

Bachelor

IN THE

BALLROOM

After a bittersweet elimination, *Dancing With the Stars'* **Peta Murgatroyd** and **Nick Viall** reflect on their seven-week run with *Us* **BY JAMIE BLYNN**

Nick Viall didn't see it coming. Through four seasons on ABC's *Bachelor* franchise, he gamely allowed cameras to capture steamy makeouts, gut-wrenching breakups and one awkward conversation about climaxing. But when he stepped on the *Dancing With the Stars* stage, he froze. Explains partner Peta Murgatroyd, 30, "Nick had such a serious case of stage fright he blanked out on the dances." Though he finally found his footing, Viall, 36, was sent home on the May 1 episode of the ABC series (Mondays, 8 P.M.). "I had no performance experience, so it was something I had to get used to," he admits. "Nothing stopped me from enjoying myself." Viall, engaged to Vanessa Grimaldi, and Murgatroyd — who welcomed son Shai with fiancé and fellow pro Maksim Chmerkovskiy in January — look back on their run with *Us*.

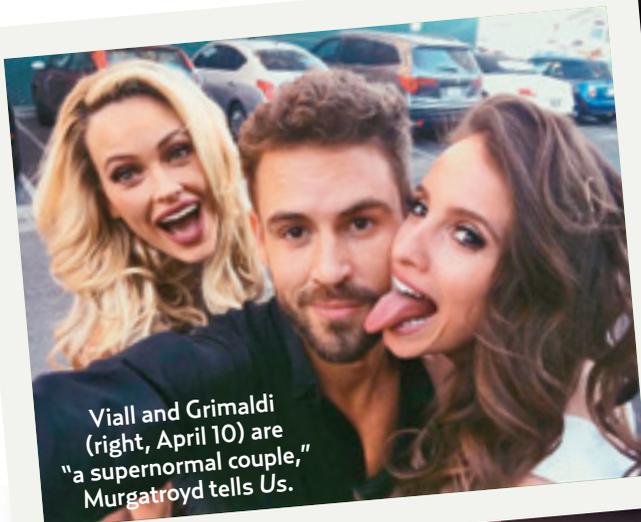
Did you think you had a good shot at winning?

PM Absolutely, we had come this far! Nick was the underdog, and had been getting better each week. Plus, he made people laugh.

It was a great combination. **NV** I expected to go home every week. But it was fun to last this long.

Why did you work so well together?

NV She's a pretty easygoing, chill person. We're also in the same places in our lives. She has her family with Maks and Shai, and I have my relationship with Vanessa. **PM** I actually heard from producers that we're the funniest couple. I really think that's the basis of our friendship. We're both very sarcastic, so we just laughed all day, whether we were frustrated or not.



Viall and Grimaldi (right, April 10) are "a supernormal couple," Murgatroyd tells *Us*.

The show "is nerve-racking and challenging," says Viall (Feb. 25). "But it's a ton of fun!"



"He wants to be picked up all the time," the Aussie pro (April 16) says of Shai.

Peta, going into the season you felt you had baby weight to lose. Do you feel more like yourself?

PM I have pretty much hit my weight. I feel really confident in my body and going out there in these short costumes! Anyone would think I'm crazy to go back to a TV show six weeks after having a child, but it was the best thing for me.

What obstacles did you face as a new mom in the ballroom?

PM It's terribly hard to leave every morning to go to work. But my scheduling skills have risen exponentially because I have to be so much more aware of when he needs to be fed, when he needs to sleep.

Last Monday, someone tried to break into your L.A. rental. What happened?

PM We were woken up by bangs at our door by the police. This man who owned our house 10 years ago thought we were trespassing on *his* property. The next night, he was there again. We're getting a restraining order, and we have a security guard. It seems extreme, but I'm not playing around.

Nick, Vanessa was front and center cheering you on every Monday night. Was that helpful?

NV The fact that she was so supportive made it easier. She was

a gymnast growing up and took dance, so she has more experience than I do. She'd watch the videos with me at night and go over steps with me.

PM I like her because she's a strong woman! She's so easy to get along with and made my life just so easy with Nick. She's the easiest fiancée to work with.

Did she sit in on practice?

NV She came to a couple but was self-conscious about showing up too much. Peta loves her, and so she had an open invite to come.

Peta, did Shai like visiting?

PM He loved it! In my trailer, I've got fluffy toys and I put mats down. Nick is great with him, too — he's got, like, 10 siblings, so he's very used to having kids around. **NV** Shai's always in good spirits! He obviously has two good-looking parents so he's in good shape.

Nick, itching for kids of your own?

NV At 36, I'm certainly ready to be a father and have a family when the time is right. I don't know if I have the baby bug yet though.

What's on your plate post-DWTS?

NV My biggest priority will be the Polished Gent [his men's grooming line, launching May 8]. There are some tricks that I have done over the years to maintain a youthful appearance. It made sense to take the stuff I've been using and put it into a single box I can share with everyone.

And, Peta, you're getting married this summer! Is the planning done?

PM We're finishing up the final touches! It's going to be really special. Maks and I call each other husband and wife already. Then we also joke around that we're baby mama and baby daddy. I actually get anxiety when I think about walking down the aisle. [Laughs.] I don't think I'll be doing good until it's time to party. **US**