



TESSA PICCILLO

PROFILE

When her father gave 12-year-old Tessa Piccillo a yo-yo he had no idea what that would lead to.

Tessa quickly mastered the few tricks her father taught her and hungered for more. Soon, one could rarely find young Tessa without a yo-yo in her hands, practicing new tricks she had seen online.

"I mostly learned by watching videos," she said. Piccillo, who grew up in Castro Valley, went to the state yo-yo championships in Sacramento as a spectator in 2010 and she was hooked. "I found my people," she recalled, referring to the close-knit yo-yo community. "Some people think we're nerds, but I don't think so. I think we're pretty cool."

The next year Tessa went back to the state championships as a contestant and three years after that (2014) – a year before she graduated Castro Valley High – she won her first world championship in Prague.

Tessa won the world championship again in 2017 in Iceland and finished second in 2016. She also won the 1A Women's Freestyle division at the European Yo-yo Championships in 2016.

Tessa quickly outgrew the beginner's yo-yo her father gave her and began competing at the top level of the sport. It wasn't long before she signed with YoYoJam and had her own signature yo-yo named "Transcend."

Piccillo established such a name for herself in the yo-yo world that she is still under the sponsorship of Caribou Lodge Yoyo Works, even though she hasn't competed internationally since 2019. Her signature yo-yo for Caribou is named Kodiak.

Yo-yo contestants perform their routines to music, and the scoring is based on performance and difficulty, similar to gymnastics or ice skating.

"You can pick any song," Tessa explained. "There's a time limit. You do a combination of tricks, whatever you want; it definitely has a creative aspect." The more difficult the trick, the higher the potential score, but there's also the risk of messing up.

Piccillo still keeps a yo-yo close at hand but now it's mostly for relaxation. "It's more like a meditative thing at this time in my life," she said.

Now living in San Francisco, Piccillo works in the food industry and plays drums in the rock band Badvriil.