

Monday, February 11, 2008

Student wins on 'Deal or No Deal'

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

On May 5, 2007, Kristine LeMieux woke up at 2 a.m. to make her way to local auditions for the NBC prime-time game show, "Deal or No Deal." When her alarm went off, LeMieux considered going back to sleep, but she had a feeling that maybe she would get picked for the show. That same feeling helped the Oakland University junior secure \$238,000 in a winner-take-all, battle of the sexes episode of "Deal or No Deal" that aired Feb. 4.

"When I got to the auditions, there was already a huge line. There were at least 1,000 people ahead of me. I waited in line for 11 hours to be seen for 30 seconds. I was asked to stay for another interview that was approximately a minute and a half," LeMieux said. "They said they would call and I thought 'yeah right.' Five months later, I was in the hospital getting out of surgery, when they called and told me I'd be on the show."

The game show features a contestant who chooses out of 26 numbered briefcases. Inside the case is a cash value ranging from one cent up to \$1 million. A "banker" will offer the contestant a dollar amount for the first briefcase the contestant chooses at the start of the game. If the contestant takes the deal, he or she wins the value of the offer. If not, the contestant opens more briefcases before another offer is made.

In the round of "Deal or No Deal" LeMieux participated in, she was not only up against the banker, but also another contestant. She participated in the Battle of the Sexes theme night and was up against Jay Hughes from Dallas, Texas in a winner-take-all scenario. The contestant with the highest dollar amount would win both totals.

"Originally, I wanted to go home with at least six figures. If my first offer from the banker was six figures, I was going to take it. Once I learned it was winner takes all, I had to think about what the other guy was doing and how I could top him as well," LeMieux said.

LeMieux started the game backstage while Hughes racked up his \$117,000 deal. She said sitting backstage was extremely nerve-wrecking and she just wanted to be on stage playing the game. Once on stage, LeMieux said she used loved ones' birthdays to select briefcase numbers and then moved to randomly selecting them. LeMieux's mother, aunt and boyfriend were on stage cheering her on and encouraging her.

"I listened to them as much as I could. I had to go with my gut feeling though. Had I listened to them and gone against what I felt and then lost, I would have been mad," LeMieux said.

LeMieux finished her game with \$121,000 and had no idea how Hughes had done. The two were brought to the stage to do their reveals to each other. They opened briefcases containing their totals and only \$4,000 separated them.

"I looked back and forth like five times before I realized I won," LeMieux said.

The show was taped Jan. 16 in Culver City, Calif. LeMieux said the show took an entire day to tape, while she played the game for nearly an hour.

"You are really into the game and you don't realize there are a lot of people there," LeMieux said. She said it was almost like playing in your living room, which she said she does just about every week. "I've always been a huge 'Deal or No Deal' fan. I'd watch it every week I wasn't in class or doing homework."

After the taping, LeMieux returned home, mum about her winnings.

"The night I got back, I had people calling asking how I did and to tell them if I was happy or if it was going to change my life. I couldn't tell them anything. The only people who knew were my mom, aunt and my boyfriend Dave. We didn't even tell my dad, my sister, my grandma or anyone. It was really hard to keep that a secret," LeMieux said.

She planned a watch party for Feb. 11, the day the show was originally scheduled to air. It was rescheduled for Feb. 4 and LeMieux got her family, including her cousins who drove up from Kentucky, together to watch. Her family learned she won \$238,000 and LeMieux got another surprise that night when her boyfriend proposed.

"It's been kind of crazy since the show aired. I'm still the same old Kristine. I'm not a celebrity by any means, but people are interviewing me and recognizing me from the show," LeMieux said.

LeMieux took home her \$121,000 plus the \$117,000 Hughes earned on the show. She plans to take \$20,000 for herself and do something fun, and invest the rest.

"I'm going to take some time off in the summer. I want to go to Fiji and I've never been able to afford it, but now I can. I also plan to go to Europe and maybe do a little shopping," LeMieux said.

When she can, LeMieux still plans to watch "Deal or No Deal" and relive her experience on the show.

"It was so fun. I miss it already. It was such a rush. A new show is on tonight and I'll definitely watch it," LeMieux said.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Monday, February 11, 2008
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Monday, February 11, 2008
Article Start Date: Monday, February 11, 2008