

SINGER-DANCER IS AURORA'S IDOL

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AURORA - Josh Jones had been waiting two years for this.

Ever since seeing his Boys II Men Fraternity brother, Josh Welton, finish as runner-up in the last Aurora Idol, Jones had always wanted to be on that stage on Downer Place. Then there he was, two years later, just not wanting to hear his named called first.

Josh Jones (r), the 2006 Aurora Idol, performs with Josh Welton (l), the 2004 Aurora Idol Runner-up who went on to star in his own television show, The House of Fatty Koo, on BET and released a CD with his group, Fatty Koo

"All right, the judges have made their decision," said Paramount Executive Director Diana Martinez as she walked across the stage. "The runner-up in this year's Aurora Idol is ..."

With no movement and no emotion, Jones clenched his lips and hoped. " ... Alex Lovely."

Immediately, a roar erupted from the crowd, and a smile erupted from Jones. After an entire summer of competition, Jones finally could relax as he was crowned 2006's Aurora Idol.

"It's all so overwhelming," the 16-year old said. "It's one of the best feelings in the world."

From the moment he was introduced, Jones seemed to be the fan favorite. Throughout the performances leading up to his, the crowd filled with family, friends and relatives constantly chanted his name. And he didn't disappoint his fans when he got the chance to sing his one song. Or really, three songs in one.

Jones started off with the Boyz II Men song *End of the Road*. Dressed in a white shirt, jeans, and red tie, he then shifted gears and displayed his dancing moves to Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*, only to finish with a combination of singing and dancing to *Usher's Yeah*.

By the final verdict, the combination was too much for the judges to resist. But their decision wasn't easy because of the 14-year old Lovely.

Singing a song dedicated to her dad, Lovely belted out Christina Aguilera's *I Turn to You*, which drew a huge cheer from the crowd.

But in the end, her vocals couldn't top the singing and dancing of Jones.

"I feel good," Lovely said while getting congratulatory hugs from her family. "But yeah, (it's disappointing). I wanted to win."

Lovely still walked away with a \$500 cash prize from National City Bank for finishing second. Jones received a \$1,000 cash prize for first place.

After congratulating Lovely and accepting his award, the new champ sang *Joy to the World* with the seven other Aurora Idol contestants. When the song was over, he walked off the stage to chants of "JOSH-U-A."

But he didn't make it far. He was congratulated first by his uncle and manager, Clayton Muhammad, and some of his fraternity brothers who had come to support him. Then, he turned around and was engulfed in a tear-filled hug from his mother, Stephanie Cannon.

The two just held each other, soaking in the moment. Cannon could barely watch when her son was on stage, and when her baby's name was called as champion, she was awestruck.

For her, there was nothing like seeing her son's dream come true.

"I just kept thinking, 'Oh, my God, he did it,'" Cannon said. "And he did. He did it."