

# Trip to skateboarding finals on the line at Charm City Skatepark

## Canton skateboarding facility hosts a regional competition of the Gatorade Free Flow Tour today

By Colin Stevens, The Baltimore Sun

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It takes a lot to claim a spot on Jason Chapman's Charm City skateboard team.

Kabian Maxwell, 18, of Baltimore proved his dedication to the sport by visiting Chapman's park, Charm City Skatepark, as often as he could. After spending a year honing his skills, Maxwell received what he said was the best Christmas present of his life.

"[Chapman] called me ... and he was like, 'I've got this big box here waiting for you with your name on it.' I came down there, I opened up the box, it was only a little piece of paper that said, 'You're on the team,'" Maxwell said. "That's what kept me going and motivated me. I was like, 'Yes, I made it.'"

No skater has it easy making the team, but once they do, they become household names at Charm City Skatepark, which will be hosting a regional stop on the Gatorade Free Flow Tour today.

A former professional skateboarder, Chapman first thought of opening his own park when his sponsor, New School, asked him to come to California and work with them. Rather than growing his craft across the country, Chapman, a Dundalk native, wanted to do something closer to home, and in 1994 he opened his park in Canton.

The facility has grown in size over the years — it began as a little shop with a single ramp outside and now takes up three warehouses — and after their first trip to the park, skaters usually can't stay away.

"Everybody that comes here, after they leave here, they pretty much don't want to go," said Zachary Williams, 14, of Dundalk. "They just want to stay here forever."

Williams has been skating for about nine years, picking it up after watching his older brother skate. He says Chapman has always been supportive as he tries to improve.

"Jason Chapman has been just pushing me and pushing me to just keep on progressing in my skating," Williams said. "If I stick a trick and I'm saying I'm done, he'll just talk you into keep on landing it."

The Free Flow Tour, an amateur event, is making its fourth appearance at Charm City Skatepark. The winner of the competition will be flown to Salt Lake City, Utah, in mid-September for the finals.

Last year, Maxwell, along with fellow Charm City skater Tyler Thomas, qualified for the finals through video submission. In total, eight Charm City skaters made it to the finals last year, and 13-year-old Myles Willard hopes he can make his first appearance there this year.

After finishing in fourth at the Free Flow last year, Willard says his strategy for victory this year is reacting to the park.

"I just pick tricks that I want to do and it kind of forms its own run. I don't really plan runs ahead," the Towson native said. "When I plan runs, I get nervous because I feel like I have to make my way and pick this and go straight to it."

The nerves no longer take over Maxwell, who has competed in so many events he can't remember the amount. He finished in second place in the Free Flow Tour at Charm City Skatepark last year and expects the competition this year to be fierce again.

"It's going to be war Saturday. It's going to be intense," he said.