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IDOL Training Day

Viewers from all over the continent tuned into the new season of "American Idol" last month, but the search for the next star began this past summer, when the show held auditions in San Francisco, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Las Vegas, Denver and Greensboro, Kentucky.

As the fifth season took shape, not only were the judges looking for talent but the show's hair stylists, along with make-up artists and fashion stylists, plotted how to make their own mark. This is exactly what Dean Banowitz, head hair stylist for the "American Idol" talent and personal stylist for Ryan Seacrest, had planned as he prepped his team for one of the country's most-watched television shows.

As the auditions unrolled, Banowitz decided to brief his team on the latest hair trends and products, with the help of Erica Jemson, an advisor for Joico.

The training began in Banowitz's home-based beauty studio, where MODERN got a taste of what it takes to style the hair of multiple contestants for a live show with more than 30 million viewers.

Since "Idol" is a live show, it is crucial that Banowitz's team members work in sync with one another, using the same techniques and products for the same effects. On the show, it is extremely common to see three or four hair stylists working on the same head. Carrie Underwood, last season's winner would often have four people curling her hair at the same time to achieve her famous textured blonde tresses. →



The "Idol" team comprises: extension specialist Megan Herrera, Dean Banowitz, Ryan Randall and rookie Michelle Nieto, the chemical go-to girl and a multi-cultural texture specialist.



Joico's Erica Jemson shows stylist Ryan Randall a color chart while training him for the upcoming season.



For Ryan Seacrest, Banowitz always styles numerous mannequin heads. "I cut, style, and color them differently so that Ryan has choices. This technique saves us a lot of time," he says.

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To that end, Banowetz asked Jemson for an intensive product-knowledge class, including Joico's Vero Color, Vero Blue and the K-Pak Collection, along with Joico styling products and trend techniques. Banowetz wanted to use the company's wide range of formulations, including semipermanent, demipermanent and permanent color, to guarantee his team maximum flexibility.

He may be a "Hollywood hair guy," as he asserts on his website, but Iowa-born Banowetz is a practical, salon-savvy hairdresser who knows how to build the biz and has a plan for this season. "My goal is to have at least two or three contestants with a curl or wave texture," he says.

"With the amount of viewers watching 'Idol,' it is no longer just a show—it becomes a trend vehicle. I know if I have curl texture on the show, people are going to go into salons all over the US, Canada and other countries asking for curls!" **m**



Last season's Top 10 Idols make hair fashion news.