



Patty Rodriguez fixes her daughter, Alexandra's, 14, traditional hairstyle during the Fourth Annual Historic Savannah Feis at the Savannah Civic Center on Saturday. *Hunter McRae/Savannah Morning News*

## Irish dance competition frolicks through Savannah

Miami, Fla., resident Alexandra Rodriguez sat patiently as her mother used a series of hairpins to secure a curly hair wig to her head.

Alexandra, 14, showed no fear, anxiety or concern for her pending performance. Having danced since she was 3, competing in the fourth Historic Savannah Feis Irish dance competition on Saturday afternoon was nothing new.

"I get used to it," she said as two dancers kicked, hopped and bobbed in front of judges on one of a series of stages. "I practice every day, so I know what to do."

Alexandra was one of about 400 competitors from around the continent who descended upon the Savannah Civic Center for the competition.

The competition attracted a wide variety of talent, from beginners to champions. Dancers attend the events to attain ascending levels that could eventually lead them to qualify for the world championship.

As Alexandra stared at the moves of her fellow performers, her mother, Patty Rodriguez, reflected on Irish dance being a part of both their lives.

"I didn't know what I was getting myself into," she said. "Where we live, there are only three competitions a year. But up north, there's one every weekend. That's why we drove here. She loves it."

As for the wig of curly hair, Alexandra said its tradition goes back to Ireland, when girls would shape their locks for church in the morning and then dance in the afternoon.