



Fina

AQUATICS

2019/6

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**WORLD
MAGAZINE**

Morozov, Campbell: over all!



MOROZOV

**FINA
SWIMMING WORLD CUP
OVERALL WINNER**

TO: **VLADIMIR MOROZOV**
150.000 USD



CAMPBELL

**FINA
SWIMMING WORLD CUP 2019
OVERALL WINNER**

TO: **CATE CAMPBELL**
150.000 USD

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BUDAPEST 2019

European Capital of Sport



Proud to have hosted

- FINA Champions Swim Series in May
- FINA Artistic Swimming World Series Super Final in June
- FINA Women's Water Polo World League Super Final in June
- FINA World Junior Swimming Championships in August
- FINA Swimming World Cup in October

Coming soon

- 2024 FINA World Swimming Championships (25m)
- 2027 FINA World Championships



EDITORIAL

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"Throughout our prestigious competitions, our grassroots work, and the unity of our 209 National Member Federations around the planet, we have demonstrated once more the strength and attraction of Aquatics," Fina President Dr Julio C. Maglione writes in his year-ending message.

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A total of 717 medals, 39 nations on the podium, 25 competition records, seven meets in three clusters, USD 2.5 million in prize money. These are some of the impressive numbers of the 2019 edition of the FINA Swimming World Cup.

ONE STAR, ONE DISCIPLINE



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"They parade you out on the field and play a video celebrating our wins in front of 111,000 people. That's definitely the craziest thing that's happened."



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"I have to learn from my mistakes quite a lot but I think that's part of my journey. Even though it sucks, I'm still happy that people still notice how well I was doing and the hard work that I put into the sport every single day."



ARTISTIC SWIMMING Anastasia Savchuk (UKR) 28

"I cannot say anything about the competitions but the pressure of the Olympic Games will accompany us all the season, that is certain, although the Olympics are always easier physically for us than, for example, the World Championships."



OPEN WATER Haley Anderson (USA) 34

"If I race poorly - or even if I have a good race - there are still things I can improve, which is what makes open water so fun. I don't think I've ever had a perfect race. I don't think I ever will have a perfect race."



WATER POLO Bronwen Knox (AUS) 42

"I believe that I have developed a reasonable understanding of the game and can adapt to playing most positions. This allows me the freedom and versatility to move about the pool."

TOKYO 2020

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"Our mission is to create the best environment for the athletes coming to the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. We believe that the Tokyo Aquatics Centre will be a venue where they can achieve the best performance."

Who will be the 1,410 happy Olympians? 56

Qualification landscape in five disciplines as of the end of the year.

LEGENDS COACHING LEGENDS

Adam Krikorian (USA, water polo) 70

"I feel like in some way I coach women for a reason: even with all the success we've had, there is this underdog-type feeling among my players. It kind of matches where I come from and my fabric, and I don't ever feel like we're given the respect we've earned or deserve. It's a perfect fit for me."

Fred Vergnoux (FRA, swimming) 76

"We have a saying that goes 'if we do something, we do it well'. As a coach, I focus on what I can control, and I always keep a very honest attitude with my swimmers. They know what I think because I tell them."

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HEROES FROM THE PAST



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"I'm dedicated, committed and tireless - never give up anything. I inherited this from my mother. She is 90 today but still insists on walking up to the hill to a favourite place from her house, whether it's raining, snowing or boiling heat."



Aleksandar Sostar (SRB, water polo) 106

"When you have a top sports career, it still gives you a better starting position. However, this is only a little better initial position, and it helps only if you understand and accept that in your 'new life' you have to work again, and even better compared with those 10-15 years spent in the swimming pool to become Olympic winner."

FAMILY NEWS 110



FINA NEWS 115



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Swimming - Diving - High Diving
- Water Polo - Artistic Swimming -
Open Water Swimming - Masters

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Very good year for FINA in 2019!

Arriving in this month of December, we can proudly say that 2019 was a good year for FINA. Throughout our prestigious competitions, our grassroots work, and the unity of our 209 National Member Federations around the planet, we have demonstrated once more the strength and attraction of Aquatics. 2020 is coming fast and the next year will be highlighted by the celebration of the Games of the XXXII Olympiad in Tokyo (JPN), where FINA will have top-level visibility, being the sport with the highest number

of finals (49) in the Olympic programme. Moreover, in one year-time, in December 2020, FINA will live intense moments with its World Swimming Championships (25m) in Abu Dhabi (UAE).

In the lead-up to the Games, the organisation of our 18th FINA World Championships in Gwangju (KOR) last July was a milestone in FINA history. Despite the inevitable challenges linked to setting up an event of this calibre, our Korean hosts delivered a superb edition of our showcase event. The venues were excellent,

the athletes and Media Village were highly appreciated, the TV production (by NBC and TV Asahi) was efficient and most importantly, our athletes delivered unforgettable performances in all FINA disciplines during the two-week aquatic festival.

During our stay in Korea we had the honour to receive an important IOC delegation, led by President Thomas Bach and all IOC Vice-Presidents, for an unprecedented meeting with the FINA Bureau. It was a privileged opportunity for the Olympic leaders to witness the value of our World Championships and to discuss important themes of common interest for the prosecution of our activities, thus confirming the high level of collaboration and mutual support between FINA and the IOC.

Gwangju 2019 was also highlighted by our General Congress, where delegates from the five continents (and 167 countries) had the opportunity to approve new changes in the FINA Constitution. In ac-



High Diving (World Cup), talented performers shone consistently, providing a fantastic experience for all digital fans following the action on TV, web streaming and social media platforms.

In terms of our robust Development Programme, we are continuing to expand our support to our members (namely financial support for their activities, organisation of schools, clinics and scholarships, coaches certification programmes and implementation of development and training centres) thus contributing to harmonious progress in our sport around the globe. It is with particular satisfaction that I underline the approval in 2019 of an ambitious project – "Pools for All" –, an initiative aimed at providing aquatic facilities in countries where this infrastructure does not exist.

As you see, 2019 was synonymous with FINA progress in many areas: competition excellence, institutional prestige and development focus. Our athletes, coaches, officials and respective national federations naturally appreciate this effort and

with the principles of good governance and transparency.

Finally, the Korean rendezvous concluded with the celebration of our World Masters Championships, in which thousands of enthusiastic athletes had the opportunity to compete and to share unique life experiences. Moreover, it confirmed that the joint organisation of the two competitions – elite and Masters – remains a successful strategy.

The rest of the year was of course marked by the success of our other competitions in our six aquatic disciplines. In Swimming, we welcomed the launch of an innovative competition, the "FINA Champions Swim Series", a concept that attracted many stars for a three-leg circuit in China, Hungary and USA, and that was very well received by the best swimmers on the planet.

In Water Polo (World League), Artistic Swimming and Diving (World Series), Open Water (Marathon Swim Series) and

give back to FINA their appreciation in the form of hard work and outstanding results.

It is a win-win strategy that we want to maintain and consolidate in the years to come. With the help of the entire FINA Family, at the core of all aquatic achievements!

Dr JULIO C. MAGLIONE
FINA President

cordance to our rules, the representatives of our National Member Federations also validated our Financial Statements for the last two years. All the procedures were done, as usual, with total democracy, and this gathering confirmed that the FINA Family is progressing in a good direction. FINA is now stronger, has additional tools to be even more efficient and is complying

FINA activities

FINA President follows action in Kazan

The FINA President, Dr Julio C. Maglione, was recently in Kazan (RUS), where the sixth and penultimate leg of the 2019 FINA Swimming World Cup took place on November 1-3. Dr Maglione was also at the launch of the FINA Training Camp some days before in the "Aquatics Palace" of the capital of Tatarstan, host of the 2015 FINA World Championships. This action is part of the FINA Development Programme, aimed at providing additional opportunities for talented swimmers from all over the world. The Training Camp was attended by 35 swimmers from 20 National Federations, including a national team from Korea and the best swimmers from India, Syria, Pakistan, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Latvia, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Malawi, Sudan, Tonga, Federated States of Micronesia, Cook Islands, Brunei Darussalam, as well as the recently added National Member Federation, Bhutan. Among them was FINA Scholarship holder Sajan Prakash from India (personal best: 1:57.73, in the 200m butterfly), who has become the best swimmer in the history of his country by achieving his A qualifying time for the last FINA World Championships in Gwangju (KOR) and is aiming to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games

The programme included daily training sessions at the pool, as well as dryland and mental training sessions. Another element added to the programme was a number of workshops to help athletes understand more about sports physiology and training.

The coaching team included the Thanyapura-FINA Training Centre Head Coach, Miguel Angel Lopez Alvarado, and the Head Coach of the FINA Development Centre in Kazan, Gulnara Garipova. Graham Hill, the Head Coach of Swimming South Africa, also joined the training camp with one of his star athletes, Erin Gallagher.



Preparing the main 2020 FINA rendezvous – FINA Executive Director Cornel Marculescu was recently in Abu Dhabi (UAE) to oversee the preparation of the 2020 FINA World Swimming Championships (25m) taking place in December. The rendezvous will also comprise the organisation of the FINA World Aquatics Convention, the FINA Aquatics Gala "Soirée des Etoiles" and the FINA World Sports Medicine Congress.

Mr Marculescu was also in China, preparing the hosting of the two legs of the 2020 FINA Champions Swimming Series, programmed on January 14-15 in Shenzhen and January 18-19 in Beijing.

Colombia celebrates 80 years of its federation – FINA President Dr Julio C. Maglione was in Cali (COL) on November 7, 2019, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Colombian Swimming Federation. Dr Maglione emphasised his satisfaction to be back in the city, host of the second edition of the FINA World Championships in 1975.

Russia's aquatic capital Kazan is like a second home for the FINA President: Dr Julio C. Maglione is pictured at the Swimming World Cup press conference (top) with local hero Vladimir Morozov, Tatarstan Sport Minister Vladimir Leonov and Russian Swimming Federation President Vladimir Salnikov. And Dr Maglione also attended the Colombian Federation's 80th anniversary gala on his home continent (left): with FINA Bureau Member Juan Carlos Orihuela, high diving legend Orlando Duque and Jorge Soto, President of the Colombian Swimming Federation

"Many years have gone past since then, but the Colombian Swimming Federation has remained an important and prominent member in the Americas and in the world, providing FINA with excellent athletes, coaches, officials and administrators, as well as major and important international competitions throughout its history.



Today we have with us the ambassador of our newest discipline, High Diving, among its honorable members: the legendary Orlando Duque. He was a great promoter of this sport. He was and will always be a true champion.

The Colombian Swimming Federation has very good reasons to be proud of its history and its protagonists. After 80 years, you may remain optimistic, as your future will continue being brilliant and prosperous!" declared the FINA President.

FINA President awarded by FISU – At the recent General Assmbeiy of FISU (International University Sport Federation), held in Torino (ITA) on November 15, the FINA President Dr Julio C. Maglione has received the 'Primo Nebiolo Award', in recognition of his contribution to the development of sport worldwide. In the occasion, it was also recalled that Dr Maglione had won a medal in Swimming in the first edition of the University Games, held precisely in Torino, in 1959.



FINA Second Vice-President Sam Ramsamy given award by ANOC – FINA Second Vice-President and IOC Honorary Member **Sam Ramsamy** (RSA) has been presented with the Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award at the sixth edition of the ANOC (Association of National Olympic

Committees) Awards, held in Doha (QAT). He received the award for almost 20 years of campaigning against discrimination in sport as Chairman of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC). Gunilla Lindberg, ANOC Secretary General and IOC Member, presented the award.



Second Vice-President Sam Ramsamy upon receiving the prestigious award at the ANOC Assembly

*Vlad Morozov on his way to claiming
his second overall title
in the Swimming World Cup*





FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP 2019

Photo: RONNY HARTMANN / GETTY IMAGES

Morozov and Campbell, the best of a successful 2019 edition

A total of 717 medals, 39 nations on the podium, 25 competition records, seven meets in three clusters, USD 2.5 million in prize money. These are some of the impressive numbers of the 2019 edition of the FINA Swimming World Cup, which ended on November 9 in Doha (QAT). Individually, Vladimir Morozov (RUS) and Cate Campbell (AUS) were the overall winners, Morozov leading the men with 333 points and Campbell the women with 357.

Morozov was also World Cup champion in 2018 and 2016 and second in 2017 and 2013. Danas Rapsys, from Lithuania, was second and Arno Kamminga, from the Netherlands, third, the best placings for both in the World Cup.

It was the first win for Campbell, who was followed by Katinka Hosszu with 312 points. The Hungarian won five times in a row between 2012 and 2016 and was second in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Sweden's Michelle Coleman finished third (174), her best showing in the World Cup.

The 2019 edition comprised three clusters in seven venues. All the meets were held in 50m pools and were qualifying events for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

The 717 medals comprised 238 gold, 240 silver and 239 bronze. Australia led the medal table with 118 (50 gold, 37 silver, 31 bronze), followed by Russia (38+21+22) and Hungary (37+40+30). Morozov was the most prolific man, with 20 titles and one second place, while Hosszu led the women (23 gold, two silver and two bronze).

No fewer than 25 World Cup records were established – 15 men's, seven women's and three in the mixed relays. Morozov and Rapsys each claimed five and Hosszu and Campbell two apiece. The top performances in terms of points were the winning times of Anton Chupkov (RUS) in the men's 200m breaststroke in Kazan (2:07.71 – 975 points) and Campbell in the women's 100m free in Jinan (52.34 – 964 points).

TOP-3 OVERALL RANKING 2019

MEN

1. Vladimir Morozov (RUS), 333 points – US\$ 150,000
2. Danas Rapsys (LTU), 234 – US\$ 100,000
3. Arno Kamminga (NED), 195 – US\$ 50,000

WOMEN

1. Cate Campbell (AUS), 357 points – US\$ 150,000
2. Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 312 – US\$ 100,000
3. Michelle Coleman (SWE), 174 – US\$ 50,000

CLUSTER 1

MEN

1. Vladimir Morozov (RUS), 156 points – US\$ 50,000
2. Andrew Wilson (USA), 129 – US\$ 35,000
3. Danas Rapsys (LTU), 111 – US\$ 30,000
4. Mitch Larkin (AUS), 108 – US\$ 20,000
5. Michael Andrew (USA), 78 – US\$ 10,000
6. Szabaszti Szabo (HUN), 78 – US\$ 5,000
7. Thomas Fraser-Holmes (AUS), 60 – US\$ 4,000
8. Grant Irvine (AUS), 54 – US\$ 3,000

WOMEN

1. Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 156 points – US\$ 50,000
2. Cate Campbell (AUS), 150 – US\$ 35,000
3. Emily Seebohm (AUS), 105 – US\$ 30,000
4. Michelle Coleman (SWE), 75 – US\$ 20,000
5. Holly Barratt (AUS), 66 – US\$ 10,000
6. Zsuzsanna Jakabos (HUN), 63 – US\$ 5,000
7. Alia Atkinson (JAM), 60 – US\$ 4,000
8. Erica Sullivan (USA), 57 – US\$ 3,000

*With Georges Kiehl, FINA Swimming World Cup scorer



CLUSTER 2

MEN

1. Arno Kamminga (NED), 117 points – US\$ 50,000
2. Vladimir Morozov (RUS), 108 – US\$ 35,000
3. Danas Rapsys (LTU), 66 – US\$ 30,000
4. Kristof Milak (HUN), 63 – US\$ 20,000
5. Ryosuke Irie (JPN), 54 – US\$ 10,000
6. Michael Andrew (USA), 54 – US\$ 5,000
7. Szebasztian Szabo (HUN), 36 – US\$ 4,000
8. Zhang Ruixan (CHN), 33 – US\$ 3,000

WOMEN

1. Cate Campbell (AUS), 93 points – US\$ 50,000
2. Kira Toussaint (NED), 90 – US\$ 35,000
3. Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 84 – US\$ 30,000
4. Michelle Coleman (SWE), 60 – US\$ 20,000
5. Zsuzsanna Jakabos (HUN), 57 – US\$ 10,000
6. Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED), 54 – US\$ 5,000
7. Maddy Gough (AUS), 42 – US\$ 4,000
8. Taylor Ruck (CAN), 30 – US\$ 3,000

CLUSTER 3

MEN

1. Anton Chupkov (RUS), 90 points – US\$ 50,000
2. Arno Kamminga (NED), 78 – US\$ 35,000
3. Vladimir Morozov (RUS), 69 – US\$ 30,000
4. Yasuhiro Koseki (JPN), 66 – US\$ 20,000
5. Michael Andrew (USA), 63 – US\$ 10,000
6. Danas Rapsys (LTU), 57 – US\$ 5,000
7. Keita Sunama (JPN), 42 – US\$ 4,000
8. Szebasztian Szabo (HUN), 27 – US\$ 3,000

WOMEN

1. Cate Campbell (AUS), 114 points – US\$ 50,000
2. Kira Toussaint (NED), 72 – US\$ 35,000
3. Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 72 – US\$ 30,000
4. Kaylee McKeown (AUS), 69 – US\$ 20,000
5. Emily Seebohm (AUS), 54 – US\$ 10,000
6. Zsuzsanna Jakabos (HUN), 51 – US\$ 5,000
7. Michelle Coleman (SWE), 39 – US\$ 4,000
8. Jhennifer Conceicao (BRA), 36 – US\$ 3,000

Sprinting to the top: Cate Campbell raced through the series for the first time and went home with a 150,000 USD cheque at the end

2019 FASTEST WINNERS

- 50m free: Men – Vladimir Morozov (RUS) 21.27, WCR (Singapore);
Women – Cate Campbell (AUS) 24.02 (Singapore)
- 100m free: Men – Vladislav Grinev (RUS) 47.78, WCR (Kazan);
Women – Cate Campbell (AUS) 52.34, WCR (Jinan)
- 200m free: Men – Danas Rapsys (LTU) 1:44.38, WCR (Singapore);
Women – Brianna Throssell (AUS) 1:56.99 (Tokyo)
- 400m free: Men – Danas Rapsys (LTU) 3:43.91, WCR (Jinan);
Women – Kiah Melverton (AUS) 4:06.71 (Tokyo)
- 800m free: Women – Kiah Melverton (AUS) 8:22.24, WCR (Tokyo)
- 1500m free: Men – Mykhailo Romanchuk (UKR) 14:51.61, WCR (Doha)
- 50m back: Men – Vladimir Morozov (RUS) 24.40, WCR (Singapore);
Women – Liu Xiang (CHN) 27.35, WCR (Jinan)
- 100m back: Men – Ryosuke Irie (JPN) 53.26 (Berlin);
Women – Kira Toussaint (NED) 59.14 (Doha)
- 200m back: Men – Mitch Larkin (AUS) 1:55.97 (Tokyo);
Women – Kaylee McKeown (AUS) 2:07.92 (Kazan)
- 50m breast: Men – Ilya Shymanovich (BLR) 26.78 (Tokyo);
Women – Alia Atkinson (JAM) 30.31 (Singapore)
- 100m breast: Men – Ilya Shymanovich (BLR) 58.73, WCR (Tokyo);
Women – Tatjana Schoenmaker (RSA) 1:06.54 (Tokyo)
- 200m breast: Men – Anton Chupkov (RUS) 2:07.71 (Kazan);
Women – Tatjana Schoenmaker (RSA) 2:22.35, WCR (Tokyo)
- 50m fly: Men – Szebasztian Szabo (HUN) 22.93 (Jinan);
Women – Holly Barratt (AUS) 25.31 (Singapore)
- 100m fly: Men – Grant Irvine (AUS) 51.26 (Singapore);
Women – Zhang Yufei (CHN) 57.41 (Jinan)
- 200m fly: Men – Nao Horomura (JPN) 1:55.25 (Tokyo);
Women – Katinka Hosszu (HUN) 2:07.07 (Singapore)
- 200m IM: Men – Mitch Larkin (AUS) 1:57.06, WCR (Tokyo);
Women – Katinka Hosszu (HUN) 2:08.63 (Tokyo)
- 400m IM: Men – Daiya Seto (JPN) 4:11.41, WCR (Tokyo);
Women – Katinka Hosszu (HUN) 4:32.30, WCR (Tokyo)
- 4x100m free mixed: Australia 3:24.89, WCR (Tokyo)
- 4x100m medley mixed: China 3:43.79, WCR (Jinan)

WCR – World Cup Record



Photos: PEDRO ADREGA

TOP-5 MEDALS BY NATIONS

Australia	50G	37S	31B	Total: 118
Russia	38G	21S	22B	Total: 81
Hungary	37G	40S	30B	Total: 107
Japan	16G	24S	27B	Total: 67
United States	15G	24S	18B	Total: 57

TOP-5 MEDALS BY ATHLETES

MEN

Vladimir Morozov (RUS)	20G	1S		Total: 21
Danas Rapsys (LTU)	14G	4S		Total: 18
Mitch Larkin (AUS)	9G			Total: 9
Michael Andrew (USA)	6G	13S	9B	Total: 28
Arno Kamminga (NED)	5G	5S	2B	Total: 12

WOMEN

Katinka Hosszu (HUN)	23G	2S	2B	Total: 27
Cate Campbell (AUS)	11G	5S	2B	Total: 18
Emily Seebohm (AUS)	7G	3S	6B	Total: 16
Kira Toussaint (NED)	7G		1B	Total: 8
Alia Atkinson (JAM)	5G			Total: 5

2019 CALENDAR

CLUSTER 1

- Tokyo (JPN) – August 2-4
- Jinan (CHN) – August 8-10
- Singapore (SGP) – August 15-17

CLUSTER 2

- Budapest (HUN) – October 4-6
- Berlin (GER) – October 11-13

CLUSTER 3

- Kazan (RUS) – November 1-3
- Doha (QAT) – November 7-9



Celebrating the overall winners at the last leg in Doha



FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP 2020

FINA announced the competition calendar for the 2020 edition of the FINA Swimming World Cup, comprising six meets from September to November. All three-day legs will take place in 25m pools, as they will be qualification events for the FINA World Swimming Championships (25m), scheduled for Abu Dhabi (UAE) in December 2020.

The first cluster will be contested a few weeks after the conclusion of the Tokyo Olympic Games, with Singapore hosting the first meet on September 4-6 and Jinan (CHN) the second on September 10-12.

The swimmers will then proceed to the second cluster, which will comprise two meets in Kazan (RUS) on October 2-4 and Doha (QAT) on October 8-10.

The series will end with the third cluster in Berlin (GER) on October 23-25 and Budapest (HUN) on October 30-November 1.

2020 FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP CALENDAR:

1. Singapore (SGP) - September 4-6
2. Jinan (CHN) - September 10-12
3. Kazan (RUS) - October 2-4
4. Doha (QAT) - October 8-10
5. Berlin (GER) - October 23-25
6. Budapest (HUN) - October 30-November 1

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SWIMMING



Margaret MACNEIL
(CAN)

I've got what works for me now, and I've focused on sprinting and gotten better. I don't see myself focusing on longer races again because sprinting is working out pretty well.



DIVING



Jack LAUGHER
(GBR)

All my downfalls I've ever had in diving, I've always thought they are blessings in disguise, to help me move forward.



ARTISTIC



Anastasia SAVCHUK
(UKR)

I cannot say how it will unfold. From the experience of the past Olympic cycle I can say that you need to listen more to the coaches and follow their advice.

ONE STAR,



OPEN WATER



WATER POLO



Haley ANDERSON
(USA)

I'm not being super-serious. Some people are super-peppy, but I'm not the peppiest. I don't listen to music. If I'm listening to music, it means I'm thinking and being in my own head, and I don't want to be in my own head. I just want to hang out.



Bronwen KNOX
(AUS)

Being a control freak, I naturally enjoyed being in control of our defence, working with the goalkeepers to set the tone and pace of what we wanted to play as a team. I spent years refining my skills and understanding of the game from this position; learning the weaknesses, what teams like to play and how we can force them to play outside of their comfort zone.



Photo: GETTY IMAGES

ONE DISCIPLINE





Margaret MACNEIL
(CAN)

By Nathan WHITE
 Director of
 Communications,
 Swimming Canada
 (CAN)



Margaret MACNEIL (CAN)

From unknown to world champ, MacNeil is back to work on second act

It's arguably the most iconic photo from the Gwangju 2019 FINA World Championships. Three of the world's fastest swimmers stand side-by-side after receiving their medals in the women's 100m butterfly. They're showing the cameras their hands, on which they've written encouraging messages to Japan's Rikako Ikee, who was unable to compete due to her battle with leukemia. On the left stands Australian veteran Emma McKeon, four times an Olympic medallist. On the right, Sweden's Sarah Sjöström, triple world champion and reigning Olympic champ at the distance. In between, with a gold medal shining around her neck and an almost stunned smile on her face, is a young woman who shocked them both – and most of the swimming world in the process – to become world champion. How did Margaret MacNeil of London, Ontario, end up in the centre of that photo at 19 years old?

Photo: LACHLAN CUNNINGHAM / GETTY IMAGES



Exactly one year earlier, Canada was announcing its team for the Tokyo 2018 Pan Pacific Championships at the conclusion of national trials in Edmonton, Alberta. Thirty-five swimmers' names were called out at the Kinsmen Sports Centre, home of the 1978 Commonwealth Games. MacNeil's was not one of them.

Then 18, MacNeil had actually performed quite well at the meet, finishing fourth in the 100m freestyle and second in the 100m butterfly, and could have accepted her first-ever senior national team spot. But a trip to Tokyo was slightly ahead of schedule for an 18-year-old whose meticulous planning and vision for her future might make a Fortune 500 CEO envi-

ous. Expecting to compete at the Junior Pan Pacific Championships and challenge for the senior team a year or two later, MacNeil was already taking classes in preparation for her freshman year at the University of Michigan. She declined the spot.

"I've focused on sprinting and gotten better"

That decision has paid off so far. Although she had to delay her senior team debut by a year, she excelled at Junior Pan Pacs, and

getting a head start on her studies has allowed her to take on a lighter school workload this year as she prepares to qualify for a 2020 trip to Japan via the Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The Junior Pan Pacs were the last of several junior teams, camps and initiatives MacNeil took part in through Swimming Canada's National Development Team Program.

"She attended all camps she was invited to and was proud to be a part of any Swimming Canada initiative she attended," Swimming Canada National Development Coach Ken McKinnon says. *"Maggie was always a positive addition to the team environment and a good team-mate."*

MacNeil's experience in the junior programme also led to her battle with asthma coming to a head.

*It was a jump-start
for a senior career*

"At a World Cup in Singapore in 2017, it was so humid I couldn't breathe," she recalls. *"I got home and ... finally went to a respirologist and found out I have sports-induced asthma, which can be worse with chlorine exposure."*

As she was finding a way to overcome asthma, it inadvertently pushed her into a focus on shorter distances.

"At (Ontario) provincial (championships) in 2018, I swam the 200 fly and almost didn't finish because I couldn't breathe and I left the meet early," says MacNeil, who worked with a specialist to find the right mix of medications. *"I've got what works for me now, and I've focused on sprinting and gotten better. I don't see myself focusing on longer races again because sprinting is working out pretty well."*

By the time she got to her second Junior Pan Pacs in 2018, *"Maggie was the de facto team leader in and out of the pool,"* says McKinnon.

MacNeil won four medals at that elite international competition in Suva, Fiji – three in relays and gold in the 100m fly.

Still, her 100m fly time of 58.38 wasn't among the top 100 in the world in 2018. A solid performance for a junior, sure, but hardly a blip on the global scale, let alone foreshadowing she would ascend to the top of the world podium in less than a year.

Outside a close circle of team-mates, family, friends and supporters in Canadian swimming, no one knew who she was when she arrived in Ann Arbor to begin her first year at Michigan in earnest.

"Maggie started laughing and the whole airport echoed"

MacNeil would soon impress another group: her team-mates at Michigan, both with her training tenacity and her personality.

"I was intimidated by her after the first week we had. I was like, 'Oh my God, no one





The iconic photo from Gwangju with McKean, MacNeil and Sjoström: message for fellow butterflyer Rikako Ikee after the victory ceremony – though the podium order was a surprise

goes that fast mid-season, untapered.' It was just crazy to me," recalls Alexis Margett, a California native a year ahead of MacNeil who represented Bolivia at Worlds.

Margett remembers her fellow butterflyer being quiet and keeping to herself in the early going. Midway through the season though, she first heard MacNeil break into her trademark laugh at the world's busiest airport in Atlanta, Georgia. Some swimmers were playing the card game 'Spoons', where players pass cards rapidly as they try to collect four-of-a-kind. Once someone does, a mad grab ensues to snatch the spoons in the middle. Only they had substituted fork/spoon hybrids.

"We were using 'sporks' and when I went to grab it I accidentally stabbed myself with it. Maggie started laughing and the whole airport echoed," Margett says. "Everyone stopped what they were doing and stared at us, like, 'Oh my God is that coming from her?' It was the first time I heard her laugh. I found it hilarious, then I couldn't stop laughing until I started crying, which made her laugh more. It was probably like a solid eight-minute laugh. I was like, 'How are you breathing?' She inhales the whole time. I'm going to start calling her Canada Goose."

Throughout the 2018-19 season, the pair became close friends.

"In practice we goof around and try to make practice as much fun as possible," Margett says. "She's the type of person who pushes you through the workout even though it's really hard."

MacNeil felt her programme at the London Aquatic Club with coach Andrew Craven had given her a great base. She credits increased weight training and the overall fit with Mike Bottom's programme at Michigan with helping her take the next step.

"We do tons of power, focus more on underwater kicking, and a bunch of stuff dedicated to what I swim," MacNeil says.

MacNeil turned that hard work into four Big Ten titles, helping Michigan to a second-place finish overall in the conference and earning Freshman of the Year honours in the process. At the national collegiate championships, she went on to finish second in the 100 yards butterfly behind Swede Louise Hansson of the University of Southern California.

By the time Canadian Trials rolled around in April 2019, MacNeil lowered her long-course best time in the 100 fly to 57.04 to win her first senior national championship. This time there was no question she would receive – and accept – a front-door invitation to represent Team Canada at the World Championships.

"Zero per cent of me thought that was possible"

Despite knowing how hard MacNeil had been training and how much faster she was getting, even those closest to her weren't necessarily betting on her unseating powerhouse Sarah Sjoström at the Worlds. The Swedish great had won the last four best-on-best titles in the distance since 2013: three straight world championships and an Olympic Games.

"She swims fast in practice, so I knew she was going to go fast. But I guess going against a (four-times) champion, pretty much people think they're invincible. Nobody really expected that to happen," Margett says. "It's a fight for second place."

In Gwangju, Sjoström was the fastest swimmer in the semi-finals to earn top seed and Lane 4. In Lane 5 was MacNeil, seven years Sjoström's junior. The self-described "biggest swim nerd ever" had been "fangirling" about just being in the same meet as one of her exemplars.

"Zero per cent of me thought that was possible," MacNeil recalls. "I just thought it would be cool to get a medal at that point."

Gold was never in the cards. I don't want to say I counted it out, but I never thought I was going to (win)."

Sjostrom went out in a blistering 25.96 over the first 50 metres, 0.81 seconds ahead of MacNeil, who was fifth at the turn. But MacNeil made up some ground with her great underwater work and by the final 15 metres began to push Sjostrom. On her final two strokes, the teenager clearly out-reached the legend, finishing in 55.83, a Commonwealth and Americas record comfortably ahead of Sjostrom's 56.22.

"That whole day is kind of just blurry now," says MacNeil, who also helped Canada to two relay bronze medals. "I still can't believe it actually happened."

"I am a super-organised person"

"It's still crazy to think about," says MacNeil, now settled into her sophomore year at Michigan.

Some university athletes will take a "red-shirt" year off of competition in order to prepare for the Olympic Games. MacNeil decided to return to what worked for her last year. And remember that decision to decline a national team spot and complete some credits early in 2018? That foresight at 18 has allowed her to lighten her course load and put more focus on swimming in this all-important year.

"I am a super-organised person. I kind of like to know what I want to do and be able to plan for the future," MacNeil, who plans to pursue law or medicine after completing her undergraduate degree, says. "I was (tempted to go to 2018 Pan Pacs) but it worked out for the best."

She says not much has changed about her life on campus, but as an unknown freshman she wasn't being honoured at Michigan's Big House, home to one of American football's largest crowds. Swimmers don't usually get the accolades at the famous football school that produced six-times Super Bowl champion Tom Brady and nine Pro Football Hall of Famers. But MacNeil had her day on the field this fall with team-mate Felix Auboeck, an Austrian distance swimmer, and two gymnasts, all of whom won national collegiate titles.

"They parade you out on the field and play a video celebrating our wins in front of 111,000 people. That's definitely the craziest thing that's happened. It's so loud and the marching band is incredible, that's my favourite part," says MacNeil, herself a talented musician who played violin and clarinet before focusing more seriously on swimming. "We got to be on the field



"They parade you out on the field and play a video celebrating our wins in front of 111,000 people. That's definitely the craziest thing that's happened."

and watch it from right there. It's different from watching in the stands. And you have to be more careful that footballs don't come at your head."

MacNeil admits she gets recognised a bit more, maybe asked for an occasional photo, but insists things are mostly the same, other than the differences for any second-year student. Her friend Margett agrees.

"She's actually really humble. She's not one of those people who show it off. She mainly keeps it to herself and doesn't express it verbally. But she shows how good she is in the water," Margett says. "If anyone asks, 'Hey can you tell me a little bit about yourself?' she won't go straight to 'I'm a world champion'. She'll start with her roots."

If anything, it's friends like Margett who bring it up in a teasing way.

"I'll use her being a world champion as motivation to tease her in the weight room or in the pool," Margett says. "If she's doing pull-ups I'll tell her, 'I think world champs should be doing more than that.' Or, 'Do you think Sarah Sjostrom is doing less than that? You've got to push yourself harder.'" Although MacNeil's Gwangju time gives her a leg up on selection for Canada's Tokyo 2020 Olympic team, she's not taking anything for granted with talented butterflyers like Rebecca Smith and Olympic silver medalist Penny Oleksiak also vying for spots and others knocking at the door.

"All my non-swimmer friends are like, 'Oh my God, you're going to the Olympics!' and I'm like, 'No.' I haven't qualified yet." ■

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Jack LAUGHER
(GBR)

By Ashley NEWMAN
FINA Aquatics World
Magazine
Correspondent
(GBR)



Jack LAUGHER (GBR)

“I can’t go back in time, no matter how much I want to”

It’s not very often that you find a sport where your competitors feel sad when you fail and gift them gold. Especially when it’s at the World Championships. But that is exactly the sport Jack Laughler finds himself in and the situation he found himself in, in Gwangju back in July.

Having been over 30 points ahead going into the final dive in the men’s 3m springboard, catastrophe struck as he failed his entry on his back 3-½ somersault tuck, to lose the World Championship and hand gold to defending champion Xie Siyi. But Xie was sad for the Briton – sad that the man he calls his “greatest rival” fell at the last hurdle, to bring a world-class and potential record-breaking performance to an abrupt halt. To put it into context, with a failed final dive resulting in just 30.60 points, Laughler still managed a podium place with third, also behind Olympic champion Cao Yuan.

And, not surprisingly, he wishes he could turn back the clock and undo that mistake. “I can’t go back in time, no matter how much I want to,” he said of his loss.

However, for the athlete with an Olympic gold medal to his name having triumphed in the 3m springboard synchro with Chris Mears back at Rio 2016, he was able to look past his disappointment at not adding the world title to his achievements. He now sees the positive side, as not winning leaves him without the added pressure that the world crown brings in the lead-up to the Olympic

Games, and the reassurance for his fans who also felt the agony of that final dive: “Obviously I would love to be a world champion but it’s OK. It’s all right,” he says...

“I’m not as natural as some of the other people”

How are you feeling a few months on from Gwangju, now that you have had time to put what happened in that last dive in the 3m springboard into perspective?

Obviously at the time I was pretty annoyed, being in such a good position, potentially getting my first-ever world title in such a difficult sport to break out against the Chinese and be so far ahead. Then to end up in third place is extremely disappointing but I had to just reflect on it. The next day I was already, not over it as such, but I’d already sat down and thought about it. I had so many conversations with my coach afterwards to understand what happened and what we could do to rectify it.

Now it’s happened I’m quite glad in a way that I’ve had the time to work on it for next year. We’re going to change around the diving order potentially because it’s happened twice now and both times it’s where I’ve been winning and on for a world record. I way prefer it happened this year than next year in Tokyo. All these learning curves that have happened over my entire life, you know I’ve had some terrible ones: I’ve failed a dive at the Olympics in 2012 – but for me as an athlete it makes me better and it makes me stronger. I’m not as natural as some of the other people, I have to learn from my mistakes quite a lot but I think that’s part of my journey. Even though it sucks, I’m still happy that people still notice how well I was doing and the hard work that I put into the sport every single day. I’m trying to push the sport forward and people know that but you know, it would be nice if it went right of course!

A lot of people felt for you when that happened, it must be nice to know you have a lot of support?

Realistically in diving it’s pretty much the whole world against China. China are so dominant in the sport and when anyone does well from any nation everyone gets behind them and roots for them. So I know I’ve got a lot of support across all the nations – including China – I know they were sad for me and I’ve got some real good friends on the circuit. It’s really nice that all the coaches, support staff, all the divers and athletes were wanting me to do well but I know they know, and I know as well, how good I can be. I like to think I’m saving it in the bag for next year.

What is your relationship like with your Chinese competitors?

It's really nice to be held up amongst some amazing athletes that I consider out-of-this-world athletes in diving. Me and Siyi Xie, we have a really good relationship I'd say, and although there's a bit of a language barrier, I think that we are really respectful of each other. When he does well I'm really happy for him and when I do well he's really happy for me as well. But it's even better when we both do well and it's a good challenge and a good rivalry. It is really nice to have a friend and competitor in one.

For five rounds the sky seemed the limit - but it was a fall from the heavens in the sixth

"We should have noticed that was a threat to the final"

Have you discovered what caused the error in that last dive?

Well I did the same error in the semi-final. I did it a year and a half before in a competition - actually in Guangzhou, China. Basically it happened in the semi-final because it was such a long day. We just thought it was a bit of a concentration lapse and we didn't really think into it too much. The main thing we've talked about is that we should have noticed that was a threat to the final. That the next day we weren't going and practising the basics and working through the skill chains and we were just doing exactly all the normal competition prep, and I think that was where the problem lay. We didn't take the signs that were presented in front of us as seriously as maybe we should have done. All my downfalls I've ever had in diving, I've always thought they are blessings in disguise, to help me move forward.

How was your mental state going into last dive as you were obviously still confident?

I was still confident, I always track how I'm doing throughout the competition and I've won a lot of competitions in my life, I know how it feels to win and I know what the levels of concentration and everything that you need. I know what it feels like to do that last dive. I've been in that position countless times before and still succeeded.





Well you still got the bronze medal...

I needed two points to get a medal, that's how well I was doing, so for me I've been in that position so many times across World Series, Commonwealth Games, Europeans, Olympic Games even. I knew that we were winning before the last dive of the Olympic Games and I still produced a good dive on the final dive. It's something to work on and it happens. I can't go back in time, no matter how much I want to. I think it's

His outstanding build, especially his legs, make him a perfect springboard diver - and he is by far the greatest rival of the Chinese rulers

Photo: CLIVE ROSE / GETTY IMAGES

nice enough to come into this year without the pressure of being the world champion because there's a lot that hangs on that. There's a lot of expectation that comes from yourself but also other athletes and the media as well. Building up towards the Olympics is going to be huge around Team GB and the pressure is something that I'm not sad that I don't have. Obviously I would love to be a world champion but it's OK. It's all right.



think that she's my biggest supporter. I got angry after my dive. My strength and conditioning coach (Paul Murphy) is a really close friend of mine and I cried in his arms just briefly and then I was OK. Then when I saw Lois that was it, I couldn't take any more, I just wanted to let it all out. I felt like at the time I'd let her down. My mum and my brother came out to Gwangju, Lois's mum came out for the first competition in a long time to see me, and I felt like I'd let them down and it was just a really, really bad feeling. Although they were so proud of me because I'd got that Olympic spot and the silver medal in synchro, and a medal in individual and an Olympic spot there as well, that's just when the realisation came through and I just wanted to cry. I'm a very emotional guy anyway and emotion plays a big part for me in the sport that I do.

How are your Olympic preparations going, especially now having qualified in the way that you did?

In synchro I knew it was going to be a really hard push because me and Dan (Goodfellow) are a new synchro pair and going out there and trying to get a medal was almost too difficult. I wasn't 100 per cent sure if we'd do it but our preparation was really good and we ended up coming away with a silver medal. In individual I knew, I've got a lot of confidence in myself, so I knew I could final and get that spot for Team GB. I'd say preparation is going really well so far, I've got those spots and I think that puts me in a really good position for next year because I don't have to go to the World Cup now with the pressure of trying to qualify for the Olympic Games. I've seen some great teams and great athletes not make it before and that's the harsh reality of it. Four years down the drain. So for us it's brilliant we've got the whole year we can prepare our dives and really focus on what we need to do rather than getting too worked up about the qualifiers.

And finally... your fellow diver Yona Knight-Wisdom has said that he likes to tease you about your 5ft 5ins (1.65m) height compared to his 6ft 2ins (1.88m) – what is your response?

Me and Yona have quite a good level of competition and banter between us, we've been best friends since maybe we were 10 or 11 years old. I mean, he knows I dish it out as much as he gives it to me, so he's probably heard everything under the sun about his height! I've always got that stellar response: that I'm the Olympic champion. ■



Me and Siyi Xie, we have a really good relationship I'd say, and although there's a bit of a language barrier, I think that we are really respectful of each other.

“I just wanted to cry”

We could see that your girlfriend and team-mate Lois Toulson consoled you afterwards?

It's really nice having someone in my life who is going through similar things to what I am. People don't quite understand it to the level that she does and I



A photograph of a swimmer, Anastasia Savchuk, in a pool. She is smiling and has her arms raised above the water. She is wearing a dark, sequined swimsuit. The water is bright blue and splashing around her. In the top right corner, there is a purple rounded rectangle containing her name in white text.

Anastasia
SAVCHUK (UKR)

By Iaroslav
TOKMACHOV
FINA Aquatics World
Magazine
Correspondent
(UKR)



Anastasia SAVCHUK (UKR)

“You need to listen more to the coaches”

She was one of the busiest artistic swimmers in Gwangju but also one of the most successful. Anastasia Savchuk stood on the podium six times at the World Championships, sharing a historic first world title for Ukraine in the highlight routine and collecting five bronze medals – two apiece in duet and team and a fifth in the free combination. Still, Anastasia rated her season as only a 7 on a scale to 10.

Photo: MADDIE MEYER / GETTY IMAGES

Amassing medals was almost a daily routine for Marta Fiedina and Anastasia Savchuk



What can you say about the past season? How satisfied are you?

The season was complicated. Marta Fedina and I had the biggest number of top-level events, six from February to August. It was hard mentally and physically, and it seems that everyone who came to the World Championships in Gwangju was not in perfect shape. Most of the representatives of other countries who participated in the World Series were tired after the busy season. Overall, we are satisfied with our results. We had a goal, to clinch the third place in the team event to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics 2020, and in the key final we did well, and actually it is our favourite event. It is exciting and we are good at it. In general, I would like to rate last season 7 out of 10: it could have been better but we did what was required.

“We always work for gold”

What was the craziest emotion during the World Championships in Gwangju?

What is the most memorable moment?

The craziest thing was when we came third in the team technical final, because before that, at the World Championships in Budapest 2017, we did not get into the top three. It was the most vivid emotion. I should also mention a significant and special moment, from which there were tears of happiness and goose bumps: the moment when the whole team stood on a podium and listened to the anthem of Ukraine as we won the highlights event. I want this to happen again.

What are your thoughts on the upcoming season? Do you have any unique plans or goals?

An Olympic medal, of course. This is the primary goal. I cannot say anything about the competitions but the pressure of the Olympic Games will accompany us all the season, that is certain, although the Olympic Games are always easier physically for us than, for example, the World Championships. In the new season, I would not like to participate in all events at all meets since there are quite a lot of them, and at the very end the pinnacle of the season and the four-year period is the Olympic Games in Tokyo.

What medal are you looking for?

We always work for gold, but any of the medals will be acceptable to the team. We

are always fighting for the third place at the major events, so if there is a bronze medal I will be glad.

Tell us more about your programme. In the duet free performance, you girls have the highest degree of difficulty.

What about the other events?

Indeed, our routine has the highest DD in the world, and we know that. We also change the team programmes, both the technical and the free, with a higher DD. At the beginning of the season we tried that choreography and after the Ukrainian Championships we will try it again, but if it is not executed well, we will change it. We do not present a single routine for a long time, as is done, for example, by the Russian and Spanish teams. Perhaps this is why we are growing faster than others. A day



before the start we may well change some element or even a chain of elements. We believe that such changes are for good luck.

“To have fewer team and personal differences”

How do you prepare for the Olympics? Is there any special regime for the Olympic season?

So far, we have just begun; I cannot say how it will unfold. From the experience of the past Olympic cycle I can say that you need to listen more to the coaches and follow their advice. Well, and to have fewer team and personal differences, then everything will be fine. There is always a chance of a nuance of misunderstanding, as the team has a lot of young girls and only two 'veterans' aged 23. Everyone needs help, a guidance, but not everyone listens to it in every moment, so all this takes time. However, this is how it works. It usually comes together through experience and the team chemistry promises to get close to the maximum for the main events of the season.

What can you say about the rivalry with Russians and the Chinese? What do you think Team Ukraine needs to do so that your team will be able to compete with them on an equal level?

Interesting question. Probably we need to work more, and the more we work, the better we will understand each other – and this will improve all of us. The Russians train longer, it's true. They have a 'five-minute' (break) between practice runs to relax, sit, or whatever... We do not have that: we watch a video, we analyse all the drawbacks and we do the run again. It is difficult to say, but I think that we still need to listen more to the coaches, this is a crucial factor to success.

It usually comes together through experience and the team chemistry promises to get close to the maximum for the main events of the season.



What are your thoughts on competing with the Japanese national artistic team at the Tokyo Olympics 2020?

It will be challenging. Japan is stronger in team events than in the duet. Yukiko Inui, who had to compete against Anna Voloshina, is still in the Japanese team, although her duet partners have changed four times already. If there is rivalry for a medal with the Japanese it will be incredible.

“Life as an athlete gives me constant tests”

Who introduced you to sports, and at what age did you start to practise? How did you get into artistic swimming? When did you realise that this was your kind of sport?

My parents were looking for an activity, mainly dancing, and one day passing by the pool we saw an advertisement on artistic swimming groups for kids. At seven years of age I had begun to train – it happened suddenly but there was no sort of feeling that ‘this sport is mine’. At some point I was chosen as a solo performer in the youth team, and then it continued. Also, in pre-school age, I was engaged in ballroom dancing, but I did not like it. Then we just went for a swim and eventually I started artistic swimming. Back in the day my parents and I did not know anything about artistic swimming.

The duet of Fiedina and Savchuk offered something special at the World Championships

How many hours per day do you practise? Is there any time left for social life or privacy?

We train from 7am to 3pm every day, but before the main events we practise an additional hour and a half more each day. We have shortened workouts on Wednesday and Saturday, and Sunday is a day off. Juniors have a slightly different schedule, as they go to school. Of course, I have a personal life, I’m married. I met my husband in the park in my hometown, the city of Kharkiv. Training does not interfere with my personal life that much. He is also an athlete and thoroughly understands the specifics of sports and the nuances of sports life.

How difficult is it to be in the national artistic swimming team? What challenges did you experience?

Life in artistic swimming continually presents me with various kinds of surprises. In the youth team I was a solo performer and I fought for a place. When I got into the national team after the retirement of Anna Voloshina, there was competition for the solo programme performer and that time Yelizaveta Yakhno was chosen. After that we had to compete for an Olympic duet spot and there was also an internal test for the opportunity to represent Team Ukraine in the Olympic

women’s duet. After that, before the Olympic Games in Rio 2016, I was out of the team for half a year due to weight issues, as a result of which I indeed lost weight and returned. In the Olympic year the team rules are unusually strict, and even minor changes can entail different types of ‘punishments’. In general, life as an athlete gives me constant tests throughout my career.

“We try to smooth out any situation”

What is it like to work as part of a women’s team? What do you like and what is a challenge?

We have never worked in male or mixed groups to understand how that goes. Yes, we have one male coach, a doctor, and also one masseur. I think that in the women’s team it is necessary to continually adapt to each other if something is wrong since each of us has her mood, the nuances of her personal life. But everyone understands this, and we try to smooth out any situation as much as possible. We had a male athlete, Anton Timofeev, who performed in a mixed duet. After a long pause he ended his career after an event in London and did not return, so now no man is training with us. Previously it was a rarity to find men in artistic swimming, but now coaches look to select children from the very beginning since this type of programme has begun to develop actively.

What are your hobbies? What do you like to do outside sport?

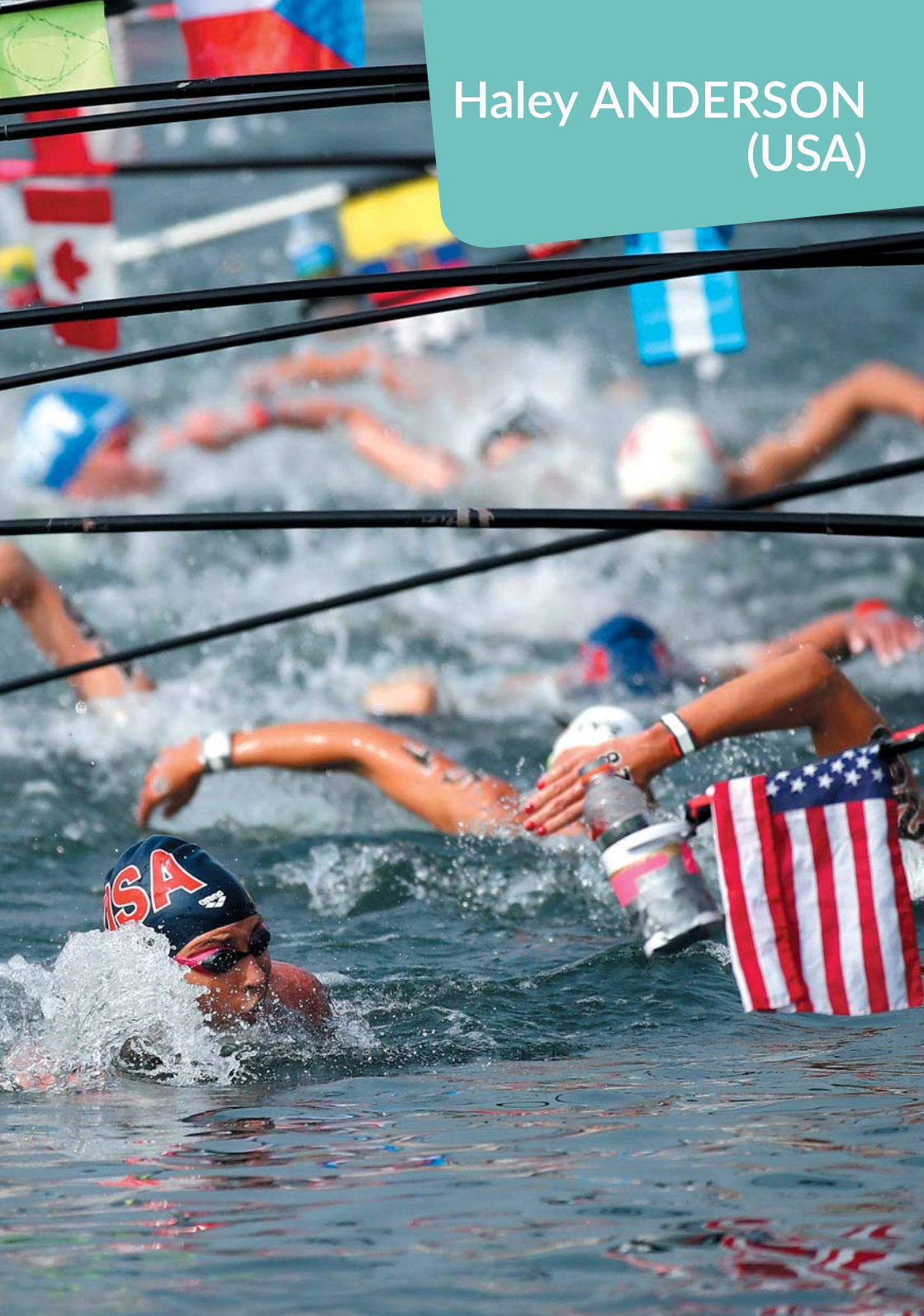
I’m studying to be a psychologist and also a master in physical education. When I started to work in a women’s team I realised that it was so interesting to understand the psychology of different people, how a person reacts, but there is not enough time to really go into the details of that. Also, I try to read on the plane when we fly somewhere with the team. And of course I’m trying not to forget about my parents. In addition to all this, I like to cook; I have pets – a dog and two cats. I love animals.

Where do you see yourself after your career ends?

Most likely, a coach, but I do not see myself here in Ukraine. I will see later and more clearly, closer to the retirement of my career: maybe even after the Olympics in Tokyo 2020, or I’ll take a break for at least half a year and think about my future. In general, it is too early to think about it yet. I am saving all thoughts and all energy for the upcoming season. ■



Haley ANDERSON
(USA)



By Aimee BERG
FINA Aquatics World
Magazine
Correspondent
(USA)



Haley ANDERSON
(USA)

“I’ve always been really tough”

A top-10 finish at the World Championships. That’s all she needed to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Instead, Haley Anderson chased – and captured – the silver medal in the women’s open water 10km in Gwangju this summer. And when she did, the California native qualified for her third consecutive Olympic Games in open water – just the fourth woman in history to do so.

Anderson has come a long way since 2012 when she made her first Olympic team as a 20-year-old college student at the University of Southern California. Eight days before her Olympic debut, Haley’s older sister, Alyssa, won an Olympic gold medal in the pool by swimming in the heats of the US 4x200m free relay. At the time, Haley was at a pre-Olympic training camp in Canada and watched Alyssa’s performance on TV. But when Haley jumped into the Serpentine in Hyde Park for the 10km in London, her family was in the stands. On the final lap of the two-hour race, Haley sped up and nearly caught the leader, but her move came too late and she lost to Eva Risztov of Hungary by four-tenths of a second, taking silver.

Motivated by that slim margin, Anderson competed at the 2016 Rio Olympics four years later, only to place fifth.

“I’m not happy – and I was never happy – with that finish,” Anderson said of her Rio result. *“I put a lot of pressure on myself beforehand. I’m very rational and I know that no one else puts pressure on me. It’s all coming from myself. But that doesn’t make it easier. I want to be really good, and sometimes it’s overwhelming. I think that’s what happened in Rio. I overwhelmed myself. I’ve always handled stress pretty well but I don’t think I handled it well that year.”*

Now, as Anderson approaches Tokyo, the 28-year-old continues to train at USC with the same coaches as she has for the past decade: Dave Salo and Catherine Kase.

In October, she spoke by phone with FINA Magazine to look back on her career and look ahead to her third Games.

“I try to push myself”

What are you doing differently to train for Tokyo than you did for London and Rio?

I’ve been in the same programme for 10 years, it’s worked and I enjoy it, but you can’t do the exact same things and expect different results. Both Dave and Catherine are really good at making things different so I’m not bored out of my mind in the pool – and you don’t find that in many places. Also, being around the college scene, you always get freshmen that have spunk and energy at 6 a.m. Those people make it really enjoyable. They bring new energy to the group every year.

Over three Olympic quads, has your mileage increased, decreased or stayed the same?

Photo: HANNIBAL HANSCHKE / REUTERS



I don't count my miles. I like to race. If there's someone next to me, I will race them. This year, we don't have another girl distance swimmer, so I'm with the boys like Victor Johansson [who set Swedish national records in 800m and 1500m at the 2017 FINA World Championships], Ous Mellouli [of Tunisia, the 2012 Olympic champion in 10km and twice an Olympic medallist in the 1500m freestyle] and some American college boys. Even though they're beating me, I try to keep up. I try to push myself. I think, 'How hard can I push myself today?' Some people think they need to be at 100% to have a good practice. I think you just need to give 100% of whatever you have. Am I feeling 80%? Well, how well can I push that 80%? Even if you're not at 100%, you need to give what you have.

How much of your training do you do in the pool compared to open water?

Ninety-nine per cent of my training is in the pool. It's easier to calculate how fast you're going and keep track of progress throughout the season. But if I have a race coming up in salt water, warm water or cold water, I'll try to acclimate as best as I can.

In 2020, the only Olympic open water race will be a 10km, just like every other Olympics since the event's debut in 2008 Beijing. Do you prefer the 10km or would you rather have other distances?

I would love to have the 5km and the 5km mixed relay. If you already have the venue, why not? I think it adds excitement. I think open water would be taken more seriously

if there were more events. Right now, I feel like pool swimmers don't take open water seriously. They see it as an ugly stepchild of swimming. I wish people cared about our event more. When they understand it, they are in awe, but until then, no one cares.

**“Don't count again!
Just go!”**

Let's go back to the 2019 World Championships for a minute. In Gwangju, you took silver in the 10km, but you didn't have to. Did you intend to win the world title? Or were you just trying to qualify for Tokyo and happened to have a great day?



Always in the elite, always close to the top – and sometimes at the very top at major events: Haley Anderson's tale seems to be a never-ending story

ONE STAR, ONE DISCIPLINE

I was definitely gunning for the podium because in 2015, at the World Championships before Rio, my mindset was to get Top 10 and I think it kind of backfired. In 2015, I thought, 'It's your first 10km at World Championships.' Even though I swam it at the 2012 Olympics, I hadn't swam it at Worlds and 10km at Worlds is a lot different. It's a different field, it's bigger, it's crazier. So in '15, I barely scraped in. I [qualified] ninth. So this time, I was like, 'You've learned a lot over the past few years, you're in a much better position,' so I definitely was gunning for a podium spot.

The 2019 finish was close, though, wasn't it?

It was one of the craziest races I've ever been in. You know how swimmers are all about feel? They're always like, 'Oh, I don't feel good in the water.' And coaches always say, 'Don't worry about feel. Save the feelings for your boyfriend.' They love to say that. Well, at no point in that race did I feel good, but this time, I thought, 'It doesn't matter. When you need to go, go! You never know what can happen.' I think it helped that I wasn't emotional. I was steady and even-keeled. Coming into the last lap, though, I was freaking out because I was trying to count how many people were ahead of me. Then I was like: 'No! We're not doing this again.' This happened before Rio. In 2015, going into the last lap, people slowly passed me one by one. I remember counting. Okay, now I'm fourth. Oh shoot, now I'm sixth. So this time, I was like, 'Don't count again! Just go! Give everything you have!' Then, at the last 800, there were like 10 of us straight across the water in a line and it was a free-for-all. A bunch of girls were getting scrappy. So the last 500 metres, I took my own line and made sure I wasn't around anybody that would just want to fight. I thought, 'Just get some clean water and go for it.' I did, and it worked!

I know you were unexpectedly introduced to open water swimming when you were in college and you were immediately successful. Do you want to re-tell that story a little bit?

Catherine [Kase] suggested it. She said, 'Your stroke would be good for open water.' I was like, 'What does that mean? I have a very ugly stroke.' I'm a brute-force type of person. My older sister made everything look very graceful. I make everything look very hard. But I think Catherine also thought I had the temperament and the slight craziness that you need to be an open water swimmer. So I did a little camp in the US, an open water select camp. In 2010, I competed in open water nationals for the first time and managed to qualify for the 25km at the

World Championships in Canada. So my second-ever race was a 25km. That summer, while training for it, Catherine kept telling me the whole time, 'It won't be that bad. Don't worry. It's not that bad.' And afterwards I was like, 'It's not that BAD? Not that BAD? You psycho! IT WAS that bad! It was awful!'

So what kept you from quitting?

Having the American flag on my cap. I was like, 'I cannot get out!' I have to finish.

How did you do?

Fourth place. But I don't tell people that only nine people finished.

Have you raced a 25km since then?

I was supposed to do it at the 2011 Worlds in Shanghai, but I pulled out and didn't start.

“One time someone asked me if I was a really big Olympic fan”

You mentioned your older sister, Alyssa, who retired after winning gold at the 2012 Olympics, but both of your sisters were excellent swimmers. Any chance we'll see the younger one in Tokyo, too?

Alyssa and I swam 2008 and 2012 US Olympic trials together [in the pool, competing in four of the same events in '08 and one same event in '12]. After Alyssa retired in 2012, I got to swim the 2016 US Olympic Trials with my little sister, Jordan. It was fun to be around for her career as well. She made the 2016 Trials in the 400 IM. She swam for the University of Utah, graduated this year and is done swimming.

Were the three of you furiously competitive with each other?

All three of us kind of overlapped in events but we all had different best events. I was definitely more long distance. Alyssa was definitely more 200 free

and fly and 400 free. Actually, she could swim anything she wanted to; she's that talented and that annoying. She also had a really good mile, but she wanted to swim other events. Her coach was like, 'If you want to swim something else, get better at it.' So her 200 got really good because she didn't want to swim the mile anymore.

I noticed that you have the Olympic rings tattooed inside your left wrist. How did you decide to put it there? And what kind of response does it get away from the pool?

I like having it on my wrist because it was a little different from what everybody else was doing. I don't mind when people see it, but sometimes it makes me feel awkward. One time someone asked me if I



Happiness with a silver lining:

Haley, just moments after finishing second in the 10km at the World Championships in Yeosu in South Korea this summer

was a really big Olympic fan. I was like, 'Yes! Huge fan! I love watching!' Someone else was like, 'What do those circles mean?' I was like, 'Whoa!' It's been in my life for so long and I always watched the Olympics, growing up. Most people get it but a handful of people don't.

Has anyone ever guessed the wrong event and said, 'Oh! I saw you in equestrian or curling?'

I'm 5-foot-10 (178 cm) and I have a lot of tall friends, so people guess volleyball sometimes – maybe because I'm a little blonder, too. I've heard soccer, too.

"I never win by a mile"

You often say that open water swimming is probably more mental than physical. Do you do any mental training?

In a two-hour 10km race, it can be a roller-coaster ride. One minute you'll feel like, 'Oh my God, I can sprint away with this right now,' and five minutes later, you can be in the back of the pack like, 'Oh, now I don't feel good.' During a race, I'm always talking to myself, trying to be as calm as possible. But no, I've never done any formal [mental] training. I've always been really tough. And I'm always turning everything into a positive during a race, like, 'Oh, that wasn't a bad decision. It got you here!' Even in practice, I'm good at seeing things as positive instead negative.

What do you like to think about before a race?

A lot of sprinters get super-hyped – which is good for them, but different events are so different. People ask me, 'What's your game face?' And I'm like, 'I don't have one because I'm doing a two-hour race and that's serious enough. I do not need to think about it one second longer.' So I'm not being super-serious. Some people are super-peppy, but I'm not the peppiest. I don't listen to music. If I'm listening to music, it means I'm thinking and being in my own head, and I don't want to be in my own head. I just want to hang out.

During a race what are you known for? Finishing speed? Underwater combat? Rapid stroke rate?

I don't know what I'm known for. I think I have certain strengths but I don't know what other people think of me. I think I have a good finish. I think I have speed because I have a decent 400 and 800 time. I think I have good finishing speed if I have clean water or if I feel like I'm in a good position. My races always come down to the finish. I never win by a mile.

Do you like to surge?

No, not particularly. I like to make sure I'm in a good position, so if that means I need to move up a few more spaces then yeah, but it's more just staying relaxed.

Do you have any rivals?

There's a core group of girls who are always competitive. They make everyone better. It is fun to race them, and I like to make sure I race them throughout the year before World Championships or the Olympics.

Like who?



Photo: CHUNG SUNG-JUN / GETTY IMAGES

Touching the panel and booking an Olympic spot once again: in Tokyo she'll become the fourth female open water swimmer to race at three Olympics



I love racing Ana Marcela [Cunha of Brazil]. I like racing the two Italians Ariana [Bridi] and Rachele [Bruni]. Some of the French girls are good. But open water swimming really depends on the day. Some people are very consistent, but you never know who will win. It's not like pool swimming when you have a time and you kind of know who will win if they hit their best time.

"I don't like to be too rigid"

Open water races often seem to come down to the last lap. Do you tend to go in with the same strategy as everyone else?

Everyone has their own race plan, but you have to be really flexible in open water. You can't be like: I need to lead this lap and I need to be in a certain place on that lap. You're not going to get your way in open water, most of the time. So I don't like to be too rigid. For me, it's more about setting up for a good finish, making sure I'm in a good position, and staying comfortable. Otherwise, you'll freak out a bit more if you need things to be a certain way.

Of all the coaches, team-mates and competitors in your career, who have you learned the most from? And what have you learned?

Photo: CHUNG SUNG-JUN / GETTY IMAGES

I feel like I still learn in every race, and not necessarily from somebody else. You can learn from yourself.

In open water, I feel like everyone kind of takes their own path. Everyone has their own way of doing things. I feel like I still learn in every race, and not necessarily from somebody else. You can learn from yourself. You learn how to deal with situations. If I race poorly – or even if I have a good race – there are still things I can improve, which is what makes open water so fun. I don't think I've ever had a perfect race. I don't think I ever will have a perfect race.

Can you think of a particular race in which you learned the most about yourself? If so, what were the lessons? I'm really good at forgetting bad practices or bad races. I don't like to dwell on things as an athlete. But I do remember things I need to work on. I remember this race in

Doha [in February], I'm very competitive, but something was missing. I ended up fourth [behind Cunha, Kareena Lee of Australia and Bruni]. In my mind, I was like, 'I'm going to get fourth and it's okay.' I knew I could have finished better. I made mistakes at the end, by committing to a certain line or not committing to any line. At the finish, I was all over the place. In the last 800 metres, I was over here, over there. Next time, I just need to commit and go for it.

In your career, what has been your highest high or lowest low?

There have been lots of highs and definitely some lows, like when I almost didn't make the national team in 2013, my first year as a pro, right after the 2012 Olympics. I graduated from USC in 2013 and I thought my first pro summer was going to be so glamorous and fun. No, it's actually harder than I thought. [Even though I had the Olympic silver medal in the 10km] I didn't qualify for the World Championship 10km. I got eighth at our nationals in 10km. So to make the national team I had to come back two days later and win the 5km. I did, and I also ended up winning the 5km at Worlds that summer, so it was about teaching myself how to bounce back and not over-thinking. No one really tells you that being a professional athlete isn't glamorous. It looks glamorous, but it's not. ■

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Bronwen KNOX (AUS)



By Russell
McKINNON
Editor from Oceania,
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Bronwen KNOX (AUS)

“I refuse to be told I can’t do something”

Winning Olympic gold is something youngsters dream about when they first dip their toes in the water. It’s something that older people still aspire to, especially when the top step of Olympism has never been attained. The desire is finite and the will to succeed never tarnishes, especially when someone has been so close for so long. Aussie Stinger Bronwen Knox is one such person.

Twice an Olympic bronze medallist, once a World Cup winner, twice a losing finalist at FINA World Championships and three times silver medallist at FINA World League Super Finals level, she still aspires to gracing the top step when the Olympic medals are handed out in Tokyo next year. If she is selected, it will be her fourth Olympic Games.



Bronwen's career reads like a who's who of someone famous – which she is. With 16 major medals from an international career spanning an incredible 15 years, Bronwen is still making her mark, and not just as an occasional player off the bench.

Her career has included overseas stints with club teams, winning the LEN Trophy with Olympiacos in 2013-14, collecting bronze in the Greek League with Ethnikos in 2008/09 and time with Hartwick College in the USA in 2005-06.

After years spent in the Australian National Water Polo League, she finally collected gold with Queensland Thunder in 2018. Previously, with Queensland Breakers, she secured two silvers and two bronzes.

She is still punching in goals and making a difference to a defiant Stingers team that has promised so much and delivered not so many of the golds expected during the United States of America-dominated era of the women's game.

Bronwen rates as one of the better players of her generation and her resilience, strength, speed, skills and agility make her one of the best centre-forward/centre-back players in the world.

Testament to her durability is the 384 international caps she has amassed –

probably more than anyone else in history – and certainly more than her nearest rival in Australia, fellow Olympic bronze medallist Mel Rippon (312), the only other Australian player to top 300 matches played.

“I am level-headed in most pressured situations”

Knox's first contact with the sport was as a 14-year-old making the 12-hour journey south from Queensland with her family to attend the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

“I remember watching the women's team win their semi-final on TV and I was straight on the phone hoping to get tickets to the final. Being an avid swimmer, I was intrigued by the sport. Although I didn't know the rules, and had never seen a game live, I knew I wanted to be in that stadium.”

“Swimming had always been my Olympic dream – I grew up watching the greats, such as Kieren Perkins, Susie O'Neill, Michael Klim and Leisel Jones, just to name a few. It took me a few more years before I fully committed to the sport of water polo. I eventually made

the switch and started training for water polo when I was 16 years old.

“Water polo wasn't officially offered at my school for girls, but there was a boys' programme, so I joined the boys' team, playing against the boys' schools around Brisbane.

“I also joined a club (North Brisbane Polo Bears) and played in the local club competition. Since making the move at 16 I have never looked back. I've had an amazing career, plenty of opportunities around the world and have made some amazing friends,” she said.

As a youngster, Bronwen had speed at her fingertips and could move well in the water.

“I still remember my first club game; the coach saying ‘just swim the ball the way the ref is pointing all the way into the goals’. I learned more rules with every game that I played. Eventually I learned the positions and seemed to find an affinity with the position of centre back.

“I was tall and long and this seemed to help my development in the sport. I think the skill I had the most trouble with was passing and shooting, being one of the weaker shooters growing up. And, if my memory serves me, I believe the one lesson I ever failed at school was where we learned treading water or eggbeater kick.

Photo: LASZLO BALOGH / REUTERS



Keeping an eye on the ball, the field, team-mates and opponents: Bronwen is the brain of the Aussie team.



"I'm patient, yet stubborn, and I believe these attributes have suited me well in my development. Stubborn in that I refuse to be told I can't do something. This attribute helped me see past disappointments and setbacks and be able to work out how I could get better and improve, constantly building my resilience in the sport.

"Patience in that I am level-headed in most pressured situations and can break down complex problems into smaller steps," she said.

"Then the enormity of the situation hit me"

Asked if she could remember her first international match, she replied:

"I don't remember my first international match very well at all. I know that it was in 2005 against New Zealand in Canberra, where there were 18 girls vying for three spots in the upcoming national women's tour in the lead-up to the Montreal World Championships.

"Having only really spent two years training in the sport, I didn't know any of the senior girls very well and had no expectation that I was moving forward.

"I remember being called into the coach's office after the last test match and being told that I was going to take one of those spots. I

remember being so ecstatic with making the team, and then the enormity of the situation hit me. I was going away with the national team and I had barely met all the girls in the team. I was nervous to say the least. I had never heard of the FINA World Championships and had no idea what I was walking in to."

Racing forward to 2019, 14 years later, and Bronwen recalls what it was like playing her most recent – and 384th:

"It was bittersweet playing my last match in Gwangju. It was a tough match against a fierce competitor, Hungary, with a nail-biting finish. It was fantastic to walk away with the bronze medal, having had a contentious year within Australian Water Polo – with leadership changes and not knowing where the programme was heading next.

"But I was so proud to be there with some girls I have played with for a majority of my career and some who were at their first World Championships. We work together as a team and were awarded with the bronze at the end of it."

Walking off the World Championship stage in the knowledge that it could possibly, probably, be her last, was emotional.

"I've now played seven World Championships, only missing 2017. I remember standing on the podium next to Rowie Webster and had one of those rare moments where we knew what the other was thinking and we were glad we were there together, side by side. The camaraderie is something I love about team sports and this moment highlighted this aspect yet again."

"My nerves were at an all-time high"

There have been plenty of highs and lows in her long career.

"My first Olympic Games in Beijing was an incredible, emotional highlight. It was a tough road getting there, being selected in the squad and then surviving cut after cut until the final team was named. And then things got harder – preparing for the Games, trying to understand what it was going to be like.

"It's an overwhelming experience from start to finish, eclipsing the two weeks that the Olympic goes for. There is little time to switch off. You see others achieve their dreams, but more often than not you see those who walk away disappointed.

"It was a tough two weeks, ending with overtime and a penalty shootout versus Hungary. I remember stepping up to take my penalty after seeing the first two shooters miss their shots. My nerves were at an all-time high. Taking a long deep breath as I swam out to the 5m line, I readied for my shot. After that everything was a blur."

Hungary had also missed one of its first two attempts and Bronwen levelled at 10-10. Kate Gynther took the team 11-10 ahead after Mercedes Stieber missed and Mia Santoromito went to 12-11. Rita Dravucz then bounced her ball into the outstretched arm of Aussie goalkeeper Emma Knox, who deflected for the bronze medal.



Photo: ANTONIO BRONIC / REUTERS

Back on the podium: the bronze at the World Championships in Gwangju will boost Australian confidence on the way to Tokyo

"I knew I wanted to take a break to get other areas of my life together and I knew that I then wanted to get fit before I made any decisions. If I was going to walk away from a sport I love, being challenged by the best of the best, I wanted to know that I was done."

"So I decided to get fit and make myself available for camps and World League in 2018, continuing to build throughout the year with the Super Final and eventually the World Cup. I knew that if I enjoyed the year – it being longer than our normal international seasons – then I knew I wasn't done with the sport. Here I am about eight months out from Tokyo in the midst of tough training regimes and selections."

"I have developed a reasonable understanding of the game"

With Tokyo so close and already being one of the most capped players in women's water polo history, Bronwen tried to explain what makes her one of the best.

"I'm not sure that there is anything that sets me apart. I think I have been lucky in surrounding myself with a great team that helps me day in and day out to get through the ups and downs that is sport – the coaches, support staff, the medical team, science and administration staff who all step up and answer my questions, deal with me hounding them about training, scheduling or treatment."

"My family has been another huge support. I come from a large family, being one of five kids. While we are all spread out in different cities or countries, they are the first to be by my side cheering me on. Without these support networks there is no way I would have continued in the sport."

"It is a shame that our sport of water polo does not allow for us to solely make a career out of playing. In order to play year after year, I have had to rely constantly and build my networks of support. The credit goes solely to these support networks that I keep returning game after game."

She began her career as a centre back, a position that she moulded into seamlessly.

It was not all sweet at the penalty-throw line.

"In stark contrast, one of my biggest lows was missing my penalty attempt in the Rio Olympics quarter-final play-offs against Hungary. I still remember the sinking feeling of letting my team and the Australian water polo community down. I remember the sound of the ball hitting the inside bar and seeing the ball rebound out of the goals."

"It is still hard to describe everything that follows this game. While I have experienced disappointments in my sporting career, I've lost games, missed out on medals, been dropped from teams and have played poorly. But this loss was one that hit the hardest."

"Then I knew I wasn't done with the sport"

Hard times lead to hard decisions and the hardest came after her third Olympic Games, in Rio de Janeiro 2016.

"After a disappointing performance in Rio, where we finished sixth, I needed some time to get the other aspects of my life in order. Vying for Olympic glory often comes with sacrificing other areas of your life. I also was lacking in my love for the sport and needed to take some time to rediscover this. I had just started law school and wanted to



"I had never planned on a fourth, I had barely planned on a third, but after Rio I didn't want to walk away being disappointed or scared of future failures."

explore this career path and see if it was for me.

"I like to refer to it as my 'gap year' – my year of professional exploration and development. I took time for my studies. I spent six weeks in Indonesia working for an NGO; I networked wherever and whenever I could with past athletes to see how their end-of-sporting career transitioned worked. I was amazed to see how many athletes, across multiple sports, suffered post their retirement. It became important to me to make sure my path transitioning out of elite sport was as supported as I could make it."

"It wasn't until last year that I decided to work towards being selected for my fourth Olympics. I had never planned on a fourth, I had barely planned on a third, but after Rio I didn't want to walk away being disappointed or scared of future failures."



Fourteen years after playing in her first FINA competition, she is ready for the next big challenge in 2020

Photo: CHRIS HYDE / GETTY IMAGES

"It came naturally to me. Being a control freak, I naturally enjoyed being in control of our defence, working with the goalkeepers to set the tone and pace of what we wanted to play as a team. I spent years refining my skills and understanding of the game from this position; learning the weaknesses, what teams like to play and how we can force them to play outside of their comfort zone.

"I like to think that I am a level-headed player and bring patience and control to the game – starting in our defence and transferring it into our attack. However, I believe that I have developed a reasonable understanding of the game and can adapt to playing most positions. This allows me the freedom and versatility to move about the pool."

"I took ownership and control"

Her first major FINA competition was the 2006 World Cup in Tianjin, China, where Australia beat Italy for the gold medal.

"I think the single most important match in my career was the first game at the 2006 World Cup. By that stage in my sporting career I knew that I wanted to excel, I wanted to be a part of the national programme and contribute.

"That year our defence was suffering and in preparation for the game I sat down with the coaching staff and discussed how, as a centre back, I wanted to run the defence. It was the first step to me finding my voice and spot in the team. I took ownership and control. Lining up before the game, it was the first time I had a hand in making the decision on how we were going to approach our defence.

"This game gave me confidence in my ability to read and play the game. It made me accountable and raised the stakes of the game entirely."

There is life away from the pool and Bronwen enjoys nothing better than catching up with friends or family over some great food and good coffee.

Then there is the future – after playing water polo.

"Having recently completed my law degree, I am currently working towards my admission to the profession. I am also currently working with a private girls' school in Brisbane to develop their water polo programme at a junior level. I am also working with the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority in

their education sector – informing other athletes of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to keeping integrity in sport and keeping it clean and fair.

"Also, I have been working with the International Women's Forum in conjunction with Ernst Young (professional services firm) as a part of the Women Athletes' Business Network mentoring programme. This is a year-long programme that selects 25 female athletes worldwide for a high-touch mentoring and training experience."

Bronwen has one final thought on the state of women's water polo.

"Women's water polo is in an interesting flux at the moment. The USA has had a strong hold over the past few years or so, but every other team is pushing closer and closer.

"In earlier years there was a greater divide between teams; now there are about nine-ten teams that are separated by a goal. And on any given day either team could come out the victor. It's exciting!

"The recent rule changes have picked up the pace of the game for the most part. While their implementation is still being ironed out, I believe they will add pace and excitement to the sport. I am interested to see how the rule of 11 players (for the Olympics) will be utilised by teams. This rule hasn't really been trialled enough to know exactly how teams will attack this," she concluded. ■

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TOKYO 2020

A close-up photograph of a swimmer in a black and white swimsuit splashing in blue water. The swimmer's face is partially visible, with water splashing around their head. The background is a blurred red and blue. The text 'TOKYO 2020' is overlaid in white at the top.

Photo: EVGENIA NOVOZHENINA / REUTERS



TOKYO 2020



Photo: GETTY IMAGES



By Tomoaki
TASAKA
FINA Aquatics World
Magazine
Correspondent
(JPN)



Olympic Games, Tokyo 2020

State of play with nine months to go

More than half a century on, Tokyo, the first Asian city to stage the Olympics back in 1964, will be hosts for the second time. The decision by the International Olympic Committee General Assembly in Buenos Aires in 2013 to bring the Olympics and Paralympics to Tokyo in 2020 was great news for Japan and its people.



In 1964 all Japan had expected their swimmers to win many medals, but the result was just a lone bronze in the men's 4x200m medley relay. Nonetheless, this resulted in the creation of swimming clubs throughout Japan and led to the achievement of two gold medals in 1972 – Nobutaka Taguchi in the men's 100m breaststroke and Mayumi Aoki in the women's 100m butterfly.

And it was not only swimming. The Sport for All movement, which went global in the 1970s, was also slightly delayed but spread throughout Japan after the Tokyo Olympics.

In 2013, the Inter College Swimming Championships were held in Japan on the day the Olympics were allocated to Tokyo. The announcement was a tremendous boost to swimmers all over Japan. National swimming team manager Norimasa Hirai and Olympic medallist Kosuke Hagino spread the words of joy. Participation in the Tokyo Olympics became a treasured dream for Japanese swimmers.

Aquatics Centre for 15,000 spectators

The Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic Games Organising Committee (OC) was formed in January 2014, with Yoshiro Mori as chairman. There were various problems but the committee overcame

them one by one and preparations are progressing steadily.

Construction started in March 2016 at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, where swimming, artistic swimming and diving will be held. It has been decided that the water polo competition will take place in the Tokyo Tatsumi International Swimming Pool, where many swimming competitions are still held. In addition, Odaiba Seaside Park, a bustling tourist destination in Tokyo, was selected as the marathon swimming venue.

The Tokyo Aquatics Centre will be the largest venue in Japan, accommodating 15,000 people. After the Olympics are over, it will be operated as a swimming venue with a capacity of 5,000.

The Tokyo Tatsumi International Swimming Centre is now a special place for junior swimmers in Japan, but after the Olympics the Tokyo Aquatics Centre will be the new hub for home swimmers and most competitions will be staged there.

Special methods have been adopted to facilitate the construction of the new complex. The roof was made first, so that the weather did not affect the construction schedule, enabling the interior to be built at the same time as gradually lifting it, from May 2018. Under this method, construction will not stop under any weather conditions. The foundations of the main pool and the diving pool have al-

ready been completed. The whole project will be completed in March 2020.

As well as the Aquatics Centre, preparations are also underway for the Tokyo Tatsumi International Swimming Pool and Odaiba Seaside Park. We are preparing to have an 'Omotenashi' and welcome athletes from all over the world.

Medals from everyone's metal

Preparations to run the swimming event smoothly are also in full gear, according to Kihō Abe, the OC Aquatics Sports Manager and vice-president of the Japan Swimming Federation.

Mr. Abe said that he had been working towards meeting the level of operation needed to meet Olympic standards. "We have annually organised the swimming World Cup and use it now to improve the operation level. It will be the 10th edition this year. The timing is also adopted, Omega; we were able to achieve the international convention standard. I heard that members of the FINA committee were very pleased," he said.

Japan has also staged major international events in other aquatic disciplines. In diving, Tokyo hosted FINA World Series legs last year and this year. Artistic swimmers will compete in the third edition of a World Series stage this year. In open water, last year's Japan Na-



tional Championships were positioned as an Olympic Test Event , and another test event was staged in open water swimming, which showed that in case of extreme heat a really careful scheduling of the 10km marathon races needs to be considered.

“At the same time as hosting each event, we also held training courses for the competition officials and focused on developing international referees. I felt that the level of the judges as well as the administration has become very high thanks to that,” he said.

The training of the international referees also involves past Japanese Olympians, such as Fumie Kurotori, Pan-Pacific women’s 400m individual medley champion in 1995 and a member of the Japanese team at the 1996 Atlanta Games. The Olympics and Paralympic Games Organising Committee also involves past Olympians, including Hanae Ito, Pan-Pacific women’s 100m backstroke champion in 2006.

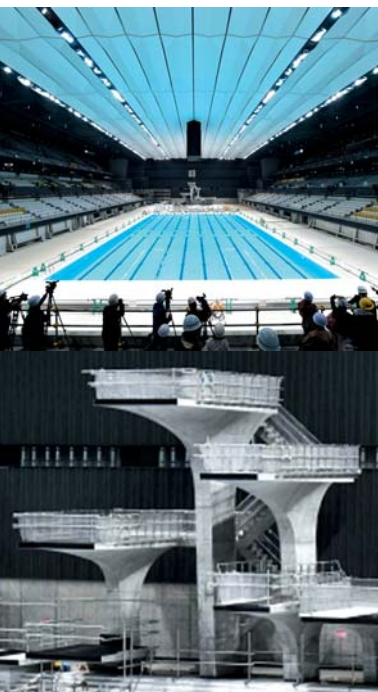
Events leading up to the Games include the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Flag Tour, launched in September 2016, with many Olympic swimmers participating. They include Takeshi Matsuda, Olympic 200m butterfly bronze medalist in Beijing 2008 and London 2012; Takahiro Fujimoto, who competed in Seoul 1988 and Barcelona 1992 and is now an actor; Mai Nakamura, silver medalist in the 100m backstroke at Sydney 2000; Masami Tanaka, a breast-



stroke swimmer at three Olympics (1996, 2000 and 2004); Tomoki Morita, bronze medallist in the 100m backstroke at the 2004 Athens Olympics; Junichi Miyashita, a member of the men's bronze medal 4x100m medley relay in Beijing 2008.

Tsuyoshi Yanagidate, Deputy Executive Director of Games Operations and Venue General Manager of the OC, said: "I heard that the people in the area who did the flag tour were getting excited. Above all, the children were very pleased. The children participated in the event with athletes whom they usually watch on TV and it seems that this kind of interaction was a good experience for the young ones. It was a very steady activity, and with this flag tour, a lot of areas were involved. We believe that we were able to achieve a certain level of results because it was an event we were doing for the purpose." Mr. Yanagidate added that he was happy with the children's delight.

Olympic fever has already reached unbelievable heights in Tokyo: promotion of swimming seems to have reached a new dimension (top left) - the new aquatic complex will be a state-of-the-art facility (bottom left) - the Olympic mascots are already popular, while the countdown clock today shows significantly fewer days to go than in the photo entering the last year of preparations (right)



And thanks to the cooperation of everyone in Japan we received enough material so it will be possible to create the approximately 5,000 medals from 100% recycled metal.



Photos: GETTY IMAGES

Best performance in the best environment

Fifty-five years have passed since the Tokyo Olympics which thrilled all Japan. Now it is little more than nine months to go to the start in 2020 and all the work is progressing well, including that related to the aquatic disciplines.

"Our mission is to create the best environment for the athletes coming to the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. We believe that the Tokyo Aquatics Centre will be a venue where they can achieve the best performance," Mr. Abe said.



Another interesting element is an innovative project for the medals. Olympic medals are the greatest honour for the athletes, the dearest treasure in their collections. In Tokyo a great project has been launched to prepare the medals of the Olympic and Paralympic Games from recycled metal. Tatsuo Ogura, a member of the OC international public relations team, said: "We started this project under the title 'Everyone's medal project'. We received used mobile phones and small household appliances from all over Japan. The project ended in March this year. And thanks to the cooperation of everyone in Japan we received enough material so it will be possible to create the approximately 5,000 medals from 100% recycled metal."

The organisers are also working to ensure the audience enjoy all the aquatic competitions in swimming, diving, artistic swimming, water polo, marathon swimming and high diving.

Again, Mr. Abe talked about the role of swimming competition in the Olympics: "Japan is a small island country from the world's point of view. However, swimming is one of the most vibrant sports in Japan. There are also many swimming pools for children to adults, and there are also many swimming fans. We hope that people who will come to Japan from all over the world will be able to say that swimming is an Olympic star sport, and we will continue to prepare for this, I'm absolutely sure." ■

ROAD TO TOKYO

Qualification landscape in five disciplines

Who will be the 1,410 happy Olympians?

The year before the Olympic Games has already paramount importance as several quotas were up for grabs at the FINA World Championships and a series of qualification events will be held in the five continents. A total of 1,410 athletes can take part in five aquatic disciplines at the Games. In this article we will have a look at the landscape before the Olympic year begins.

Before we start our tour of the disciplines, let's go through how the numbers are divided up: Swimming 878; Marathon Swimming 50 (25 men, 25 women); Diving 136 (68 men, 68 women); Artistic Swimming 104 (women only); Water Polo 242 (132 men, 110 women).

SWIMMING

As usual, Standard Entry Times of two types have been established: an "Olympic Qualifying Time" (OQT) and a "FINA/Olympic Selection Time", of which the "FINA/Olympic Selection Time" is easier to achieve. Standard entry times can be achieved only in competitions approved for that purpose by FINA.

Maybe it's not common knowledge that these times are not the outcome of lengthy meetings – the Olympic Qualifying Time is the result of the 16th-placed semi-finalist in each event swum at the Rio Olympics.

Olympic Qualifying Time (OQT)

For each individual event at the Olympic Games, each National Federation/NOC may enter a maximum of two competitors. To enter two swimmers in the same event, both swimmers must

have achieved the Olympic Qualifying Time. To enter one swimmer in an event, the competitor must have achieved at least the OQT or must have achieved the FINA/Olympic Selection Time, and be invited by FINA to compete.

Swimmers who achieve the Olympic Qualifying Time in one or more individual events are automatically qualified to participate in the Olympic Games.

Olympic Selection Time (OST)

After determining the number of swimmers who have achieved the Olympic Qualifying Time, the number of swimmers entered in relays and the number of swimmers of National Federations/NOCs who have not achieved either Standard Entry Time, swimmers with the FINA/Olympic Selection Times may be invited. The number of invitations will be determined by the athlete quota/target established by the International Olympic Committee.

Swimmers who achieve the FINA/Olympic Selection Time are eligible to be invited to participate in the Olympic Games and will be invited to compete in the Games until the IOC quota/target is reached.

The priority order for qualification into the Olympic Games will be:

Photo: REUTERS



MEN'S EVENTS			WOMEN'S EVENTS		
EVENT	OQT	OST	EVENT	OQT	OST
50m free	22.01	22.67	50m free	24.77	25.51
100m free	48.57	50.03	100m free	54.38	56.01
200m free	1:47.02	1:50.23	200m free	1:57.28	2:00.80
400m free	3:46.78	3:53.58	400m free	4:07.90	4:15.34
800m free	7:54.31	8:08.54	800m free	8:33.36	8:48.76
1500m free	15:00.99	15:28.02	1500m free	16:32.04	17:01.80
100m back	53.85	55.47	100m back	1:00.25	1:02.06
200m back	1:57.50	2:01.03	200m back	2:10.39	2:14.30
100m breast	59.93	1:01.73	100m breast	1:07.07	1:09.08
200m breast	2:10.35	2:14.26	200m breast	2:25.52	2:29.89
100m fly	51.96	53.52	100m fly	57.92	59.66
200m fly	1:56.48	1:59.97	200m fly	2:08.43	2:12.28
200m ind. medley	1:59.67	2:03.26	200m ind. medley	2:12.56	2:16.54
400m ind. medley	4:15.84	4:21.46	400m ind. medley	4:38.53	4:46.89



On their way to the Games – almost 900 swimmers will arrive in Tokyo

- All Competitors with Olympic Qualifying Times
- Relay-only swimmers
- Universality Competitors
- Invited Competitors who have achieved a FINA/Olympic Selection Time

National Federations/NOCs with no swimmers who have achieved either Standard Entry Time may enter one man and one woman (Universality), provided that those swimmers participated in the 2019 FINA World Championships in Gwangju and are invited by FINA to compete.

Relays

In the Olympic Games, not more than 16 teams can be entered in each relay competition. The top 12 finishers from Gwangju have qualified based upon the results achieved in the heats.

Here are those who already booked their place in Tokyo:

Men's 4x100m Free: USA, GBR, RUS, AUS, ITA, BRA, FRA, HUN, JPN, GRE, GER, POL

Men's 4x200m Free: ITA, RUS, USA, AUS, CHN, BRA, GBR, GER, JPN, ISR, POL, SUI

Men's 4x100m Medley: RUS, USA, JPN, GBR, AUS, BRA, CHN, GER, BLR, CAN, LTU, HUN

Women's 4x100m Free: AUS, CAN, SWE, USA, JPN, NED, CHN, GER, RUS, HKG, CZE, POL

Women's 4x200m Free: AUS, USA, RUS, CHN, GER, CAN, HUN, JPN, POL, NZL, HKG, KOR

Women's 4x100m Medley: USA, AUS, ITA, CAN, CHN, SWE, GBR, JPN, GER, NED, SUI, RUS

Mixed 4x100m Medley: USA, AUS, RUS, GBR, CAN, ITA, NED, GER, BLR, ISR, POL, HUN

The four other teams shall be selected by FINA on the basis of the fastest times achieved in the 15-month period before the Olympic Games (1 March 2019 through 1 June 2020) in competitions approved for that purpose by FINA. Individual times may not be aggregated for relay qualification purposes.

Each National Federation/NOC may enter only one team in each relay event. All swimmers entered in individual events can be used in relays, even if they have not achieved the FINA/Olympic Invitational Time for the corresponding stroke and distance of the relay in which they are entered.

Each National Federation/NOC may enter additional swimmers for relays only, provided that they have achieved the FINA/Olympic Invitational Time for the corresponding stroke and distance of the relay in which they are entered.

If an NOC enters relay-only swimmers for a specific event, these swimmers must swim either in the heat or final of that relay event. Should a relay-only swimmer not compete, this will lead to the disqualification of the respective team. If a Competitor could swim in multiple relays, but does not compete in any for which he/she is eligible, the final relay for which he/she was eligible will be the relay that is disqualified.

Photo: CHUNG SUNG-JUN / GETTY IMAGES



Comparison with Rio2016

It's interesting to see the difference between the Olympic Qualification Times set for 2016 and 2020. While generally in each event a better effort is required from the swimmers to make the cut for Tokyo, the margins differ significantly in some events.

In the men's events, there are only tenths between the OQTs over the 50-100-200m free, while the competitors in the 400m free should clock 3.5sec better times than four years ago. There is a new event in the programme, the 800m free, in which the 2017 World Championships' semis set the bar. In the longest distance (1500m) the jump in the 'requirement' is even bigger, almost 14 seconds.

Male swimmers in other strokes face lighter challenges. In all but one event the difference can be measured in tenths of a second, usually between 0.4 and 0.7, the only exception being the 200m breast where the OQT is 1.3sec faster for Tokyo.

Most of the women's standards are in the same category as four years ago. Here only the individual medley events demand much more from the potential qualifiers. In freestyle it's interesting that while the 50m dash has a 0.50sec improvement, the 100m requires only 0.05sec. The same applies to the 200-400m comparison, in the shorter distance the difference being bigger (1.7s) than in the 400m (1.3), while it's only 0.6sec in the 800m (the 1500m will be contested for the first time in 2020).

It's unique that in the backstroke the OQT is identical in the 100m back (1:00.25) to what it was four years ago, and only a slight improvement is needed in 200m (0.21). In contrast, in the breaststroke it's 0.7 in 100m and even bigger in 200m (1.4sec, this stands out just like in the men's event), while the bar is 0.8-0.9sec higher among the flyers. The IM events saw the biggest jump in level: in the 200m it's 'only' 1.7sec but in the 400m it's almost a full 5 seconds.

MARATHON SWIMMING

Open water swimming runs under the name Marathon Swimming at the Olympics and at the Games only the 10km event is contested, where 25 men



and 25 women can take part. Each swimmer qualifies himself/herself and not a place for his/her NF/NOC.

Phase 1

From the 2019 FINA World Championships the top 10 ranked swimmers in the 10 km events – men and women – have qualified.

Open water swimming has arguably the toughest qualification system over the five disciplines – to make the cut requires huge efforts from the swimmers at the World Championships and in next May's Olympic qualification races

Phase 2

For the FINA Olympic Marathon Swim Qualifier – to be held in Fukuoka (JPN) on 30 May – only an NF/NOC not having qualified swimmers through Phase 1 may elect to send two competitors per event, though only one competitor per NF/NOC per event can qualify. From both races the top 9 ranked swimmers will qualify respectively.

Continental Representation

The first eligible finisher in the Qualifier event – men and women – from each of the five continents will qualify. In the event that an NF/NOC has previously qualified a swimmer, the selection process will move to the next eligible finisher in the FINA Olympic Marathon

Swim Qualifier event to ensure that each of these competitions yields a competitor.

Host Nation

One (1) male and one (1) female marathon swimmer from the host nation will qualify.

MEN

Qualification event	Places	Qualified Athletes
2019 World Championships	10	Florian WELLBROCK (GER) Marc-Antoine OLIVIER (FRA) Rob MUFFELS (GER) Kristof RASOVSZKY (HUN) Jordan WILIMOVSKY (USA) Gregorio PALTRINIERI (ITA) Ferry WEERTMAN (NED) Alberto MARTINEZ (ESP) Mario SANZULLO (ITA) David AUBRY (FRA)
2020 Olympic Marathon Swim Qualifier	9	
Continental Representatives (from the OMSQ)	5	
Host country	1	JPN
Total	25	

WOMEN

Qualification event	Places	Qualified Athletes
2019 World Championships	10	Xin XIN (CHN) Haley ANDERSON (USA) Rachele BRUNI (ITA) Lara GRANGEON (FRA) Ana Marcela CUNHA (BRA) Ashley TWICHELL (USA) Kareena LEE (AUS) Finnia WUNRAM (GER) Leonie BECK (GER) Sharon van ROUWENDAAL (NED)
2020 Olympic Marathon Swim Qualifier	9	
Continental Representatives (from the OMSQ)	5	
Host country	1	JPN
Total	25	

Comparison with Rio2016

Neither the qualification system nor the number of quotas has changed.

Chasing the Olympic dream: divers like Great Britain's Katherine Torrance can still secure a berth in the coming season

Photo: QUINN ROONEY / GETTY IMAGES





MEN'S 3M SPRINGBOARD

Qualification event	Places	NOCs with quota(s)
FINA World Championships	12	CHN CHN GBR USA RUS MEX COL RUS GER UKR KOR USA
2019 Pan American Games	1	COL
2019 European Diving Ch.	1	GBR
2019 Asian Diving Cup	1	
2019 Oceania Diving Championships	1	
African Qualifying	1	
FINA Diving World Cup	Up to 18	
Re-allocation of unused quota		
Total		

MEN'S 10M SPRINGBOARD

Qualification event	Places	NOCs with quota(s)
FINA World Championships	12	CHN CHN GBR KOR USA GBR UKR FRA USA RUS CAN AUS
2019 Pan American Games	1	MEX
2019 European Diving Ch.	1	RUS
2019 Asian Diving Cup	1	
2019 Oceania Diving Championships	1	
African Qualifying	1	
FINA Diving World Cup	Up to 18	
Re-allocation of unused quota		
Total		

DIVING

An NF/NOC may enter up to two divers for each individual event (springboard or platform) and up to one team in each synchronised diving event (springboard or platform) on the same height, for which the divers and/or federation team is qualified. Quotas are for the NFs/NOCs, not for the divers themselves.

Phase 1

At the 2019 FINA World Championships 2019 the 12 finalists from each individual event (men's 3m and 10m, women's 3m and 10m) earned qualification positions for their NF/NOC.

- Men
3m: CHN-2, GBR, USA-2, RUS-2, MEX, COL, GER, UKR, KOR
10m: CHN-2, GBR-2, KOR, USA-2, UKR, FRA, RUS, CAN, AUS

WOMEN'S 3M SPRINGBOARD

Qualification event	Places	NOCs with quota(s)
FINA World Championships	12	CHN AUS CHN CAN GER CAN JPN GBR UKR MAS NED AUS
2019 Pan American Games	1	MEX
2019 European Diving Ch.	1	RUS
2019 Asian Diving Cup	1	
2019 Oceania Diving Championships	1	
African Qualifying	1	
FINA Diving World Cup	Up to 18	
Re-allocation of unused quota		
Total		

WOMEN 10M SPRINGBOARD

Qualification event	Places	Qualified Divers
FINA World Championships	12	CHN CHN CAN CAN ITA AUS GBR USA MAS JPN NED USA
2019 Pan American Games	–	MEX
2019 European Diving Ch.	1	UKR
2019 Asian Diving Cup	1	
2019 Oceania Diving Championships	1	
African Qualifying	1	
FINA Diving World Cup	Up to 18	
Re-allocation of unused quota		
Total		

MEN'S 3M SYNCHRO

Qualification event	Places	Qualified Teams
2019 World Championships	3	CHN GBR MEX
FINA Diving World Cup	4	
Host Nation	1	JPN
Total	8	

Photo: MADDIE MEYER / GETTY IMAGES



*All eyes on them:
Daiya Seto and his fellow Japanese swimmers will enjoy huge support but face enormous expectations at the same time*

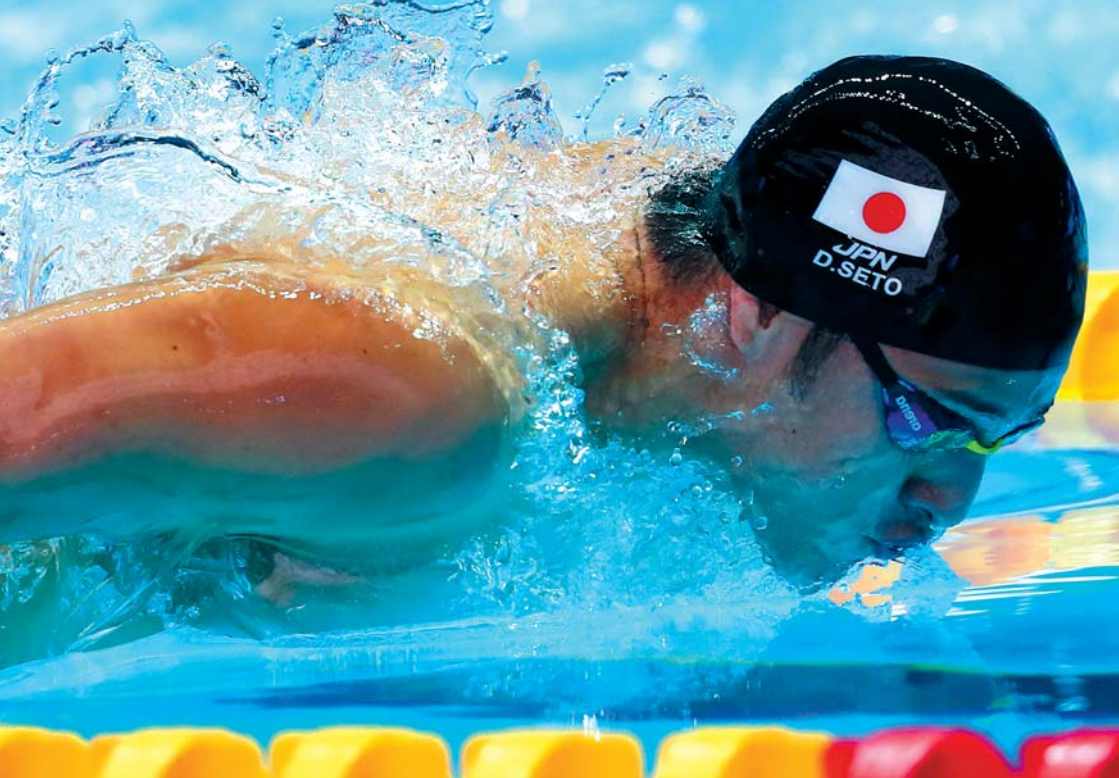
- Women
3m: CHN-2, AUS-2, CAN-2, GER, JPN, GBR, UKR, MAS, NED
10m: CHN-2, CAN-2, ITA, AUS, GBR, USA-2, MAS, JPN, NED

The top three seeded finalists earned quotas for the respective NF/NOCs in the synchronised events.

- Men
3m: CHN, GBR, MEX
10m: CAN, CHN, MEX
 - Women
3m: CHN, CHN, MEX
10m: CHN, MAS, USA
- The host nation (JPN) also has a quota in each event.

Phase II

From the Continental Championships, conducted after the World Championships 2019 and prior to the World Cup 2020, the highest-ranked, non-qualified diver in each of the four individual events earns an Olympic Qualification position for his/her National Federation/NOC.



Should Continental Championships not take place, a continent may qualify a diver for an individual event at the 2020 Diving World Cup. At least two National Federations of that continent must participate in the respective individual event at the 2020 Diving World Cup. The highest-placed continental diver will obtain a quota place for his/her National Federation/NOC. An individual diver may obtain only one quota place per individual event for his/her Federation.

FINA World Cup 21-26 April, 2020, Tokyo (JPN)

In the individual events the 18 semi-finalists can earn qualification positions for their NF/NOC (to a maximum of two per NF/NOC). The remaining places for the individual events will be determined by the ranking in the preliminaries (19th place and higher).

In the synchronised events the top four placed teams, excluding those teams previously qualified in Phase I.

Comparison with Rio2016

Neither the qualification system nor the number of quotas has changed.

MEN'S 10M SYNCHRO

Qualification event	Places	Qualified Teams
2019 World Championships	3	CAN CHN MEX
FINA Diving World Cup	4	
Host Nation	1	JPN
Total	8	

WOMEN'S 3M SYNCHRO

Qualification event	Places	Qualified Teams
2019 World Championships	3	CAN CHN MEX
FINA Diving World Cup	4	
Host Nation	1	JPN
Total	8	

WOMEN'S 10M SYNCHRO

Qualification event	Places	Qualified Teams
2019 World Championships	3	CHN MAS USA
FINA Diving World Cup	4	
Host Nation	1	JPN
Total	8	

ARTISTIC SWIMMING

Teams

The Olympic competition shall be for a maximum of 10 teams of eight competitors per team selected in the following manner.

1. Automatically one team from the Continental Championships of the five continents. The Host Country will be representative of that continent.

2. The first two teams from the World Championships based on the combined results of the free and technical routines. Should one or both of the first two teams from the preceding World Championships already be qualified through Point 1, the next ranked team(s) will be allocated a place.

3. The remaining three teams shall qualify from the Olympic Games Qualifying Tournament in Artistic Swimming in the year of the Olympic Games (to be held in Tokyo on 30 April-3 May).

Duets

The competition shall be for a maximum of 22 duets selected in the following manner:

1. Ten duets representing the same NOCs which qualified teams in the team event.
2. The best-ranked NOC in each of the five Continental Championships will each obtain a quota place.
3. The remaining open positions will be allocated according to the rankings of the Olympic Games Qualifying Tournament in Tokyo.

Photo: TULLIO M. PUGLIA / GETTY IMAGES



ARTISTIC SWIMMING TEAMS

Qualification event	Place	Qualified teams
Host	1	JPN
African Continental Selection (in Gwangju)	1	EGY
2019 Pan American Games	1	CAN
2019 European Champions Cup	1	RUS
2019 Oceanian Continental Selection (in Gwangju)	1	AUS
2019 World Championships	2	CHN UKR
2020 Olympic Qualifying Tournament	3	
Total	10	

ARTISTIC SWIMMING DUETS

Qualification event	Place	Qualified duets
Qualified in the team event	10 (7 so far)	AUS CAN CHN EGY JPN RUS UKR
African Continental Selection (in Gwangju)	1	RSA
2019 Pan American Games	1	MEX
2019 Asian Continental Selection	1	KAZ
2019 European Champions Cup	1	ESP
Oceanian Continental Selection (in Gwangju)	1	NZL
2020 Olympic Qualifying Tournament	7	
Total	22	

Comparison with Rio2016

Since the team event is one of the highlights of the entire Olympics, the final featuring only eight teams was relatively short for the spectators and this limit also left a few great teams out of the competition. Now, for the first time, two more spots are available, so it will be a 10-team final – though it has come at the expense of the duet field which has been cut back to 22 (from 24) in order to keep the balance of the number of competitors, set by the IOC.

Eyeing Tokyo, but only the ten best teams will get the chance to perform their routines in the summer of 2020





WATER POLO

Twelve men's and 10 women's teams can participate in the Olympic Games.

Men

The competition shall be between a maximum of 12 teams selected in the following manner:

1. The first team from the 2019 World League Super Final.
2. The first two teams from the 2019 World Championships.
3. The Host Country will automatically qualify.
4. Automatically one team from the Continental Championships of the five continents. If it is qualified at the preceding year's World League or at the preceding FINA World Championships, then the next ranked team from the continental championships will qualify.
5. The top three ranked teams from the Olympic Games Qualification Tournament to be held in Rotterdam (NED) on 29 March-5 April 2020.

If, for any reason, no team enters from a continent, the next ranking team(s) will then be taken in order from their placing at the Olympic Games Qualification Tournament (in the recent editions no African team participated, so usually the top four teams advanced from the qualification tournament).

Olympic Games Qualification Tournament

The competition shall be between a maximum of 12 teams, selected according to the following formula: Europe - 5; Americas - 3; Asia - 2; Africa - 1; and Oceania - 1. The Host Country (the Netherlands) will be considered to be a representative from that continent.

The highest qualifying team(s) from the continental qualification tournament or continental championship shall be entitled to represent that continent; if any teams do not accept, then the next high-

est-ranking team willing to accept and participate in the Olympic Games Qualification Tournament shall qualify.

If there is an unfilled vacancy from a continent, then that vacancy shall be filled by the next highest-placed team(s) from the continental qualification tournament or continental championship with the following rotation: host continent of the Olympic Games Qualification Tournament, Americas, Asia, Oceania and Africa (this was the case before Rio when 9 of the 12 places were filled by European teams).

MEN

Qualification event	Place	Qualified teams
Host nation	1	JPN
2019 FINA World League	1	SRB
2019 FINA World Championships	2	ITA ESP
2019 Pan American Games	1	USA
Oceania Continental Selection	1	AUS
2019 Asian Qualification Selection (11-15 Dec, Almaty)	1	
2020 European Championships (12-26 Jan, Budapest)	1	
Olympic Qualification Tournament (29 March-5 April, Rotterdam)	4	
Total	12	



Photo: TULLIO M. PUGLIA / GETTY IMAGES

maximum of 12 teams, selected according to the following formula: Europe - 5; Americas - 3; Asia - 2; Africa - 1; and Oceania - 1. The Host Country (Italy) will be considered to be a representative from that Continent.

The highest qualifying team(s) from the continental qualification tournament or continental championship shall be entitled to represent that continent; if any teams do not accept, then the next highest-ranking team willing to accept and participate in the Olympic Games Qualification Tournament shall qualify.

If there is an unfilled vacancy from a continent, then that vacancy shall be filled by the next highest-placed team(s) from the continental qualification tournament or continental championship with the following rotation: host continent of the Olympic Games Qualification Tournament, Americas, Asia, Oceania and Africa (in 2012 seven European teams took part in the event). ■

Pietro Figlioli and the Italian team already booked their spot in the men's Olympic tournament by clinching the world title – many of their biggest rivals face tough tests on the road

Women

The competition shall be for a maximum of 10 teams selected in the following manner:

1. The first team from the 2019 World League Super Final.

2. The first team from the 2019 World Championships. If this team has already qualified from the World League, the next ranked team from the World Championships qualifies (which was the case this summer with the USA, so Spain qualified).

3. The Host Country will automatically qualify.

4. Automatically, one team from the Continental Championships of the five continents. If it is qualified at the World League, or at the FINA World Championships, then the next ranked team from the continental championships will qualify (so Canada qualified from the Pan American Games).

The two other teams qualify from the women's Olympic Games Qualification Tournament, to be staged on 15-22 March in Italy (and if Africa does not take the continental quota, which has always been the case ever since women's water polo made its debut in 2000, the third-placed team from this tournament will also qualify).

Olympic Games Qualification Tournament

The competition shall be between a

WOMEN

Qualification event	Place	Qualified teams
Host nation	1	JPN
2019 FINA World League	1	USA
2019 FINA World Championships	1	ESP
2019 Pan American Games	1	CAN
Oceania Continental Selection	1	AUS
2019 Asian Qualification Selection (11-15 Dec, Almaty)	1	
2020 European Championships (12-26 Jan, Budapest)	1	
Olympic Qualification Tournament (15-22 March, Italy)	3	
Total	10	

Comparison with Rio2016

A decade-old demand has been catered for, with the expansion of the women's tournament to 10 teams. In the previous two editions two really strong European sides missed the cut (agonisingly, it was Greece and the Netherlands both in 2012 and 2016 – to highlight their strengths: these two contested the European Championship final last year; before London 2012 the Greeks were the reigning world champions and the Dutch the Olympic title-holders). Thanks to the expansion, one quota has become available at the World Championships (before that it was not the case), so the field will surely be even stronger than ever before.

Just like in our last edition, here is another water polo-swimming duet of coaching greats. Judging Adam Krikorian's illustrious career is perhaps premature as he is still leading the US women's water polo team and it doesn't seem as if their golden march will ever end. Fact is that he is already the most successful coach ever in female water polo – and however easy the US triumphs look, no titles come for free and it has taken tremendous efforts by the coach to keep his team number one for almost a decade. At the same time Fred Vergnoux has tried to propel several swimmers to greatness in several corners of Europe and his most successful protégée is Mireia Belmonte. A Frenchman who took a Spanish swimmer to unprecedented heights – quite a feat, and also a fine tale of how a great coach clears all the hurdles before reaching his well-deserved place at the top.

Adam

KRIKORIAN



Legends **COACHING** Legends

Fred

VERGNOUX



Legends COACHING Legends

“I realise that I can have an impact”

Adam KRIKORIAN (USA, water polo)



By Greg MESCALL
Director of
Communications,
USA Water Polo
(USA)



The fire is still there whether it's a trial match, a preliminary game or a big final

There are still games to be played and medals to chase, but the legacy that Adam Krikorian is assembling could very well mark him as the greatest women's water polo coach of all time. At the helm of Team USA since 2009, Krikorian has taken a very good programme and made it other-worldly. Two Olympic gold medals, three FINA World Championships, three FINA World Cups and nine FINA World League titles fill a Scrooge McDuck-like vault of riches. Yes, he has the advantage of coaching this sport in a relatively new Olympic era, dating back to just the year 2000, but nobody has come close to doing what Krikorian has done.

But this coach – the one all the other coaches are chasing – was once, himself, coached.

Before he drew up plays on the white board and developed tactics to reach the top of podiums all over the world, Krikorian was an athlete. Swimming and water polo were his priority, but he played many of the sports kids growing up in the United States typically play, including baseball, soccer and basketball.

On the journey from Adam Krikorian the Athlete to Adam Krikorian the Coach, three men left an indelible mark – im-

fectful memories as fresh to Krikorian today as when they occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.

Coach Kevin Perry taught the value of commitment and the mental side of sports.

Coach Ken Pearce taught the importance of fundamentals and making the basics fun.

Coach Guy Baker taught how to plan and develop a vision.

Krikorian encountered all three of these coaches before his 21st birthday.

The traditional jump into the water at the end of a major event – performed every year at least once since 2014

what a true level of commitment is, and what it really takes to be great – the discipline required day in and day out to achieve goals.

Perry also introduced something new, as Krikorian recalls he was his first coach to talk about the power of the mind. *“How powerful self-talk and imagery and visualisation is. Just how our actions are ultimately controlled through our minds and our mental preparation,”* Krikorian says, adding that part of Perry’s teachings allowed him to develop a tough mindset.

As is often the case in youth sports, parents take up the coaching reins at an early age in volunteer roles. One of those coaches was Ken Pearce, the father of Krikorian’s friend Drew Pearce, who coached baseball and basketball – and de-

ing at the ball while dribbling. A group of 11- to 12-year-olds working on fundamental running drills. Literally *how to run*. Krikorian laughs at the thought of his children being put through some of these drills in their youth sports leagues, but it made an impact.

“We went through so many drills, fielding ball after ball, catching fly ball after fly ball. Going through every detail, doing it as perfectly as you can,” he recalls. *“I never once thought it was boring or monotonous. I had a blast doing it. It left a long-lasting impression.”*

Krikorian likes to use the term *fun-comfortable* with Team USA: the idea that you find a way to enjoy the things you probably wouldn’t enjoy. You don’t have to look far to figure out where that term came from.



“How powerful self-talk and imagery and visualisation is”

“I probably spent more time as a competitive swimmer than anything, but I played every sport there was,” remembers Krikorian. *“Kevin was my coach from when I was 12 to 17. He probably had the greatest impact on me, and I still think about him all the time.”* Perry helped Krikorian understand

livered another key piece for Krikorian’s future coaching toolbox: the importance of fundamentals. *“Ken helped me discover the importance of fundamentals; the value in doing all the technical things right,”* Krikorian said.

“The one thing I’ll uniquely remember about him, he made the fundamentals fun. He found those first three letters more powerful than anything.”

Pearce put the kids through drills that had to have others at the recreation centre rolling their eyes. Basketball drills wearing goggles with tape to avoid look-

“It made me really enjoy the times where adversity was so prevalent”

Guy Baker is the coach most publicly linked to Krikorian. Given that Baker coached Krikorian at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles), and Krikorian succeeded Baker both at UCLA and with the national team, it is no surprise. Baker

had a daunting task at UCLA on the verge of Krikorian's freshman year. The men's water polo programme had been dropped and missed a complete recruiting class before being brought back to Westwood.

As the programme restarted, some 12 freshmen were part of an incoming class which included Krikorian – the very first recruit to commit. They had big dreams and even bigger egos. The initials FRC were invoked early in the first season – in reference to the freshman being part of the Four Ring Club: getting set to win four straight NCAA titles. As it turns out, those players would be quickly humbled, but it allowed for a moment that set the framework for Baker's impact on Krikorian.

"I remember heading up to Stanford to play my freshman year. Back in those days it was Stanford and Cal. UCLA hadn't won a title since 1972. There were essentially only two programmes in college water polo," remembers Krikorian. *"Being from Norcal I was so stoked; I played for the Stanford water polo club. It wasn't necessarily a dream of mine to play at Stanford, but anytime you get to go home and play in your hometown at your home pool, it's big. A freshman, I was excited to play the number 1 or number 2 team in the country. We were the FRC; we thought we had a chance to do something great that year. Playing up there at Stanford, the game started getting going, and very quickly we were outmatched and outmanned. The final score was 11-3 or 12-3. I'll never forget Guy taking us right underneath the scoreboard, back in 1992. The very last thing he left us with was, 'I want everyone to turn around and look up at the score. I want everyone to remember this day; we have a lot work ahead of us. But we are going to turn this thing around.' As fate would have it, I played my last competitive water polo game in that very pool, winning a national championship in 1995. The vision that Guy helped instil in me and our team and programme after that butt whipping at the hands of Stanford left an impression on me for four years. It helped fuel the fire that allowed us to compete at a certain level to get the programme back."*

There would be no FRC. Each passing year the Bruins made progress but failed to win a title. The name changed from Four Ring Club to Three Ring Club and so on. In the end, they were just the ORC, One Ring Club – but how fitting it came in 1995 in Krikorian's final game and in the place where Baker taught that lesson three years earlier.

"Guy's impact on me was multi-level when I think of me as an athlete and him helping me become the coach I am today. He helped me learn how to plan and how to have a vision. He took over a UCLA water polo programme that had been cut and had been dropped a year prior and essentially missed a recruiting class. He started a pro-



*The perfect formula:
Adam and the winning women*

gramme over from scratch; we were fighting like heck to be in the top eight," says Krikorian. *"But he had a vision beginning with this brand-new team all the way to the winning the national championship to the last game I ever played. He helped formulate a vision and setting goals. I think – and didn't realise at the time – that when the journey was over for me in 1995, it made me fall in love with what we had accomplished over those four years. It made me really enjoy the times where adversity was so prevalent. I think to this day in those moments of difficulty and adversity, I still find great joy. There is always frustration, but there is a certain amount of joy."*

Success in succession

Adam Krikorian has won 18 major titles with Team USA in 21 competitions (so far):

- Olympic Games: 2 golds
- World Championships: 3 golds
- World League: 9 golds
- World Cup: 2 golds
- Pan American Games: 2 golds.

The only events his team didn't make the top of the podium were the 2011 and 2013 World Championships (6th and 5th place) and the 2013 World League (bronze medal).

+ 11 national titles with UCLA as head coach (3 as assistant coach) – in 2000, 2001 and 2005 he achieved the men-women double in the NCAA.



“I always have had this competitive, underdog feeling”

Krikorian has not played in a water polo match since December 3, 1995 – the date of UCLA’s national championship victory. He became an undergraduate assistant with the programme the next year – his fifth year at UCLA – and has been coaching ever since. A psychology major with an emphasis in business, Krikorian thought he might want to be a child psychologist like his dad Gary or get into finance and the business world. But as he unpacks the memories of the coaches he loved most, it becomes clear that coaching probably was what he was meant to do all along.

“My dad speaks about when he was coaching my youth soccer team and how I

would comment on my team-mates and where people should be on the field. Who is weak in certain areas; who is strong in certain areas,” Krikorian remembers.

Then add those tendencies to the idea that we are the products of our environments. Indeed, a lifelong San Francisco 49ers fan, Krikorian came up during the heyday of the 1980s teams that won four Super Bowls and was captivated by their legendary coach Bill Walsh: *“What I remember most is that he was a master psychologist, and he had this demeanour, this unphased demeanour no matter the situation: ‘Calm is contagious’, as one of my good friends says. So, as an eight-year-old kid when they won their first Super Bowl, then three years later with their second Super Bowl win, I was enamoured with Bill Walsh.”*

He didn’t think he would be a coach when he went to UCLA, but again, as fate would have it, Krikorian was sur-

rounded by some of the all-time greats. After graduating he would take over the UCLA water polo programmes as a 24-year-old. He’d share space on campus with celebrated volleyball coach Al Scates, recently retired gymnastics coaching marvel Valerie Kondos-Field, U.S. women’s national soccer team head coach Jill Ellis, softball champion Sue Enquist – and of course the Wizard of Westwood himself, basketball’s John Wooden. Just by breathing the same air on that campus at that time, one was bound to get a better understanding of how to be a coach.

Krikorian, now 44, paired all those influences with the philosophies of his three coaching mentors – and mixed it all with a pinch of feeling counted out or overlooked.

“I wouldn’t trade anything; it gets me thinking that coaching fit me perfectly,” Krikorian says. *“I spend less time doing this*



now, but I always have had this competitive, underdog feeling. A lot of it goes back to when I was a kid and people at school or friends teased me about being a swimmer or a water polo player as opposed to being part of a more mainstream sport. I went on to have a lot of success as an athlete and a coach, but I was told I wouldn't be good enough to play in college, or I shouldn't go to a place like UCLA and instead should think more along the lines of a Division 3-type school. At UCLA we were rebuilding, and there was no chance in hell we would ever win a national championship. After I took over the programme as a 24-year-old coach, I was too young and didn't have experience to be a successful head coach. I feel like in some way I coach women for a

Next generation of coaches? The maestro with his son Jack in a gala – and some more recognitions on their way for sure...

Perhaps one of the best team pictures ever (top right): Krikorian with the 13 gold medals round his neck with the 13 Olympic champions in Rio

reason: even with all the success we've had, there is this underdog-type feeling among my players. It kind of matches where I come from and my fabric, and I don't ever feel like we're given the respect we've earned or deserve. It's a perfect fit for me."

"I spent more time swimming than anything else, including homework"

Kevin Perry passed away in 2008 after a fight with cancer. The death of someone who made such an impact forced Krikorian to reflect on that impact – and he had an epiphany of sorts.

"I remember it was the first time I realised that I spent more time swimming than anything else, including homework. I can honestly say I don't think I even enjoyed swimming – but I absolutely loved being



When we talk about the health and growth of our sport, it's easy to focus on the highest levels. But the reality is the biggest impact comes from those who are coaching the 11 and 12-year-olds.

coached by Kevin, and that's why I swam," says Krikorian. "As a coach of the senior national team, being exposed to the best in the world, I realise that I can have an impact. But I'm not naive enough to think I have the biggest impact. It's the coaches at the youngest ages who are the most important. When we talk about the health and growth of our sport, it's easy to focus on the highest levels. But the reality is the biggest impact comes from those who are coaching the 11 and 12-year-olds. They can help those kids fall in the love with the sport or the process. That impact and what those coaches can do is under-appreciated."

And after all of his big moments, Krikorian hasn't forgotten the foundation that made him the coach he is today. The

coaches in his formative years. The baseball coach he had in grade school who made even the challenging things fun. The swimming coach in junior high who unlocked the potential of the mind – so effectively, in fact, that it made him keep doing a sport he wasn't all that interested in. The water polo coach who taught about the bigger picture – right around the time the bigger picture of life started to come into focus. They're all part of how Adam Krikorian leads the USA women's national team into action, looking to defend its latest titles.

The greatest coaches are developed in a variety of ways, but they have all one thing in common. In one way or another, they've all been coached, too. ■

Legends COACHING Legends

By Christina
MARMET
FINA Aquatic World
Magazine
Correspondent
(FRA)



“We take pride in working hard”

Fred VERGNOUX (FRA, swimming)



Frederic Vergnoux has had a fairly unusual path so far as a swimming coach. Originally from a small town in southeast France, his name likely does not ring a bell to most of the general public in his home country, where the likes of Philippe Lucas, Lionel Horter and Denis Auguin have often hit the headlines and been the talk of the town since the golden years of French swimming in the mid-2000s and up to this day.

After retiring as a competitive swimmer, Vergnoux has indeed spent most of his coaching career abroad, but his skills and hard work are undoubtedly recognised amongst his peers around the world. He was named Coach of the Year numerous times in Great Britain and Spain, and has coached a swimmer to an international medal every year since 2002 - Alena Popchanka, Amaury Leveaux, Kirsty Balfour and Kris Gilchrist among many others. His most recent accomplishment was

to guide Mireia Belmonte to gold at Rio 2016 in the 200m butterfly, which made her Spain's first and sole female Olympic champion in swimming.

After the U.S., Great Britain and brief stints in clubs in France and Spain, Vergnoux has been serving since 2013 as Spain's national team head coach and is based at the Centre d'Alt Rendiment (C.A.R.) Sant Cugat in Barcelona.

Making the most of it: after a series of silvers, Vergnoux finally coached Mireia Belmonte to Olympic gold in 2016 and a world title in 2017, in the 200m fly

a lot of different competitive sports in school. To be honest, I was a pretty bad swimmer, but I loved the 'swimmer's life' and what goes with it. I had the opportunity to experience the life of a pro swimmer in the Racing Paris club during my military service year. It was a great opportunity, and from there I started to coach professionally in the same club. I swam until I was 26 years old; in my last season I was already coaching and also finishing my university studies, so I started to coach when I was 25 years old. I decided early on that I would go into coaching. I knew I wouldn't be a good swimmer but I wanted to become a great coach. Since I was a teenager, I had the influence of many coaches and I guess they passed on to me the passion for coaching. Before going to university, I took one year to study for the coaching diploma, which is

I coached there for three years and I went to the US for two years after the 2000 Olympics. The story is that I sent 82 e-mails to various programmes in the States and the only answer I received was from number 82! I quickly learned that in order to achieve your goals, you have to be persistent, and that it will be a tough process. I had started to travel to Florida in the 90s to be there for the summer camps with Peak Performance. Nick Baker, the owner, has had a tremendous influence on my career, but he has also helped me to be an efficient decision-maker. Then one summer I decided to quit my job in France and to spend more time in the US. It was risky; at that time I had no salary but I simply wanted to learn from the best nation. I left my club and for almost two years I was a club-less coach visiting programmes and



“I had no salary but I simply wanted to learn from the best nation”

Why did you decide to become a coach in the first place?

I swam pretty much my entire life, from a very young age to pretty late, but I also did

compulsory in France, so it would allow me to start working early on with different age groups. I think coaching all categories, from beginners learning how to swim to Masters, has been instrumental in my development towards coaching elite swimming.

How long did you stay in France before heading to the US? What were you looking for there, and did the American coaching method shape you into the coach you are today?

other coaches. I'm very thankful to all the coaches who helped me at that time, especially the likes of Gregg Troy and Paul Bergen who allowed me to be on deck with them. I suppose the influence has come from those coaches too, especially in realising the fact that we work with athletes, and not only swimmers. I always had a strong focus on land work, and they proved to me that it's a must-have. The work outside of the water that I witnessed there was really impressive.



The coach and his team – under Fred, one really needs to spend long hours in the water

A few years later and after coaching swimmers to the 2004 Olympics, including Alena Popchanka and Darian Townsend, you eventually found your way to Scotland. How did you end up there, and how was your experience?

I coached the national training centre in Edinburgh in Scotland from 2004 to 2008. It was a club but it was funded by British and Scottish Swimming to work like a performance centre. It was probably the best four years of my coaching career so far. After the Olympics, Bill Sweetenham [the National Performance Director for British Swimming at the time]

invited me to attend a camp of junior swimmers while in France, and told me to apply for the head coach position. Being under his leadership was amazing. It wasn't easy every day but he got the best out of us, both coaches and swimmers. We were very competitive among ourselves, and I think we were successful because everyone had the same mentality. My set-up in Edinburgh was a dream situation for a swimming coach. I had an assistant coach, Chris Jones, who later became an Olympic coach himself, a team manager, a physio, sports science support, etc. It was very professional and focused on performance. My swimmers were all students, and it's so rewarding to see that many of them are professional coaches nowadays. I started to work with the likes of Tim Kerrison, Jodi Cossor and Bob Treffene, and it was a fantastic learning experience.

“Being able to help those guys was simply fantastic”

And you were eventually named as the head coach for Great Britain's men's team for the 2008 Olympics, right?

Yes, in 2006 I was named as the men's Olympic team head coach for the 2008 Olympic preparation. It was probably the most rewarding job in my career so far. Being able to help those guys was simply fantastic; the coaches were already experienced and helped me a lot. It was a natural task and things went really smoothly.

Did you wish you could have stayed in Great Britain a bit longer or were you always planning on heading back to France after?



reactions due to fatigue in training and also in competition. Unfortunately, the programme was shut down after two years due to financial reasons and I had no choice but to look for another position. This is how I ended up in Spain. The CN Sabadell club was looking for a technical director and I sent them my CV. The transition was actually pretty challenging. Spain was only a five-hour drive from home but I had to learn another language and understand a new system of working. I was really lucky to be recruited by Sabadell, the best club in the country, where I was immediately able to work with a great group of swimmers, and I had a very professional staff of coaches.

driven. Her mindset is something that she developed over the years and it's probably what made the difference in her career. Basically, she knows what she wants. We radically changed the weights and fitness programme, and she was really excited about it. We also slowly increased the volume in the water, and when we realised that she could also race distance events, we started to change her racing programme.

Mireia was quite straightforward after taking silver in London: it didn't satisfy her at all



I would have loved to stay in Edinburgh, but the pool was shutting down for major refurbishment, which I knew when I signed my contract. A huge thanks to Scottish Swimming as it offered to move me to Stirling and be based at the national centre so I could still work in Scotland, but I decided to take the job in Paris, and some swimmers came along.

You stayed in France for a little bit before moving again to Spain this time. Can you talk about your decision to go there and join the club CN Sabadell? How was that transition?

After the 2008 Olympics I came back to France to become the head coach of the club where I first started coaching! It was a really interesting project, especially having a professional sports science team supporting us. We actually did various studies, including one on the hormonal

“Fred, I want to win gold in Rio”

How was your working relationship with Mireia Belmonte when you first started? Did you always believe she could become an Olympic champion?

I only knew her results prior to arriving there, but I didn't know much about her background and her way of training. She immediately showed a very clear focus about her goals and she was performance-

In 2012, she earned two Olympic silver medals, 200m butterfly and 800m freestyle. Did you expect such a result was possible after coaching her for only about two years?

Yes, because ours was a two-year plan. It wasn't like she trained for two years non-stop, and she still had some time off during the summer and over Christmas, but we clearly decided to engage the preparation over a two-year time frame. During those years, she broke her personal best pretty much at every meet she raced, had imme-

COACHING LEGENDS

diated success at the first major meet that we prepared for, and the progression was leading her to aspire to an Olympic podium. Sometimes, I think we started to work together two years too late, but that's just life.

How did you motivate her for four more years after London?

I didn't have to motivate her. She actually motivated me. We were still at the Olympic Village in London, and she asked to talk to me and basically told me "Fred, I want to win gold in Rio". I had less than a second to think, assimilate and reply. It was amazing how by a single look into her eyes, we committed to our next four years. We knew the struggle would be guaranteed and the success is not necessarily possible, but it was a commitment that we made together.

"In Spain, the facilities are incredible"

What have you learned from each of your experiences in all these different countries and working with so many different coaches and swimmers?

I have learned a lot from every place I went to, and each of the swimming cultures helped me a lot in understanding

Success in succession

Fred Vergnoux has a fine list of coaching success – featuring swimmers from several nations which makes it really impressive.

- Mireia Belmonte (ESP) – Olympic and world champion
- Darian Townsend (RSA) – Olympic champion
- Amaury Leveaux (FRA) – Olympic and world champion
- Michael Jamieson (GBR) – Olympic silver medallist
- Alena Popchanka (BLR/FRA) – World and European champion
- Kris Gilchrist (GBR) – s/c world champion
- Kirsty Balfour (GBR) – World Championship silver medallist, European champion
- Henrique Barbosa (BRA) – s/c World Championship bronze medallist

In terms of medals, his results so far: 3 Olympic medals, 11 World Championship medals, 33 European medals.



As a coach, I focus on what I can control, and I always keep a very honest attitude with my swimmers. They know what I think because I tell them.

the sport better. I was, and still am, very impressed by the land work that they teach at an early age in the Eastern countries, and it is still something that we should learn from them. I was so impressed also by the quality of the technical work they can achieve. Those coaches have a really high understanding of skills, and they know how to teach that. In Great Britain, I felt more part of a bigger project. We had constant workshops and we were involved in a lot of decision-making. We all worked toward the same project. In France and in Spain, it's more being part of a system and focusing on your own squad, and there are many competitive clubs and a couple of national training centres. In France, swimming has become a popular sport since the results from 2004 onwards, and the number of swimmers has increased a lot. In Spain, we have fewer swimmers, but the facilities are incredible, and the clubs are actually pretty much all private, which means that they own the pools. Also here, we can use the best altitude training centre in Sierra Nevada, so having this next door has been determinant to our results. Saying that, I have to say that unfortunately here in Europe, the professional situation for a swimming coach is far from that in the US for example. Some coaches that I know here have to take two jobs to make a decent living; we don't have much personal time during the week, and professional development is not an easy task.

In 2013, you were named Spain's national team head coach. How did you react when the federation offered you this position?

It was a great opportunity for me to work with a reduced number of swimmers in a national training centre with perfect working conditions. But I was also a bit sad to leave the club where I had a really good relationship with my staff and the swimmers. I think I made the right decision. Coaching in a club requires being

on site all the time, but [my swimmers and I] did a lot of camps and competitions abroad, which is why the federation wanted me, so I could be fully involved with the national team preparation.

"If we do something, we do it well"

How would you describe yourself as a coach? Do you have a specific coaching philosophy?

I try to get the best out of each swimmer that works with me. To achieve this, I strongly believe that a coach must be supported by a staff of competent people. Here in Spain, I work closely with a sports physiologist, a biomechanics specialist, a physiotherapist, an osteopath and a mental coach. I have worked with those guys since 2010, and as someone told me once, "all you need is a few good people to be ready to follow your path". I'm also very lucky to have great support from our federation. I can run the planning of training and competition my way, and it is really positive for a coach to have that freedom. My swimmers know that the preparation will be their main factor for confidence, so we take pride in working hard. We have a saying that goes "if we do something, we do it well". As a coach, I focus on what I can control, and I always keep a very honest attitude with my swimmers. They know what I think because I tell them.

What are a few keys to being a great coach in your book?

With Nick Baker we always talked about the ten keys to success, and with Bill Sweetenham we always argue that there are only nine keys! I sincerely don't know how many keys a coach should use, but for sure a coach has to be passionate, must be willing to work hard and do extra hours all day long, and understand quickly that this is a competitive world. A coach must be surrounded by experts, always ask questions and learn constantly. The sport evolves rapidly, and we as coaches must be having a constant learning approach and mentality.

What is the greatest achievement of your coaching career so far?

Outside of the medals and the records, which actually is all pretty rewarding especially being the actual coach of the only Olympic champion of Spain, I think it is being able to work with athletes from many countries and to witness them grow in the sport, from a lower level to winning Olympic medals... It's something very spe-



In one of his favourite facilities, the brilliant complex of Sabadell in Spain

cial. I feel really proud to tell the stories of my swimmers, especially the ones involving Michael Jamieson, Kris Gilchrist, Gregor Tait, Darian Townsend, Henrique Barbosa, Damian Blaum, my wife Alena Popchanka, and more recently the likes of Mireia Belmonte, Judit Ignacio, Esther Nunez and Conchi Badillo. They basically all struggled to make it to the top and had to leave their comfort zone, which seems to be a common aspect that we have. I guess the famous sentence "it's not about the destination but about the journey" is making more sense to me now than ever before.

What do you think is the hardest thing about coaching swimming at the elite level? How do you stay motivated to continue?

For me, coaching has never been hard. I have seen and understood other people's realities and situations, so when you wake up early to go to a swimming pool and work with athletes, it's not that hard. Obviously it's not an easy task, because many coaches are doing a great job producing results and we face many challenges trying to win at the highest level. But my passion has been the same

since day one. I feel fortunate to do this job, and every single morning when I enter the pool, I make sure to remind myself of that. I have the best support from my wife Alena, who went to four Olympic Games and understands my involvement, and I work with top swimmers, so the motivation is something natural. We actually strive for that as a group. I also do believe that it's exactly the same for the swimmers... Training hard twice a day, representing your country, travelling the world to compete, it's not hard! ■



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INVESTING IN HEALTH

By Dr Jim MILLER,
FAAFP/Sports
Medicine FINA
Sports Medicine
Committee Member



In collaboration with Dr Margo MOUNTJOY
FINA Bureau liaison to the FINA Sports Medicine
Committee, IOC Sports Medicine
and Dr Edgar Ivan ORTIZ, OB-Gyn,
FINA Sports Medicine Committee Member

The first continental sports medicine symposium at the 2019 Pan American Games

A great initiative, to be followed

FINA has invested heavily over the years in athlete health research, the results of which have been published and presented at international conferences. These projects feature a breadth of sports medicine topics. FINA is committed to disseminate the results of these research projects to the continental leaders and sports medicine practitioners. Hence, the FINA Bureau approved an initiative to deliver FINA Sports Medicine Symposia to be conducted at all the Continental Championships. The Pan American Games 2019, held in Lima, Peru, was the site of the first FINA Sports Medicine Symposium, held on August 4.

FINA has a goal to support the development of the aquatic sports in the national federations. One opportunity to support this vision is by sharing the wealth of medical information at the continental federation level. This information has been collected through research initiatives conducted by the FINA Sports Medicine Committee. These various athlete health projects have been conducted over a decade at FINA World Championships and Olympic Games.

70 participants representing 17 nations

As such, FINA supported a new initiative to educate the sport physicians and health-care teams of the national federations attending the Pan American Games in Lima. The symposium was the first such initiative to be realised anywhere. It attracted more than 70 sports medicine physicians, physios, dieticians and coaches from over 17 nations. These aquatic health professionals met to learn and share ideas and applied concepts stimulated by five presentations covering a broad range of topics.

Two FINA SMC members (Dr Jim Miller – USA – Family Practice and Sports

Medicine and Dr Edgar Ivan Ortiz – Colombia – ObGyn) along with the FINA Bureau Liaison to Sports Medicine (Dr Margo Mountjoy, MD PhD – Canada – Family Practice and Sports Medicine) presented a four-hour long programme. The programme is shown below:

- The Female Aquatic Athlete: How to maximise sport performance through attention to the unique health issues of the female athletes – Drs Margo Mountjoy and Edgar Ortiz

- Concussion in the Aquatic Sports: What's new in terms of screening, diagnosis and treatment? Learn an 'aquatic-specific "Return to Sport" protocol – Dr Jim Miller

- Nutrition for Aquatic Athletes: how to prevent injuries, maximise performance, and navigate nutritional supplements that work and aren't prohibited – Drs Margo Mountjoy and Jim Miller

- What is new from FINA research? – Drs Margo Mountjoy, Jim Miller, Edgar Ortiz

- Athlete Mental Health: IOC Guidelines + FINA Athlete Survey – Drs Margo Mountjoy and Jim Miller

The lectures were an amalgamation from several resources. FINA has supported the Sports Medicine Committee in their presentations at the **IOC World Conference Prevention of Injury & Illness in Sport** held in Monaco every 2-3 years. Dr Margo Mountjoy, Dr Jim Miller, and Dr Cees van den Hoogenband have been ac-

One of the key researches is to establish the safest environment for open water swimmers



tively involved in these presentations for all three conferences since the first in 2011.

Three research projects in Gwangju

Another source comes from the active research initiatives FINA sponsors at the FINA World Championships and in coordination with the International Olympic Committee at the Olympic Games. As an example, the 2019 FINA World Championships in Gwangju (KOR) was the location for three research projects which included:

- **Athlete health surveillance: Injuries + Illnesses:** This prospective surveillance project captures the new-onset illnesses and injuries experienced by international athletes during the FINA World Champi-

onships. Not only does this chronical the trends of illnesses and injuries our elite athletes face in competition but it also is an excellent tool to assist future World Championship Organising Committee medical teams to prepare for the wide range of medical challenges they may face. The collection of the data requires that all the problems presenting to the World Championship medical clinics be collated with daily reports submitted by all the national federation medical teams.

- **Athlete Health Survey:** The Athlete Health Survey has changed over the years. The general principle is to give athletes the opportunity to share their daily training experience, whether it is facilities, financial support, coaching support, living conditions, medical support, etc. The latest version also extended into topics of athlete mental health and safe sport – including the presence of abuse and harassment. This topic is a priority for the International Olympic Committee as well as for FINA to investigate the prevalence

of this problem to better develop programmes to provide a safer environment for our athletes.

- **Athlete Heart Health:** Initial studies on swimmers' heart health were conducted at the FINA World Championships (25m) in Doha 2014 and Windsor 2016, looking at the impact of swimming training on the athlete heart. These initial studies were expanded in Gwangju 2019 to include all six aquatic disciplines, to allow comparison as the training and sport physiological demands are widely variable for each discipline. Five researchers from the University of Guelph (Canada) and Michigan State University (USA) came together to create a cardiac research centre in Gwangju this summer.

A third area of athlete health that FINA has invested in is independent research conducted by experts at university settings, including the safe warm water temperature research for open water swimming completed by the University of Otago in 2013. This research evaluated

Photo: CHUNG SUNG-YUN / GETTY IMAGES

Proper warm-up is essential to avoid injuries



Experiences and advice for the future

the impact of warm water temperature in the open water athlete population, establishing the currently existing rule maximum of 31 degrees Celsius. The project was also co-funded by the International Triathlon Union as well as the International Olympic Committee. A similar grant went to the University of Portsmouth in Great Britain to research the impact of cold water on open water athletes. This project was concluded in 2016. The results were published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* as the lead article, featured by the "Editor's Pick" in September 2019. A follow-up study is under way at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, Indiana, USA, to ascertain more details.

The key speakers at the Pan American Games symposium: Dr James Miller, Dr Margo Mountjoy and Dr Edgar Ivan Ortiz

Finally, a wealth of information comes from publications by members of the FINA Sports Medicine Committee. The journals include: *The British Journal of Sports Medicine*, *The International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism* and (font) *Clinics in Sports Medicine*, FINA Magazine publications, plus contributions by members of the FINA Sports Medicine Committee to their local federation publications.

As you can see, a breadth of knowledge results from these vigorous sports medicine research programmes and the knowledge gained from these projects needs to reach the grass-roots sports medical providers around the globe. Each collection of continental federations has its own unique needs which will direct its selected programme of topics.

There are several basic items which are critical to the symposium's success, starting with advance notice of the symposium and topics that will be covered. This should start no later than six months in advance, which correlates with the timing that most federations are selecting



their medical, support and coaching staffs. The symposium date should be early in the championship programme and in close proximity to the legislative congress, since this is when the greatest number of federations will be present. Simultaneous translation via headphones is also important in most continental symposia to ensure thorough understanding of the materials in the participants' native language. In the case of the Pan American Symposium, both English and Spanish simultaneous translations were provided. The conference room should be located near the Athlete Village or a centralised location to facilitate easy access for participants. Microphones for each table to encourage the interaction during the Question & Answer sessions will help to engage the audience in the learning of the materials.

For future FINA Sports Medicine Symposiums in other continental champi-

onships, the following items are recommended:

- Expand the symposium information/invitation to all sports in the continental games. Topics such as nutrition, the female athlete, athlete training demands, concussion, etc are not unique to aquatic sports. This offering also supports FINA's goal of being a leader in sports medicine/sports science.

- Consider creating a series of 10 topics from which symposium organisers select based on the needs in their areas. Specifically, all symposia should include lectures surrounding nutrition, athlete mental health (to include athlete safety) and an update on FINA research. The update is important to open the floor to new ideas/needs that teams may be facing. These backbone topics also benefit all aquatic disciplines and are also applicable to all sports, as noted above. Whether the other topics are **Concussion** and **The Fe-**

male Athlete, as it was in our case, or other potential topics such as **Overuse injuries in aquatic sports** or the **Physiology and planning the taper for maximisation of performance** would be up to the organisers.

- Continue these opportunities, in our case the Pan American Games, with ongoing outreach to all federations participating. No fees were charged to participants, eliminating a potential barrier to participation for some federations. Expense is nominal, including travel and lodging of the speakers and cost of the conference room plus the set-up.

This first Continental Sports Medicine Symposium was an enormous success, as evident from the robust participation, revealing the potential for future events. It provided a unique opportunity to engage federation leaders, coaches and sports medicine teams in a common theme, the health and safety of their athletes. ■

Photo: QUINN ROONEY / GETTY IMAGES

Almost 35 million aquatic athletes!

FINA conducted and concluded a gigantic survey to assess the state of aquatics around the world. Based on the data supplied by the national federations, some significant findings have been presented. Perhaps the most wonderful statistic is the number of registered aquatic athletes in the world - almost 35 million. They can swim in more than 90,000 pools – besides the natural waters of course.

The 2019 FINA General Survey aimed to gather data in order to monitor, explain and examine the structure and functioning of each NF. Thanks to the previous General Survey in 2017, it was possible to have an overview of the 207 federations affiliated at that time, when 167 national federations participated. In this version FINA asked its 209 national member federations with a higher rate of response (198 NFs) and more accurate detail in their answers.

To guarantee a continuous progress and development of the six aquatic disciplines, it was essential to review and create a new version in order to be updated about the evolution of the sport and our member federations.

The FINA General Survey of NFs was undertaken by the FINA Development Department. It reviewed the 2017 questionnaire to identify which topics were the most important to revisit and compare with the picture in 2019 and which areas required further refinement and potentially new areas of questioning.

The new survey was launched on April 1, 2019, and closed on July 29. It was conducted on Google Forms and was provided on a Word Document if necessary. The expectation was 100% participation, and the continental associations participated in approaching the federations which did not answer by the survey submission deadline. This report contains the answers of 198 national member federations.

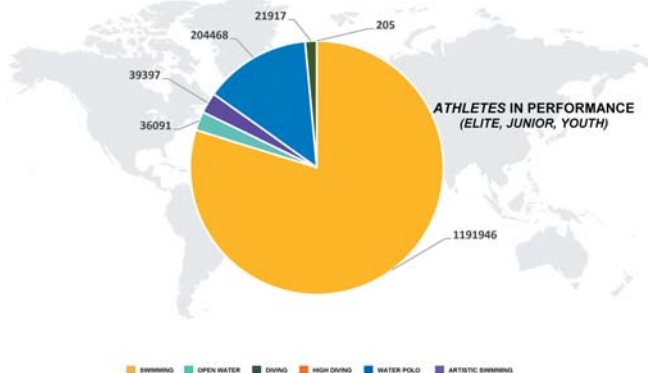
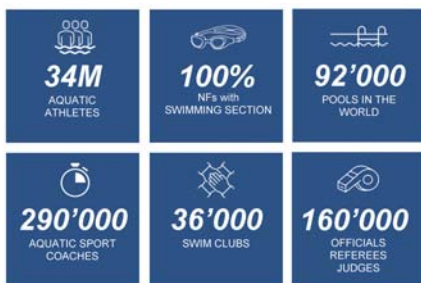
- The survey covered a range of topics:
 - General information of NFs: including general information, number of clubs active in the country, number of permanent administration staff and volunteers, if they have a bank account and if they use an external control audit
 - Members and participants: including World Championship and Olympic Games athletes' participation, number of athletes per category, number of coaches in the country and if they have an education programme, officials and judges for all aquatic disciplines
 - Facilities: Including pools of 25 metres, 50 metres, other-size pools and specific structures for diving.
 - The NF's performance programme: including if athletes have a performance programme and support, if they have additional technical staff; if the

NF provides anti-doping education and organises national competitions. As for the findings, it is great news that the total number of aquatic athletes is nearing 35 million, among them 106,000 identified as elite swimmers and almost 35,000 elite water polo players.

There are more than 91,000 facilities worldwide, including 12,271 50m pools, 25,164 25m pools and 52,862 pools of other sizes.

According to the national federations, 288,496 coaches work in the six disciplines, while at the various competitions almost 160,000 officials oversee the action.

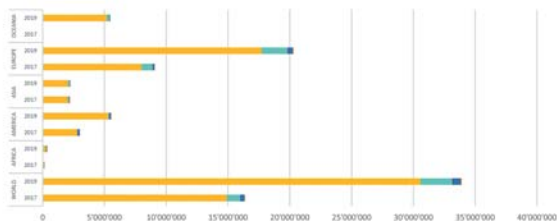
In almost all categories we can see a fine rise in numbers compared with 2017, which brilliantly mirrors the growing popularity of aquatics and the outstanding efforts of the national federations. ■



■ SWIMMING ■ OPEN WATER ■ DIVING ■ HIGH DIVING ■ WATER POLO ■ ARTISTIC SWIMMING



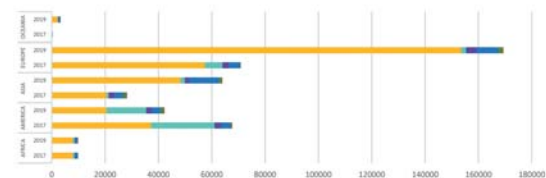
NUMBER OF ATHLETES / 2017 vs 2019



198 NATIONAL FEDERATIONS PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY

ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL
CLUBS	39'474
NFs HEADQUARTER	76(%)
NFs PERMANENTS STAFF	77(%)
VOLUNTEERS	54'363
NFs BANK ACCOUNT	96%
NFs AUDIT CONTROL	78%

NUMBER OF COACHES / 2017 vs 2019



FACILITIES	Total 91'245
25M POOLS	25'164
50M POOLS	12'271
OTHER POOL SIZES	52'862
DIVING STRUCTURE	948
HIGH PERFORMANCE CENTRE 211	

ATHLETES	Total 34'186'755
SWIMMING	30'882'984
OPEN WATER	2'582'675
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	134'789
WATER POLO	478'791
DIVING	77'101
HIGH DIVING	30'415

COACHES	Total 288'496	% NFS WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SWIMMING	232'690	73%
OPEN WATER	5'158	29%
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	7'664	25%
WATER POLO	24'482	38%
DIVING	4'476	24%
HIGH DIVING	26	3%



TOTAL (%) OF NFs ORGANISING NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

96% 65% 33% 4% 50% 38%



NFs WITH HIGH PERFORMANCE

	Total %
> PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME	53%
> COUNTRY SUPPORT FOR ATHLETES	57%
> ANTIDOPING EDUCATION	62%

OFFICIALS	Total 159'936	% NFS WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SW OFFICIALS	102'918	73%
OW OFFICIALS	10'503	38%
AS JUDGES	5'580	29%
WP REFEREES	22'960	38%
DV JUDGES	3'071	28%
HD JUDGES	39	4%





AFRICA

ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL
CLUBS	1'631
NFs HEADQUARTER	72(%)
NFs PERMANENTS	118
VOLUNTEERS	5'410
NFs BANK ACCOUNT	96%
NFs AUDIT CONTROL	70%

FACILITIES	Total 1'729
25M POOLS	978
50MPOOLS	172
OTHER POOL SIZES	526
DIVING SRUCTURE	53
HIGH PERFORMANCE CENTRE	9

ATHLETES	Total 352'277
SWIMMING	270'069
OPEN WATER	46'309
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	2'392
WATER POLO	30'764
DIVING	2'672
HIGH DIVING	71

COACHES	Total 9'806	% NFS
		WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SWIMMING	7'959	68%
OPEN WATER	650	22%
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	255	2%
WATER POLO	762	26%
DIVING	176	2%
HIGH DIVING	4	0%

OFFICIALS	Total 42'202	% NFS
		WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SW OFFICIALS	7'605	61%
OW OFFICIALS	1'004	28%
AS JUDGES	97	4%
WP REFEREES	874	15%
DV JUDGES	536	2%
HD JUDGES	0	0%



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	1773
JUNIOR	39890
YOUTH&YUNGER	35329
MASTERS	2799
AMATEUR	123425



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	43
JUNIOR	1030
YOUTH&YUNGER	544
MASTERS	7
AMATEUR	664



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	0
JUNIOR	0
YOUTH&YUNGER	8
MASTERS	8
AMATEUR	32



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	46
JUNIOR	1037
YOUTH&YUNGER	552
MASTERS	2
AMATEUR	575



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	480
JUNIOR	3063
YOUTH&YUNGER	2520
MASTERS	1029
AMATEUR	5625



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	513
JUNIOR	10712
YOUTH&YUNGER	8267
MASTERS	259
AMATEUR	4323

Africa's development is mirrored by the numbers and the continent's growing participation at the major FINA events (pictured: Nonhlanhla Thole of Zambia at the 2019 World Championships)



TOTAL (%) OF NFS ORGANISING NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

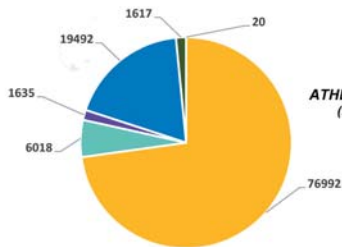




NFs WITH HIGH PERFORMANCE

Total %

> PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME	35%
> COUNTRY SUPPORT FOR ATHLETES	31%
> ANTIDOPING EDUCATION	54%



AFRICAN ATHLETES IN PERFORMANCE (ELITE, JUNIOR, YOUTH)

SWIMMING OPEN WATER DIVING HIGH DIVING WATER POLO ARTISTIC SWIMMING



AMERICAS

ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL
CLUBS	16'614
NFs HEADQUARTER	60 (%)
NFs PERMANENTS	221
VOLUNTEERS	38'387
NFs BANK ACCOUNT	93%
NFs AUDIT CONTROL	74%

FACILITIES	Total 34'713
25M POOLS	3'030
50MPOOLS	1'232
OTHER POOL SIZES	30'284
DIVING SRUCTURE	167
HIGH PERFORMANCE CENTRE	31

ATHLETES	Total 5'531'415
SWIMMING	5'321'639
OPEN WATER	57'455
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	21'115
WATER POLO	114'438
DIVING	16'689
HIGH DIVING	79

COACHES	Total 42'202	% NFS WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SWIMMING	20'559	57%
OPEN WATER	14'881	29%
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	1'915	19%
WATER POLO	3'421	22%
DIVING	1'417	15%
HIGH DIVING	9	2%

OFFICIALS	Total 19'705	% NFS WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SW OFFICIALS	16'523	60%
OW OFFICIALS	660	33%
AS JUDGES	819	31%
WP REFEREES	1'353	26%
DV JUDGES	346	17%
HD JUDGES	4	17%



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	20107
JUNIOR	44355
YOUTH&YUNGER	363206
MASTERS	86764
AMATEUR	85777



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	437
JUNIOR	8822
YOUTH&YUNGER	1059
MASTERS	209
AMATEUR	3932



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	20
JUNIOR	2
YOUTH&YUNGER	4
MASTERS	3
AMATEUR	50



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	496
JUNIOR	1206
YOUTH&YUNGER	9932
MASTERS	1623
AMATEUR	6371



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

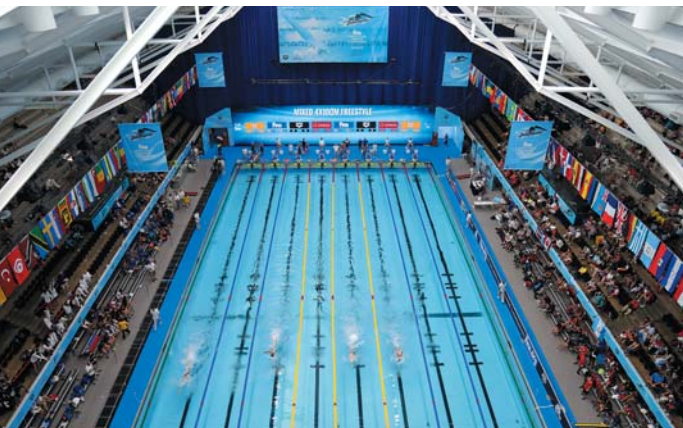
ELITE	923
JUNIOR	2593
YOUTH&YUNGER	4459
MASTERS	18758
AMATEUR	2394



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	3029
JUNIOR	9784
YOUTH&YUNGER	7736
MASTERS	5945
AMATEUR	34819

The top swimmer of the American continent, 14-times world champion Caeleb Dressel - and an iconic venue, the world-famous Indianapolis Natatorium



TOTAL (%) OF NFs ORGANISING NATIONAL COMPETITIONS





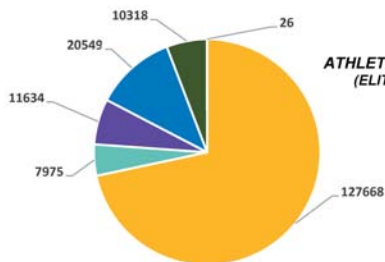
Photo: REUTERS



NFs WITH HIGH PERFORMANCE

Total %

> PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME	43%
> COUNTRY SUPPORT FOR ATHLETES	57%
> ANTIDOPING EDUCATION	38%



■ SWIMMING
 ■ OPEN WATER
 ■ DIVING
 ■ HIGH DIVING
 ■ WATER POLO
 ■ ARTISTIC SWIMMING



ASIA

ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL
CLUBS	7'562
NFs HEADQUARTER	78 (%)
NFs PERMANENTS	274
VOLUNTEERS	766
NFs BANK ACCOUNT	95%
NFs AUDIT CONTROL	90%

FACILITIES	Total 23'952
25M POOLS	6'223
50M POOLS	6'223
OTHER POOL SIZES	9'046
DIVING SRTUCTURE	258
HIGH PERFORMANCE CENTRE	68

ATHLETES	Total 2'228'901
SWIMMING	2'060'882
OPEN WATER	131'484
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	8'421
WATER POLO	20'985
DIVING	7'050
HIGH DIVING	79

COACHES	Total 63'888	% NFS
		WITH
		EDUCATION
		PROGRAMME
SWIMMING	48'365	90%
OPEN WATER	1'622	36%
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	1'475	39%
WATER POLO	11'327	56%
DIVING	1'095	44%
HIGH DIVING	4	2%

OFFICIALS	Total 30'947	% NFS
		WITH
		EDUCATION
		PROGRAMME
SW OFFICIALS	26'146	90%
OW OFFICIALS	1'387	44%
AS JUDGES	703	34%
WP REFEREES	1'568	56%
DV JUDGES	1'138	49%
HD JUDGES	5	3%



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	4926
JUNIOR	40736
YOUTH&YUNGER	23116
MASTERS	97962
AMATEUR	94943



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	804
JUNIOR	1415
YOUTH&YUNGER	949
MASTERS	409
AMATEUR	1570



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	2
JUNIOR	8
YOUTH&YUNGER	9
MASTERS	0
AMATEUR	60



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	497
JUNIOR	1204
YOUTH&YUNGER	1503
MASTERS	4
AMATEUR	1352



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	729
JUNIOR	1295
YOUTH&YUNGER	1647
MASTERS	50828
AMATEUR	2684



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	1354
JUNIOR	3106
YOUTH&YUNGER	4900
MASTERS	579
AMATEUR	3084



TOTAL (%) OF NFs ORGANISING NATIONAL COMPETITIONS





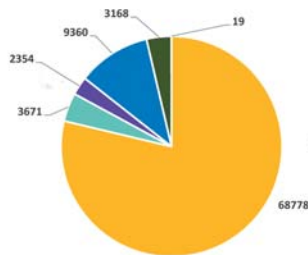
Diving is one of Asia's favourite discipline (pictured: Thailand's Thitipoom Marksin) – and the continent's most renowned aquatic complex, the Water Cube in Beijing



NFs WITH HIGH PERFORMANCE

Total %

> PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME	56%
> COUNTRY SUPPORT FOR ATHLETES	64%
> ANTIDOPING EDUCATION	68%



ASIAN ATHLETES IN PERFORMANCE (ELITE, JUNIOR, YOUTH)

SWIMMING OPEN WATER DIVING HIGH DIVING WATER POLO ARTISTIC SWIMMING



EUROPE

ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL
CLUBS	12'473
NFs HEADQUARTER	51
NFs PERMANENTS	969
VOLUNTEERS	5'334
NFs BANK ACCOUNT	98%
NFs AUDIT CONTROL	81%

FACILITIES	Total 28'282
25M POOLS	13'975
50M POOLS	1'894
OTHER POOL SIZES	11'999
DIVING STRUCTURE	414
HIGH PERFORMANCE CENTRE	90

ATHLETES	Total 20'290'067
SWIMMING	17'722'344
OPEN WATER	2'118'306
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	102'251
WATER POLO	267'513
DIVING	49'497
HIGH DIVING	30'156

COACHES	Total 169'506	% NFS WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SWIMMING	153'506	77%
OPEN WATER	1'952	23%
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	3'943	40%
WATER POLO	8'155	52%
DIVING	1'760	40%
HIGH DIVING	9	4%

OFFICIALS	Total 42'443	% NFS WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SW OFFICIALS	62'443	87%
OW OFFICIALS	6'351	44%
AS JUDGES	3'877	48%
WP REFEREES	19'113	64%
DV JUDGES	1'010	50%
HD JUDGES	30	10%



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	73633
JUNIOR	200877
YOUTH&YUNGER	223329
MASTERS	147947
AMATEUR	2503601



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	1067
JUNIOR	1938
YOUTH&YUNGER	3026
MASTERS	2027
AMATEUR	9539



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	30
JUNIOR	76
YOUTH&YUNGER	34
MASTERS	30
AMATEUR	30010



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	5197
JUNIOR	9310
YOUTH&YUNGER	8125
MASTERS	1899
AMATEUR	34840



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

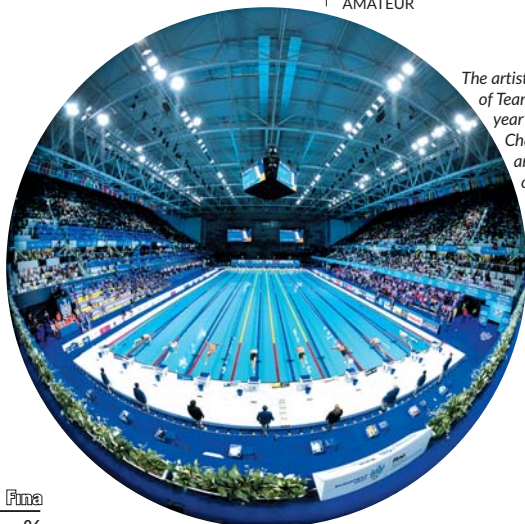
ELITE	2883
JUNIOR	3236
YOUTH&YUNGER	10866
MASTERS	148704
AMATEUR	19711



NUMBER OF ATHLETES

ELITE	28293
JUNIOR	33031
YOUTH&YUNGER	27247
MASTERS	17710
AMATEUR	41402

Photo
ANTONIO BRONIC / REUTERS



The artistic swimmers of Team Italy at this year's World Championships – and a photo of one of the top European venues, the Duna Arena in Budapest



TOTAL (%) OF NFs ORGANISING NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

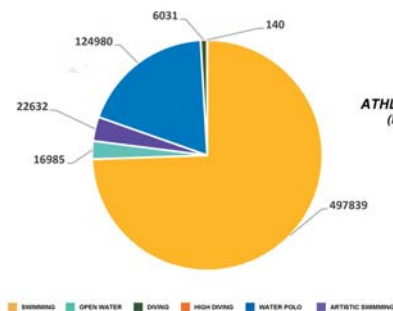




NFs WITH HIGH PERFORMANCE

Total %

- > PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME **81%**
- > COUNTRY SUPPORT FOR ATHLETES **81%**
- > ANTIDOPING EDUCATION **87%**



EUROPEAN ATHLETES IN PERFORMANCE (ELITE, JUNIOR, YOUTH)

SWIMMING OPEN WATER DIVING HIGH DIVING WATER POLO ARTISTIC SWIMMING



OCEANIA

ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL
CLUBS	1'194
NFs HEADQUARTER	6
NFs PERMANENTS	96
VOLUNTEERS	4'440
NFs BANK ACCOUNT	93%
NFs AUDIT CONTROL	47%

FACILITIES	Total 2'569
25M POOLS	958
50MPOOLS	1'007
OTHER POOL SIZES	56
DIVING SRTUCTURE	56
HIGH PERFORMANCE CENTRE	13

ATHLETES	Total 5'463'255
SWIMMING	5'208'050
OPEN WATER	209'021
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	610
WATER POLO	44'381
DIVING	1'193
HIGH DIVING	0

COACHES	Total 3'235	% NFS
		WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SWIMMING	2'059	54%
OPEN WATER	63	47%
ARTISTIC SWIMMING	76	14%
WATER POLO	767	7%
DIVING	28	7%
HIGH DIVING	0	0%

OFFICIALS	Total 6'294	% NFS
		WITH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
SW OFFICIALS	4'901	60%
OW OFFICIALS	1'266	40%
AS JUDGES	84	14%
WP REFEREES	2	0%
DV JUDGES	41	0%
HD JUDGES	0	0%



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	6227
JUNIOR	57162
YOUTH&YUNGER	57280
MASTERS	6878
AMATEUR	28840



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	10
JUNIOR	32
YOUTH&YUNGER	741
MASTERS	30
AMATEUR	0



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	0
JUNIOR	0
YOUTH&YUNGER	0
MASTERS	0
AMATEUR	0



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	49
JUNIOR	33
YOUTH&YUNGER	310
MASTERS	18
AMATEUR	100



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	374
JUNIOR	434
YOUTH&YUNGER	589
MASTERS	2847
AMATEUR	103



NUMBER OF ATHLETES	
ELITE	330
JUNIOR	17217
YOUTH&YUNGER	11910
MASTERS	3454
AMATEUR	7195

Australia is a global powerhouse in many aquatic disciplines, and its men's water polo team (pictured: captain Aaron Younger in action) is also on the rise - and a glimpse of the continent's most impressive facility, the Sydney Olympic pool



TOTAL (%) OF NFs ORGANISING NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

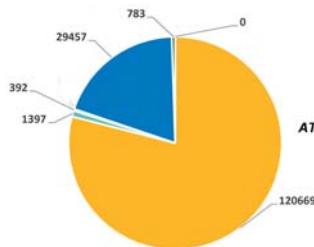




NFs WITH HIGH PERFORMANCE

Total %

- > PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME 34 %
- > COUNTRY SUPPORT FOR ATHLETES 27 %
- > ANTIDOPING EDUCATION 40 %



OCEANIAN ATHLETES IN PERFORMANCE (ELITE, JUNIOR, YOUTH)

SWIMMING OPEN WATER DIVING HIGH DIVING WATER POLO ARTISTIC SWIMMING

HEROES FROM

MAGYAR ÚSZÓ SZÖVETSÉG

Sandor
WLADAR



THE PAST

Aleksandar
SOSTAR

What they have in common is that both are great champions from Eastern Europe and later returned to their beloved sports which they are still serving. However, their careers were in contrast:

while Sandor Wladar quit swimming early because of ugly experiences in Hungary around the boycotted Los Angeles Olympics in 1984, Aleksandar Sostar stayed in the pool as long as he could and was still active in collecting trophies at the age of 40. Ah, by the way, one more thing in common: Sandor Wladar did play water polo for a while in order not to leave the pool so painfully early in the mid-80s.



By Gergely CSURKA
FINA Media
Committee Member
(HUN)



Sandor WLADAR (HUN, swimming)

“I was living to win”

This is a story of a boy with brilliant swimming talent who managed to conquer the highest heights and brought Hungary its first Olympic gold in 1980 after a painful wait of 28 years. But it's a story and not a tale as it lacks the fairy-tale elements. It's a story from East Europe in the 70s and 80s, with highly different values from those commonly accepted in the free world. Sandor Wladar was the favourite pupil of legendary coach Tamas Szechy. But he can hardly recall any fond memories from his active career. Yet not even the toughest moment could ruin his extremely strong bond with swimming – which still lasts, as today he is the president of the Hungarian Swimming Association.

It was just the usual beginning: the parents sent the older brother to a swimming course and once they saw that the training had an outstanding impact on him (instead of spending his days on the streets and doing useless stuff he became a disciplined boy), the younger son had to follow him.

At that moment Sandor Wladar had his fate. But what was even more important, he met Tamas Szechy. The parents made a sure bet – by the mid-70s the

coach had already been famous and infamous for his methods: he demanded the utmost discipline, he demanded enormous workloads but at the same time young lives were shaped in a very accountable and healthy way.

Soon it turned out that Sandor was a raw diamond even among the gifted kids.

“I'm dedicated, committed and tireless – never give up anything”

“He was the real talent” his brother Zoltan recalled. “He was born to swim. His buoyancy, his body shape, his mentality and nerves were all a perfect match for this sport. When we faced a critical moment in a competition, my mind blocked while he was inspired by the most difficult situations and that pushed him towards achievements he might not have accomplished in normal circumstances.”

“Let me add that Zoltan didn't devote as many efforts as I did,” Sandor put in. “I think he was also an outstanding talent, a fine 1500m free swimmer, once he even beat the greatest of our times, Vladimir Salnikov, so he also had a gift. But it all depended on your will – and he just didn't want the victory so fanatically, at any cost, while I was living to

win. I did everything and even more in every moment in order to reach for the wall first. In my very first competition, as a kid, I was so nervous in a 1500m free race that I forgot to count the laps and I would have turned after 1600m, when the judges stopped me. I got second there but that taught me to approach the races with a cool head.”

Talking about memories from the early days, Sandor offers a surprising reply – but that also explains much of what came next in his career.

“I can't really recall any memories before I turned 10. Maybe I'm an extremely slow-maturing type of person but I would say that my life was a kind of vegetative existence during the first 10 years and I started recognising the world around me only after that. My brother was the opposite, he was smarter, more creative, more inventive. He had loads of ideas, initiatives, but delivering them was less important for him – he would rather find out another genius thing. I'm the opposite: if anything grabs my attention I will never settle until I go all the way to the end, fulfil the goal set, no matter what it takes, how long it lasts. I'm dedicated, committed and tireless – never give up anything. I inherited this from my mother. She is 90 today but still insists on walking up to the hill to a favourite place from her house, whether it's raining, snowing or boiling heat.”

And perhaps these values were the ones Szechy recognised in him immediately – and these were the ones he was looking for in all talented swimmers.

Training under the famed coach was anything but fun, all in all. The road leading to the top of the world was paved with suffering and pressure. But it led to the top of the world inevitably, at least for the most talented – history shows that under Tamas Szechy at least four golden generations grew up. And among them it was Sandor Wladar who ultimately delivered the coach's very first Olympic title – and the first for Hungarian swimming since 1952.

“It was like a military camp”

By 1980, “The Old Man”, as everyone nicknamed Szechy, had already been through two unsuccessful editions of the Games – although Andras Hargitay and Zoltan Verzaszto claimed world titles. Montreal 1976, especially, was a bitter failure. However,



Recalling the glorious (and sometimes really painful) days:
 Sandor Wladar en route to the Moscow Olympic gold (top left) and at the wall in 1980 (bottom) - with fellow Hungarian Moscow medallists Zoltan Verraszo (middle) and Alban Vermes (right) - and the Old Man, collector of souls and the master behind the champions, the legendary Tamas Szechy (top right)



Szechy himself learned a lot in the process. Both about competitions and training loads. The first pupils had to cover nothing like the distance in practice that were imposed on the middle generations of Wladar, then a bit later Jozsef Szabo and Tamas Darnyi, and even more so, and effectively, on Attila Czene and Norbert Rozsa.

"Once Andras Hargitay asked the Old Man if I were much more talented than him to clock way better times at the same age. He responded: 'No, I developed a lot in the meantime.'" - Wladar recalls one of the most remarkable dialogues he witnessed on the pool deck. But he is reluctant to remember more.

"You know, I was often dreaming about my university exams, even when a professor put me to shame, or of the horrors of the long sessions of morbid anatomy. But I did not have a single dream about swimming, training or meets. None. I only retained some movie-like flashes, moments, but the whole picture is rather a misty impression, white like sour cream, which is, I think, the defensive reaction of my soul. To erase the bad things, as to be brutally honest, there were plenty to forget and really few positives to retain. It was like a military camp. My father got up at 3.30 to prepare my breakfast, mostly two slices of bread with a pair of sausages, woke me up at 4.00, then put me into his car at 4.35 as I had to stand on the starting block at 5.00 every single morning. You were not allowed to be late, to go to pee - either you did it before or



had to hold back till the end of the session. At 7.30 I jumped back into my dad's car, next to his actual pupil as he worked as a driver instructor. Soon afterwards he dropped me off at school. At two in the afternoon I went home, had lunch and headed back to the pool at 15.15 as it took a while to get there by bus. The second session lasted from 16.30 to 19.00, then I went home and enjoyed the brightest part of my day, walking 400 metres from the bus stop to our home. That was the phase I could switch off a bit. And this went on every single day for long, long years."

And our hero did not even go into the details of what they had to bear in training - the loads, the time-goals set and the punishments if those were not met. The lighter ones were just extra kilometres to swim. "Once I had to stay for a longer extra-load with the assistant coaches. The Old Man left in the meantime and took the dressing-room key with him. I had to travel home in my robe and sneakers on the bus..."

What? You may ask - why did he, they, stay at all? First of all, you need to see that it was communist East Europe. The 70s in their prime. Questioning any-

thing was not part of your life. Following orders – that was the only way. Since that had already gone on for almost quarter of a century, people got used to it. Children were raised along these rules.

In a world like this the little community led by Tamas Szechy was not an outstanding exception. It was just stricter. But the Maestro had something very special in how he could persuade his youngsters to follow his orders.

“Without him I would never have got that Olympic gold”

“I was afraid of him, I admired him, I loved him and I hated him,” Wladar says. “And this would change within a single day, sometimes more than once. There has been no other person in my life who could produce such a wide range of emotions and also trigger so many in yourself. There were times when I swore to God that once I grew up and the Old Man got really old, I would bust him up badly. Or just ruin his car a bit. These were times when he beat me in order for me to stay on the ground and remain disciplined. I was upset. I wanted to go home and ask my father to come back and return everything the coach did with me. But on my way home I calmed down. When I entered the door I had already convinced myself, OK, it was your fault and the Old Man was right and everything happened for the best for you. You will scarcely find any man who was as persuasive as him. He simply filled the whole environment with his enormous personality. If you sat in front of him you felt you were helplessly small. He was a bit honest, a bit liar, a bit pushy, a bit dictatorial but he perfectly adjusted to any arising situation and identified absolutely clearly the way he would reach his goals.”

Once he convinced the headmaster of the high school that he had to let Wladar miss the year-ending grammar exam because he had to do an essential training session instead. “At that moment, he seemed to have gone too far, this move even upset my parents and the head coach of the national team” Sandor says with a broad smile. “But in the end he won again. He explained in his unique way that it was in my interest to attend the second class a second time, so my knowledge would be more well-founded and I should profit from this in the rest of my life. He managed to disarm everyone. Parents, the headmaster, the teachers. So I skipped the year before the Moscow Olympics and could focus entirely on my preparations. Well, in the wake of my win, would anyone argue that it was worth it?”

It seems like an unbelievable story

and one which would not occur in any normal democracy, Wladar gives an insight into why this could indeed happen and what the motives were behind it.

“The Old Man wanted to occupy you. Possess you. Entirely. And not share you with anyone else, like your parents or your school. He collected souls and owned them. I would say, he looked for mediums. If you were able to resonate to his will, you were part of the team. If you were unable to cope with his mental games, then he left you behind. He often had one-on-one talks with the better ones, like me. After practice, in the coaches’ room. Sometimes he even drove you home. And he was talking and talking and talking. He had infinite ways to convince you that everything he did was for your sake. To become a better swimmer. And to become Olympic champion. And I tell you what: without him I would never have got that Olympic gold. He made me believe that I was capable of it. He planted a heck of a will in me. And the only way he could achieve that was that I was his pet swimmer from 1979 till 1984. He focused almost solely on coaching me. Controlled every single minute of my life and he was master of offering you cathartic moments on a daily basis too. This is how he kept his disciples in the pool amidst such conditions.”

It was somewhat typical, what happened at those 1980 Moscow Games. First of all, Sandor Wladar won, he became Olympic champion in the 200m back. His older team-mate Zoltan Veraszto touched second. However, there were not many joyful moments on the pool deck. Maybe a hug but then immediately instructions struck. “Széchy started explaining what I should say on TV,” Wladar says. “I was a shy 17-year-old who was too worried whenever he needed to talk in front of a camera. I was supposed to tell the reporter that the whole race had been planned as it unfolded and I kind of helped Zoltan to come second at the end. Hell, that wasn’t the case at all! It was a gruelling race and I could barely win it. You can see on the video that I’m losing my speed at 180m. I felt that Zoltan would beat me, I was totally exhausted, water poured into my body through all available holes... But then, this is something I can still recall, I suddenly and clearly heard the voice of my mother. ‘Don’t give up!’ It was as mythical as it sounds but that helped me to push myself till the end.”

At home, the whole building where he had a flat was decorated with flowers and the neighbours received him as a hero. In the following year he doubled up the backstroke titles at the European Championships. Then came two silvers (one from the 1982 Worlds and one from the 1983 Europeans) – and an abrupt end.

An unworthy finish of a fine but definitely shortened career.

“A dream never fulfilled”

“We were over the blast. In time, I mean, definitely not in our souls. We couldn’t go to Los Angeles because of the (Soviet-bloc) boycott. I had an invitation from Michigan University to join their programme. Before I would have travelled to the US, I had a chance to visit West Germany at the end of August 1984. My godmother was a great painter and graphic artist. She had an exhibition in Bonn and we had a phone call when she told us how successful the event was and I told her that co-incidentally I would be also heading to the country, so if she needed anything I could bring it with me. She said that the staff members of the local embassy were really helpful, so she would love to offer them some smaller pieces of her artwork. We had a key to her flat. I went up, took some of her drawings, put them into a box and two days later I drove to Germany. At least I wanted to. At the Hungarian border they stopped me and asked if I was bringing any item of higher value on my own or by someone else’s order. I said no. But they decided to raid my car.”

When they found the drawings, he was immediately put in a dark room and then questioned for hours in a manner as if he had stolen or smuggled real national treasures like the crown jewels. But the worst part came after. He was exposed to the press, the high-profile swimmer who had committed a serious violation of customs regulations. In those days people knew that top athletes could earn a fortune by smuggling valuable clothing and electronic goods from their western tours and because of their star status they were not really bothered at the borders. It seemed just another case, but everyone

Medal tally

Olympic Games

Gold
200m back – 1980, Moscow

FINA World Championships

Silver
200m back – 1982, Guayaquil

European Championships

Gold
100m back – 1981, Split
200m back – 1981, Split

Silver
200m back – 1983, Rome



"If I enter a 200m race I will not quit at 100m, right?"

It's one of the most well-known in the country – thanks to the Wladar Bros who form a fine combination: Zoltan is a surgeon while Sandor is an internist. He was also a keen businessman and presided over the swimming club where Daniel Gyurta (Olympic champion in London 2012) and the Verraszto siblings (world and European medallist David and European medallist Evelyn) were raised and excelled.

Then, all of a sudden, in the turmoil which hit the federation in 2017, the members decided that Wladar should be the one to lead Hungarian swimming into more peaceful waters. In October that year he was unanimously elected as the new president.

"Had I known what I was taking on, I would have definitely said no," he laughs. "Often I spend 10 to 12 hours in our headquarters, like a paid staffer, though I still do it on a voluntary basis of course. This is me, I can't help it. I was talking to you about my assets, that I was strong-minded to go all the way, whatever it took. This has never changed. I'm just doing the same as I did as a swimmer. If I enter a 200m race I will not quit at 100m, right? And I managed to build a wonderful team around me, they are true professionals whom I can trust. Of course, we must solve all kinds of problems with our national team swimmers, our age-group teams and run junior programmes. In the meantime, this team organised four major FINA events in 2019 alone: Champion Swim Series, Marathon Swimming World Cup, Junior World Championships, Swimming World Cup – within a span of five months. Show me another national federation which does the same and delivers these events on the level we did. Challenge after challenge, week after week. But I was trained for that. By the Old Man. By the way, recently I found an interview with him on YouTube. I was simply amazed. Shortly before his death he still had that unparalleled dedication and determination. It comes through the screen, grabs you and flies you to the skies. I decided to ask my staff to make a motivational video by using that footage – it will be a fantastic tool to further boost the enthusiasm of our coaches."

And the president is enthusiastic too. *"I'm 56 but for swimming I was ready to give up my comfortable life and my hobbies. Still, I find the positives. I spend my weekends in our clinic and cure animals – that makes me relax. And when I saw Kristof Milak breaking the 200m fly world record in Gwangju I felt my life was filled with gold once more. Just like in Moscow, that was one of those moments when you had to admit: no matter how many annoying chapters you have behind you, swimming is still giving you the utmost joy." ■*

thought that it must have been something really serious if Wladar had been caught and given up to the media.

"I still have the old police report which said that the estimated value of the drawings was 8,650 Hungarian forints. In those days the average salary amounted to 5,452 forints. So it wasn't a big deal anyway, but none of those drawings was intended to be put up for sale at all. Still, that was the good old way to ruin one's life and reputation that they applied to many athletes. Bugging phone calls, then setting up the trap. The neighbours, who had greeted me with flowers four years earlier, did not return my greetings. More painfully, and as a natural consequence in those days, the state sports authority revoked my permission to go to the US, so studying and swimming at Michigan University and getting to know the American culture and their training methods remained a dream never fulfilled. Actually, I was set up because of this and a couple of harsher remarks I had made towards the totally dumb leadership of the federation. It was revenge. I tried to convince them that even our swimming would benefit if I learned something new in the US. The only response I got: 'If you

His favourite pastime is practising his profession: at the family-owned pet clinic with a seemingly magnificent patient

don't like to stay here and are still able to attend university, you might end up driving the local buses.' And that was it. For me, there was no way of staying in competitive swimming any longer."

Instead he joined the water polo team of his club, Ujpest. Two years later he was part of the side which caused a huge upset by clinching the league title. *"It was a lot of fun. I didn't have to leave the pool but I had to recognise that I had very little talent for this sport, so I soon quit," he says but also adds that in the end this internal chapter also led to a happy ending. "Again, following my brother, I went to university and studied to be a vet. And again, I was stubborn enough that finally I was able to stay in the university to be part of research and soon the old regime fell, freedom arrived in the country and we were able to set up our private animal clinic."*

By Dean BAUER
FINA Aquatics
World Magazine
Correspondent
(CRO)



Aleksandar SOSTAR (SRB/YUG – water polo)

The goalkeeper who wanted to score goals

One of the biggest names in the history of Serbian water polo. In fact, a lot more. Not only in the history of Yugoslav water polo but in the whole history of the sport. In ancient Rome there was a saying: 'Nomen est omen', the name is a sign. His name is indeed a sign: a sign of greatness.

The first association for the name of Aleksandar is the historical figure of the famous conqueror, Alexander the Great. Sostar was just that, Alexander the Great. During the 80s and 90s he was arguably the best water polo goalkeeper in the world. His treasury, just like that of his illustrious predecessor, was full of gold, medals, trophies from the Olympic Games, World and European Championships.

At the start maybe we were just a bit uncomfortable to tell him that this interview was intended to be published in the 'Heroes of the Past' column, so it turned out that we were to talk about the good old times with someone who used to be a hero, a long time ago...

"Ha, ha, ha, not a problem at all," he answered with a laugh. "So be it then. Time passes. There are new generations, and this... Heroes of the Past, well... that's right! That's the time."

For this great goalie, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame in Fort Lauderdale in 2011, water polo was his first sports option. He did not try swimming first or basketball, football...

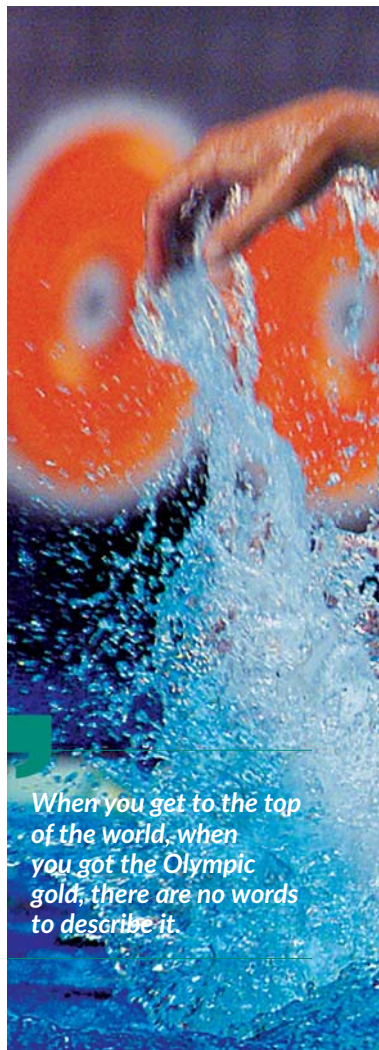
"As a child I lived in Belgrade not far from the Banjica, the swimming pool of the Water Polo Club Partizan. My two friends and I went there one day. One friend gave up after seven days, the other after a month, and me... I stayed for a lifetime! However, I started to train quite late, I was 11 and a half years old. That was the upper limit. Today it would be unthinkable late."

"People must think a little first"

Why is it too late? At that age, one is still a child, who should be given a few more years to play, and not immediately be specialised in sports, a kid pulled into full, formal training.

It is an extreme case to start practising any sport at the age of 11 or 12 years and then expect something big is going to be achieved. Especially in aquatic sports. On the other hand, I am also not in favour of dropping the minimum age limit for starting training way too low. Now you have kids who, if they do not start to train at nine, are told that it's too late. No, that's not too late. At nine years old! Only we have a second problem, and this is the 'fight for children' since many sports want, need, kids at a very young age. What I do not like is what you have at national level today, competition for children under 10-12 years. In water polo. This is very early because of the psychological side of their development. It turns out that the kids then have a wall at home full of medals and trophies, for example, and then success goes to a 13-year-old boy's head and he does not realise that all those medals mean absolutely nothing in the context of something he might achieve later if he wants or manages to build a serious sports career. It's difficult to explain that to a child. In my

Photo: TIBOR ILYÉS / MTI



When you get to the top of the world, when you got the Olympic gold, there are no words to describe it.

time, I had my first official competition when I was 14 years old. I know that time and social fluctuations are changing, but people must think a little first.

Let's get back to you and your beginning. Did you start as a goalie from day one?

First, like every child, I wanted to score. So I was a 'regular' (outfield) player. Then my coach, today an excellent friend, Aleksandar Maksimovic, put me in goal. It was at the age of 13 and I was quite unhappy

Goalies usually stay longer in the water – Sostar indeed stayed incredibly long as he was still playing at the highest level at close to 40

that I had to defend the goal and no longer be able to score goals. But he left the club some two months later and I immediately stopped being a goalie and started playing outfield again. And I was pretty good. One day, I remember, Vlaho Orlic, one of the great coaches at the time, joined in our training with the first team of Partizan. He swam a little and chatted with me. He told me if I wanted to become a good water polo player I had to work a lot, an awful lot. Then two months later coach Maksimovic came back to the club, and in February 1978 we had to play a game in the Yugoslav Cup. My club had a really good team but we did not have a goalkeeper because I played outfield. Then Maksimovic sent me back to the goal, for a second time... And finally I stayed there.

“I'm just happy to be part of that big generation”

The legend started... The most brilliant period was probably when the national team of Yugoslavia won gold at the Olympics in Seoul 1988, gold at the 1991 FINA World Championship in Perth – on both occasions retaining their titles – and gold at the 1991 European Championships in Athens, as well as gold at the 1991 Mediterranean Games. Was that the best water polo team ever? Although we know that there was a fantastic Italian side in the 90s and Hungary had three Olympic golds in the first decade of the new millennium...



HEROES FROM THE PAST

I think it is impossible to choose the best team of all time in any sport. Impossible. That team of Yugoslavia was not always the same. One or two players have always changed. True, we were always part of the circle of favourites and we won a lot of gold. I do not think there was any competition after 1983 from which Yugoslavia did not return with a medal. But the best of all time... I cannot say that. You have just mentioned Italy and Hungary from the later epoch, but the Soviet Union in the early 80s was also great, like the Serbian team since 2008. Or 2010... I'm just happy to be part of that big generation.

From an entire career full of great stories, success, anecdotes, if there is anything you might wish to highlight then it must be Seoul 1988.

When you get to the top of the world, when you got the Olympic gold, there are no words to describe it. After 1988, that national team was completely refreshed. Many players left it at the age of 28-29, totally opposite from today. Then, you were (considered) old after that many years. I know, for example, that this generation had 51 consecutive victories, and we lost in our 52nd match. It happened in the final of the 1989 European Championships in Bonn, against West Germany. After extra time, in the sudden death. Still, that run was a demonstration of the quality of Yugoslav water polo. And that we still have today, when you see three very strong medal-winning teams of the former state, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro.



The breakup of Yugoslavia has further enriched water polo by creating three new strong national teams.

That's right. These are the three countries who are favourites at all tournaments in the world and very often they win a medal. However, I know that sometimes some parties outside this region do not look at us in a very sympathetic way, because this winning streak gets boring, but it's not about luck or chance. When others start to work in water polo the same way that they work in Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro, then the competition will be even stronger. Although, I think the competition is now very strong because we always have 6-7 teams going for medals at each event.

“If the goalkeeper makes a mistake, there is no one else to correct it”

Like every sport, water polo has been changing for decades. Just recently some further changes have been adopted in the rules, which then change the way of play in certain positions. And what about the goalkeepers? Do you like these changes?

There is something very interesting to me. Now the goalkeeper can go forward, to attack, beyond 'his' half of the pool. This can contribute to attractiveness because every team can now risk gambling with one player more in the offensive, while they attack. Otherwise, the whole story about changing the rules of water polo is a little overdone. I think it is important to just determine the direction where we are going and what we want to reach. Water polo is a specific sport, it is clear that speed of movement cannot be the same as on a hard surface, like in handball and basketball, for example. The

more important thing it is to determine if we want to have a cleaner game in water polo, that is the only important thing. There is always a lot of talk that many people cannot understand the discipline, they do not see much about it, but the popularity of water polo does not depend on that. Today, the essence is promotion of a sport on all levels. It is incredible to hear talk that water polo is not popular when you see full stands at each big competition.

A little bit more about the water polo positions. Some goalkeepers take notes of how some player shoots – what did you do in your era?

Statistics are something to be respected. It's not the one in sport that's always 100% accurate. Goalkeepers take their statistics, but some players too, to see what a goalkeeper is doing, how he is making his saves. There was a lot of talk about me, that I had some notes where I recorded everything. None of that is true. I never wrote anything and I did not have any notes, but I had a lot in my mind. I've been very careful about what, how, where, in which way some player shoots. The position of goalkeeper is a very specific one in all team sports. Because a goalie takes part in 50% of the match, when you are on the defence. And that 50% of the match has a triple intensity compared with what's happening at the other end. I do not say that the goalkeeper is a bit more important than others, but he is different from a psychological point of view. You have six players in the field and if one makes a mistake, he can always rely on the other five to correct that, plus there is still the goalkeeper. If the goalkeeper makes a mistake, there is no one else to correct it. That's why the goalkeeper must be physically but also psychologically very well prepared.

Did you have sport psychologists in the former Yugoslavia during the 80s? It's common today, but then...

Medal tally

Olympic Games

Gold
1988, Seoul

Bronze
2000, Sydney

FINA World Championships

Gold
1991, Perth

Silver
2001, Fukuoka

Has two European Championship golds, won 15 national club titles in three countries (YUG/SRB, ITA, ESP), one of the few players to claim all major European club trophies (Champions League, Cup Winners Cup, LEN Trophy and Super Cup) at least once in his career.

Two legendary teams from 1988: Europe's best club side, Partizan Belgrade, and the world's best national team, Yugoslavia, who retained their Olympic title in Seoul

Oh yes, we just had one. It was at the beginning, sometime in 1982 or 1983, at the Institute for Sport and Sports Medicine in Belgrade. We were organised from the very beginning at a very high level.

"I adapted much quicker for real life"

Was there a city, pool, player or team that was especially difficult to play for you?

As far as the player is concerned, it has been always very difficult to defend against a player who can always keep his eye on the goal and the goalkeeper. There were players with an incredibly strong shot, but it was not such a big problem for me. Those created the problems who could direct their shots based on how the goalkeeper was moving. I knew how they were shooting, what they did before, so there was some kind of 'chess in the water'. Among those particularly cunning, smart players I would mention Veselin Djuho and Igor Milanovic. They always watched the goalkeeper and assessed what the goalkeeper was doing and worked the opposite way to score a goal. It's a huge quality. Then there was Frank Otto from Germany. As for swimming pools, not only to me but to many players I know, the hardest thing was to play in Dubrovnik, in the old swimming pool of Gruz. And in Sibenik, also in Croatia. Water there seemed particularly heavy, ha, ha.

Do you regret that you were not born a bit later, because when you look at today's top-ranked players you can see that they make very high sums?

No, not at all, because I'm absolutely happy with everything I've achieved in my water polo career. Each time or period bears its own beauties. We earned our living in one way, today is another. We had some other qualities in my time. For example, I got an apartment in Belgrade from my club, Partizan. Today, players cannot even think about that. My first 'bigger' contract was when I went abroad, and it happened in 1991.

What did water polo generally give to you?

Everything! Because I've been in water polo all my life. I graduated at the Faculty of Engineering and thought I would play water polo up to 32-33 years of age. It



turned out I played up to 39 and after that I stayed in the sport and I became an official. Water polo and sport generally taught me a lot more about things in life than my friends know who did not practise sports. I adapted much quicker for real life. I'm talking about socialisation issues, time organisation, problem solving. There is some goal in the sport, and the goal is to win. Victory comes from the team, and it is necessary to cooperate. All these things are connected in sport, but you also meet those values and challenges later, once you are out to lead an 'ordinary' life.

"You are the first to start but there are a lot of laps to go till the end"

How did you deal with the end of your competitive career and move to this 'ordinary life'? For many athletes this is a problem, because Aleksandar Sostar is a world champion and an Olympic winner, but once you get out of the pool... that became only memories almost overnight.

Exactly. The fact that I claimed golds in my career does not mean I'm just as successful as a sports official or in business etc. Though it's not a start from level zero either. When you have a top sports career, it still gives you a better starting position. However, this is only a little better initial position, and it helps only if you understand and accept that in your 'new life' you have to work again, and even better compared with those 10-15 years spent in the swimming pool to become Olympic winner. As in the pole position in Formula 1. You are the first to start but there are a lot of laps to go till the end.

After your active playing career you were the director of the club, the president of the Water Polo Federation of Serbia and Montenegro, the president of the Sports Direction of the Ministry of Education and Sports of Serbia, Deputy Minister. Today you are the president of the Serbian Sports Federation and president of the Water Polo Club Partizan Belgrade. But what about coaching?

That's the only thing I did not do, and I'm a little bit sorry because of that. Again, maybe it's never too late. That's the only thing I did not try in the sport, and sincerely, it's really alluring. As far as my age is concerned, I'm 55 now, although I think years are not so crucial. Who knows, maybe I'll give it a try.

Is there a coach who has left the greatest impression on you?

The late Vlaho Orlic left a huge legacy not only in my club, in Partizan, but in the entire Water Polo Association of the then Yugoslavia. Later, of course, Ratko Rudic and Nikola Stamenic. In Italy, but in any other way, also the late Paolo de Crescenzo, too bad that he passed away. And Toni Esteller who is currently working in Barcelona.

And now, in the end, your choice of top goalkeepers in the world.

Unfortunately, I never had a chance to watch the Serb great Milan Gale Muskatirovic. Still, I should mention him, then Croatian Karlo Stipanac and the late Milos Markovic from Serbia. Need to add American Craig Wilson and definitely the late Jesus Rollan from Spain. From nowadays, the top guys are surely Branislav Mitrovic of Serbia and Josip Pavic of Croatia, and among the younger ones Marko Bijac, also from Croatia, and Hungary's new talent, Soma Vogel. ■

News from the



Family

AUSTRALIA

■ Olympic champion Kyle Chalmers has his fingers crossed that a third round of heart surgery will kick start his second Olympic campaign for Tokyo 2020. Chalmers entered hospital just a month after his leading role for Australia in claiming five medals at the World Championships in Gwangju. The Olympic 100m freestyle champion has undergone two previous operations to correct his supra-ventricular tachycardia condition – a recurrent rapid heartbeat that is normally not life-threatening. Chalmers suffered an attack during the 2016 Australian Short Course Championships in Brisbane. And in 2017 he underwent his second round of surgery after increasingly suffering symptoms, including an abnormally fast heart rhythm, and sat out the World Championships in Budapest. Chalmers returned to training under coach Peter Bishop in Adelaide and made a triumphant return at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, with gold in the 200m freestyle, and at the Pan Pacs in Tokyo, where

he won the 100m freestyle. Chalmers showed scintillating form through 2019 – spearheading the Dolphins to gold in the 4x200m freestyle and claiming silver in a close race with US superstar Caeleb Dressel in the 100m freestyle in his five-medal haul. Apart from his obvious individual prowess Chalmers remains the key cog in four Australian relays for Tokyo. He has time on his side to make a full recovery, with the Olympic Swimming Trials not till next June in his home city of Adelaide.

■ Janelle Elford, who guided her daughter Lani Pallister to three gold and three silver medals at the FINA World Junior Swimming Championships in Budapest in August, has dared her girl "to dream big" as she prepares her for her next major challenge – next year's Tokyo Olympic Trials. The message to 17-year-old Lani from Mum and coach and as an Olympian herself was: *"Remain humble, but get fired up. The next 10 months will be gruelling. But trust me, it will be worth it. Don't just dare to dream. Dare to dream big."*

Messages from a woman who has done it herself and, as a coach, has seen the potential and hard work pay off for Lani, who delivered a spectacular six days in Budapest to be named the Female Swimmer of the Meet, completing a 400, 800 and 1500 treble – only the second in seven Junior World Championships – and all in championship record times. You get the impression that as a coach Janelle is getting the best out of her swimmer. Both Janelle and her husband, former surf and triathlon champion Rick Pallister, know she will get there with both feet firmly on the ground. Lani has been able to mix her talents and her time as a budding Olympian and also as a world and Australian surf lifesaving champion with Alexandra Headlands. Catching waves, competing in surf, iron-woman and board races and mixing with her friends at the beach has played a major part in the Pallister lifestyle – a perfect mix for young Pallister. She will now set her sights on the middle-distance and distance freestyle events at next June's Olympic Trials in Adelaide.



Good news again, Kyle Chalmers has had a second successful operation



Mum and daughter: the Pallisters did an excellent job at the FINA World Junior Swimming Championships in Budapest

AUSTRIA

Lena Grabowski's top form lasted until the end of the season. She claimed silver in the 200m backstroke at the World Junior Championships in Budapest, improving her Austrian record, set at the World Championships in Gwangju, to 2:10.27 and undercutting Olympic qualification for Tokyo 2020 by 12 hundredths of a second. Grabowski is the third Austrian to make the cut, alongside Marlene Kahler (1500m freestyle) and Felix Aubock (800m freestyle). "I just missed the podium at the Junior European Championships and the semi-finals at the World Championships. This is now a real satisfaction for me. I still have reserves, can still improve my technique and have a lot of plans," said Grabowski, who celebrated her 17th birthday at the beginning of September.

CANADA

Julie Payette, the Governor General of Canada, has announced 83 new appointments to the Order of Canada. The order, created in 1967, honours people "whose service shapes our society; whose innovations ignite our imaginations; and whose compassion unites our communities". This year FINA Honorary Member Eldon C. Godfrey was among 21 who received the 'Officer' award of the order, whose motto is *Desiderantes Meliorem Patriam* (They desire a better country). The order's six-point white enamel insignia symbolises Canada's northern heritage and diversity, because no two snowflakes are alike.



FINA Honorary Member Eldon C. Godfrey has received the Order of Canada

CROATIA

Sandro Sukno, the best water polo player of the 2017 FINA World Championships and the captain of title-winning Croatian team, has announced the end of his playing career for health reasons at the age of 29. Two months after the 2017 Worlds, doctors discovered serious cardiac problems in a routine check. Sukno underwent heart surgery in the Cleveland Clinic in the USA in March 2018. After a good recovery, he returned to water polo but his doctors could not guarantee maximum safety if he returned to professional sport, so he had to say good-bye to his beloved sport. However, Sandro is staying on the pool deck and is now the assistant coach of the Croatian national water polo team.

Franko Grgic (16), twice champion in the 800m (European junior record) and 1500m free (world junior record) at the FINA World Junior Swimming Championships in Budapest, was this year's winner of the prestigious annual Drazen Petrovic Award for the best and most promising young athlete in Croatia. The award has been presented by the Croatian Olympic Committee for 12 years. Grgic received it from COC President Zlatko Matesa and Biserka Petrovic, mother of Drazen Petrovic, a Yugoslav and Croatian basketball international who won two Olympic silver medals and one bronze and played in the NBA. Petrovic tragically died in a car accident in 1993 at the age of 28.

FRANCE

Twins Anastasiya and Daria Bayandina, former members of the Russian national artistic swimming team, have been training alongside the French national team at the INSEP (National Institute of Sport, Expertise and Performance)

centre near Paris for three months. They are on track to eventually join the team and represent France internationally. The Bayandina twins, born and raised in the Siberian town of Krasnoyarsk, were members of the Russian junior and senior national teams for many years. They earned gold medals at the 2017 FINA World Championships and the 2018 European Championships in technical and free team. As juniors, they won gold at the 2014 FINA Junior World Championships in duet. They were also part of Russia's training squad for the 2016 Olympic Games but did not make the final cut for the Olympic team. Now 22, they were not selected for the 2019 Russian team, which in turn drastically reduced, once again, their likelihood of going to the Olympics. They travelled to France in January for a trial period and settled in full-time at INSEP at the end of March. They now share training sessions with the French team but cannot swim internationally for the country until the required formalities are completed.



Finding a new home: Russian twins Anastasiya and Daria Bayandina pose with their French team-mates



An abrupt end to a magnificent career: Croatian superstar Sandro Sukno was forced to call it a day after he was diagnosed with a serious heart problem

UNITED KINGDOM GREAT BRITAIN

One in three adults in England cannot swim, according to new statistics. Now Swim England is to highlight the benefits of swimming as a valuable life skill in a nationwide drive to encourage more adults to take the plunge and learn how to swim. Through the #LoveSwimming campaign, the achievements of adults who have conquered a fear of the water or simply decided it's never too late to learn will be celebrated in a bid to inspire others.

Jane Nickerson, Swim England chief executive, praised the courage of people who decide to learn to swim as an adult. She said: "Swimming is a valuable life skill and it is so important that we continue to highlight its benefits in a bid to reduce the number of individuals unable to swim... Through the #LoveSwimming campaign, we've shown the benefits of swimming on mental wellbeing, physical health, social cohesion and family connection. I believe that those who learn to swim in later life should be celebrated. The sessions are welcoming, supportive and very well run but it takes a real hero to learn in their adult years."

HUNGARY



■ Hungary mourns its water polo legend Istvan Szivos Jr. who died on November 11, aged 72. The most successful nation in the discipline's history has had many great players, but only a few have had such an impact on water polo as Istvan Szivos, who took part in four Olympics, capturing medals in each (bronze in 1968, silver in 1972, gold in 1976, bronze in 1980), claimed a world title in 1973, two silvers in 1975 and 1978, a World Cup gold in 1979 and two European Championship

victories, in 1974 and 1977. He was not only a giant, 202cm (6ft 7-1/2ins) tall centre-forward – the rules had to be modified because of his unparalleled abilities and physical measures – but also a man and player of wisdom. He won all the titles available to the national team and his clubs (Ferencváros and OSC) – and then went on to gain as much success after he ended his playing career. Szivos became a dentist, lectured at the medical university, coached Ferencváros to national titles and the Hungarian junior teams to age-group triumphs. He later became president of Ferencváros and led Hungary's biggest and most popular club to unprecedented heights. After retiring from active work, Szivos still played an active role in his beloved sport, oversaw the federation's junior development programmes and presided over the water polo teams of KSI (Central Sports School), the country's most successful water polo academy. The name Szivos has long been famous in the world of water polo. Istvan Szivos Sr. was twice an Olympic champion (1952 and 1956) and Istvan Jr's son Marton is still an active player who inherited his majestic sense of the game and ball-touch from his grand ancestors – he was a world champion in 2013 and a double Olympian, featuring prominently in a series of outstanding matches

IRELAND

Swim Ireland have announced a team of 19 swimmers for the 2019 LEN European Short Course Championships (25m) in Glasgow in December. Eleven seniors and eight juniors have been selected for the December 4-8 event, with all the team then going straight on to Dublin for the Irish SC Championships on December 12-15. Selections were made from performances in their identified summer benchmark meet in relation to the IOC's 2020 Olympic Qualifying Time. Shane Ryan will be looking to emulate his performances from last year when he collected a bronze medal in the 50m backstroke at the World Short Course Championships in China. Swim Ireland Swimmer of the Year Brendan Hyland also had a top 10 finish at those championships, in the 200m butterfly. At the 2017 short-course Europeans in Copenhagen, Jordan Sloan and Mona McSharry were finalists, with Conor Ferguson reaching a semi-final.

JAPAN

Japan's Olympic Swimming Trials will be held from April 1 to 8 next year at the Olympic Aquatics Centre. Most swimmers have taken a couple of weeks' rest after the National Sports Festival and will have a very hard training camp before the trials. Kosuke Hagino, 400m individual gold medalist in 2016, restarted his hard training regime in August, aiming for the Tokyo Olympics after an absence of about a year from world-level competition.

KUWAIT

Kuwait hopes that an influx of youth into the Board of Directors of the previously suspended Olympic Committee will change international perceptions. The average age of members of the Board of Directors is now 32, which the KOC says "reflects the KOC's desire to usher in a new generation to lead the Olympic Movement in Kuwait and provide fresh and new perspectives on how best to serve sport in the country". The Kuwait Olympic committee was suspended by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) executive board in October 2015 because of "undue government interference", following the introduction of sports legislation which the IOC said was interfering with the autonomy of the Olympic movement. Last year the suspension was provisionally lifted, enabling Kuwait to compete at the Asian Games under its own flag. The suspension was fully lifted in July this year, the IOC noting that Kuwait had worked to implement various steps of a roadmap agreed between the parties.

Among the new appointees is Faye Sultan, the Chair of the Athletes Committee. She competed at the 2012 and 2016 Olympics and was the first-ever Kuwaiti female Olympic swimmer. The new president, just the third to serve in the role, is Sheikh Fahad bin Nasser Sabah Ahmad Al Sabah. He is the head of the Kuwait Motocross Committee and previously served in the Kuwait military as an Apache helicopter pilot. He studied in Switzerland before earning a degree in business administration and marketing management from the American University of Kuwait.

NAMIBIA

Alexander Skinner recently broke four Namibian swimming records in South Africa and edged closer to qualification for the 2020 Olympic Games. Competing at the South African Open and Youth Championships in Durban in October, 17-year-old Skinner broke the Namibian senior and age-group records twice in the 100m free. Skinner, whose previous national record was 52.61 seconds, swam 52.38 in the heats and dipped under the 52-second mark in the final in 51.98. He also came

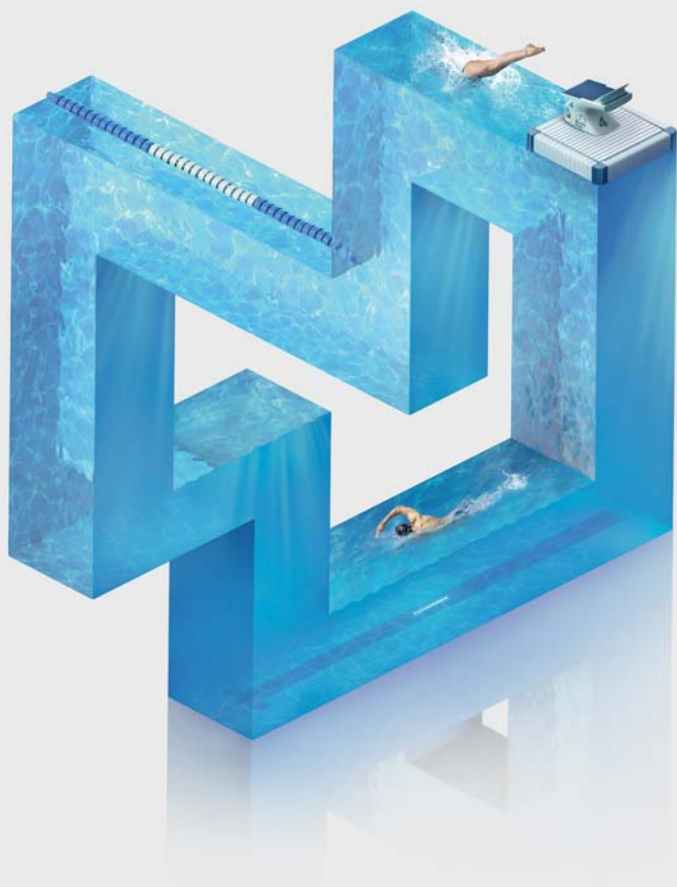


■ Hungarian water polo has had to go through a painful period of losing some of its most remarkable champions in a very short

span of time. Just days after we learned of the passing of Istvan Szivos, another giant died: Zoltan Domotor, a legendary player and swimmer of the 1960s. He earned three Olympic medals, including a gold from 1964 when he scored a never-to-be-forgotten goal from a lob against the Soviet Union which secured Hungary's title in Tokyo. Before and after that, in 1960 and 1968, he was part of the bronze-medal winning side. He also claimed European water polo titles in 1958 and 1962 and had a third European gold from 1954 as a member of Hungary's winning 4x200m free relay in swimming. After retiring he became a successful coach: after a brief spell in England he became the head of the junior programme at the Central Sports School and during his outstanding tenure eight players developed there who later became Olympic champions in Sydney 2000.



■ Hungarian water polo great Miklos Ambrus has died at the age of 86. He was a member of the Olympic gold-medal winning team in Tokyo in 1964 and the European title-winners of 1962. He arrived in Tokyo as the reserve goalie but first-choice Otto Boros – hero of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics – was off-form and Ambrus jumped in to save the team in the two decisive matches against Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. He was five times a national champion as a member of the brilliant Ferencváros team in the 1960s. His son Tamas also became a goalkeeper and won national honours with the club and played in the national team at the 1986 FINA World Championships. Tamas then had a fine coaching career before dying tragically from a sudden illness four years ago.



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within a hundredth of a second of his 50m freestyle record of 23.80. Skinner is now quite close to the Olympic 'B' qualifying standards in both events and is aiming to achieve them in competitions over the next month.



Namibia's pride: Alexander Skinner

QATAR

The Qatar Olympic Committee and the Qatar Swimming Association staged a 'Swimming For All' event to mark the IOC's anniversary on June 23. Under the #swimming4all project in Qatar, the meet was organised for the seventh time at the Hamad Aquatics Complex in Doha. It brought together 130 participants from different age groups to compete in 50m free, 100m free and 4x50m free relays. At the of victory ceremony Khalil Ibrahim Al Jaber, QSA President, presented awards to the winners, together with representatives of the federation and the QOC's sports affairs department.

PERU

The Central American and Caribbean Swimming Federation (CCCAN) held its elections in June. CCCAN President Felix Calderon, the incumbent, defeated challenger Lindsay Gillette, the current Trinidad & Tobago federation president, 29-21 votes. Errol Clarke was re-elected FINA Bureau member to represent CCCAN for 2017-2021, defeating challenger Juan Santiago Estrada, the Nicaragua federation president, 31-19. Algernon Cargill was elected to the FINA World at Large position to represent CCCAN, defeating Juan Santiago Estrada 26-24. Cinthia M. Torres-Sanes of the United States Virgin Islands was elected CCCAN secretary and Sonia O'Neal of Barbados was elected CCCAN treasurer. Jaime Peterkin of St. Lucia was elected English-speaking islands vice-president, while Imaday Nunez Gonzalez was elected Spanish-speaking islands vice-president. Mauricio Acosta was elected Central America vice-president. Radhames Tavarez of the Dominican Republic was elected UANA executive committee member, defeating Martin Lyn of Jamaica.

Maureen Croes was confirmed as the new UANA President in August and will preside over the 2023 Pan American Games. Croes defeated Stephen Joachim, President of the St Vincent &

the Grenadines federation, by a vote of 40-10. UANA is one of five continental regions representing aquatic sports within FINA. It comprises four regions - the CONSANAT (South America), Aquatics Canada Aquatiques, United States Aquatic Sports (USAS) and CCCAN.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad and Tobago was selected to host the Commonwealth Youth Games in 2021. "This is awesome and historic," Trinidad and Tobago Commonwealth Games Association President Brian Lewis told *Loop News Barbados*. "On behalf of the youth and young people of Trinidad and Tobago, thank you to the Commonwealth Games Federation. It's an honour to be entrusted with the 2021 Commonwealth Youth Games." The competition is scheduled for August 1 to 7, 2021. It will be the seventh edition of the Games, first held in Scotland in 2000. Since then, the competition has taken place in Australia, India, Isle of Man, Samoa and the Bahamas.

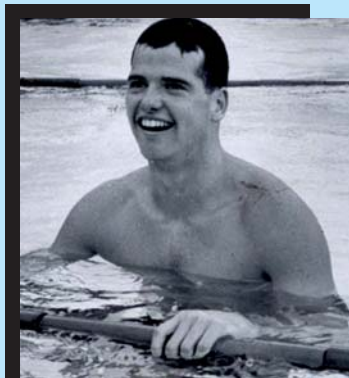
USA

Dana Vollmer, seven times an Olympic medalist, swam the final race of her career at the U.S. National Championships. The 31-year-old mother of two had announced that the race would be her last. She remains the American record holder in her signature event, the 100m butterfly. Vollmer was 16 when she competed in the 2004 Athens Olympics. She missed the 2008 Olympic team but returned in 2012 to win gold in the 100 fly and set a world record in London. She also added relay gold medals in the 4x200 freestyle and the 4x100 medley. At the 2016 Rio Olympics, she earned bronze in the 100 fly, gold in the 4x100 medley relay and silver in the 4x100 freestyle relay. Vollmer was the first woman to break 56 seconds in the 100 butterfly in the London final, a record that has since been surpassed by Sweden's Sarah Sjöström.

After having her second child in July 2017, Vollmer returned to competition in November 2018 but wasn't swimming fast enough to make the 2020 Olympics. Vollmer will retire with 10 long-course and six short-course World Championships medals in addition to her seven Olympic medals.



Dana Vollmer has called it a day



Mike Troy, 200m butterfly Olympic gold medalist in 1960, has died at the age of 78. Troy picked up the dolphin butterfly stroke where 1956 Olympic champion Bill Yorzyk left off and it didn't take long for the swimming world to find out it would take some kind of a horse to beat this Troy. He carried the butterfly standard to new world and Olympic records with heroic time drops before and during the 1960 Rome Olympics. In Rome he doubled with a second Olympic gold medal in the USA's winning 4x200 freestyle relay. Troy was the second American to win the 200 butterfly Olympic title after Yorzyk won the inaugural bill in 1956. He also claimed silver in the 200 fly at the 1959 Pan American Games and was on the gold medal winning 4x200 free relay team. Following his retirement as a swimmer, Mike Troy became a Navy Seal and officer decorated for distinguished and heroic action in Vietnam with a star. When he got out of the service Troy settled in the San Diego area where he split his time between real estate and coaching. Troy was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 1971.

The Junior Olympics, the largest water polo tournament in the world, returned to Orange County, California, in July as William Woollett Jr. Aquatics Center once again played host to the highest-level medal matches in the Championship Division. Two sessions of water polo action saw 11 different age groups crown champions across several divisions. The top division saw different champions crowned in the four boys' age groups, five girls' age groups and the two co-ed age groups.

The women's national water polo team extended their winning streak to 59 games as they dominated Canada 24-4 in the final to win their fifth straight Pan American Games gold medal. The men's national team snatched their seventh straight Pan American Games gold medal by taking down Canada 18-6 in the final, which in turn qualified them for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

U.S. Masters Swimming will have 13 national championships in 2020, the organisation's 50th anniversary. Its Spring Nationals will be April 23-26 in San Antonio, Texas, just 500 miles away from the site of the first meet in the organisation's history in May 1970, and its Summer Nationals will be August 13-16 in Richmond, Virginia. There will also be six open water national championships, which will be held between June and August, and three ePostal national championships throughout the year.

**FINA WORLD WOMEN'S JUNIOR
WATER POLO CHAMPIONSHIPS
September 9-15, 2019 – Funchal (POR)**

The team of Russia was the winner of the 2019 edition of the FINA World Women's Junior Water Polo Championships, held in Funchal (POR), from September 9-15, after beating the Netherlands by 11-5 in the final of the competition. The Russians managed to revalidate the 2017 title and were victorious in all the six matches of the tournament in Portugal. Before these two consecutive titles, the team of Russia had also won the Championships in 2009.



Triumphant Russians after the final in Funchal

In the decisive game of the competition, the gold medallists built up a decisive advantage (7-3), by the end of the second period, with the Dutch then balancing the match (2-2) in the third period. This effort was not sufficient, as the Russians scored two unanswered goals in the fourth quarter to seal the victory in 11-5. Polina Kempf (four) and Lieke Rogge (three) were respectively the best scorers of the final for Russia and the Netherlands.

The bronze medal game opposed Italy to Greece and the result was undecided until the end, with the Italians eventually prevailing by a tangential 9-8. The Italians seem to conduct the game at half time (6-3), but the Hellenic squad was better in the second part of the match, with a 3-2 and a 2-1 partial in the third and fourth quarter respectively. Agnese Cocchiere (ITA), with three goals, was the most prolific scorer of the game.

To close the top-8 ranking of the competition, Spain narrowly beat USA by 10-9 for the fifth position, while Hungary was better (12-7) than China in the match deciding places 7-8.

In terms of individual awards, Russia had in Evgeniia Golovina and Margarita Pystina (21 goals) respectively the best goalkeeper and scorer of the tournament, while Simone van de Kraats (NED) was the Most Valuable Player of the Championships.

The **final ranking** of the 2019 FINA World Women's Junior Water Polo Championships was as follows:

1. Russia; 2. Netherlands; 3. Italy; 4. Greece; 5. Spain; 6. United States; 7. Hungary; 8. China; 9. Australia; 10. Canada; 11. Brazil; 12. South Africa; 13. Japan; 14. New Zealand; 15. Kazakhstan; 16. Portugal.

**FINA WATER POLO CHALLENGERS CUP
October 8-13, 2019 – Singapore (SGP)**

The team of Singapore won the 2019 edition of the FINA Water Polo Challengers Cup (formerly known as FINA Development Trophy), organised from October 8-13 precisely in Singapore. In the decisive match of the game, the locals were stronger than Austria, managing a 8-5 victory for the gold medal of the men's tournament. Both teams were leaders of their respective preliminary groups, with Singapore totalling four victories in Group A and Austria also four wins in Group B. Moreover, Jun An (SGP) was voted the Most Valuable Player of the competition and Salkan Samardzic (AUT) the Best Goalkeeper of the tournament.

For the bronze-medal match, the team of Indonesia was better than Ireland, triumphing by 14-9. The action of Indonesian star Ridjkie Mulia (six goals) was decisive for the outcome of the game – at the end of the competition, Mulia was the Best Scorer of the Singaporean rendezvous, with a total of 37 goals.

In the remaining action of the final day, Philippines beat Hong Kong 13-8 for the fifth position, while India had no problems in dominating Malaysia by the same result for the seventh place. Zimbabwe's impressive triumph of 30-3 over Chinese Taipei ensured the African squad the ninth spot of the competition.



The happiest players on Earth – or at least at the end of the water polo Challengers Cup: the team of Singapore on the top of the podium

FINAL RANKING:

1. Singapore; 2. Austria; 3. Indonesia; 4. Ireland; 5. Philippines; 6. Hong Kong; 7. India; 8. Malaysia; 9. Zimbabwe; 10. Chinese Taipei

FINA/CNSG MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES 2019 Event 9 – Chun’An (CHN), September 29

Kristof Rasovszky of Hungary and Rachele Bruni of Italy were the overall leaders of the FINA/CNSG Marathon Swim World Series 2019 with 4750 points and 5000 points respectively.

5km World champion Rasovszky, 22, won three times throughout the circuit, namely in Balatonfured (HUN) in June, in Lac St Jean (CAN) in July and in Lac Megantic (CAN) in August. He also secured a silver medal in Doha and a third position in the Seychelles, while the Italian ace Bruni, 28, took the Lac St Jean victory as well as three silver medals (Setubal, Lac Megantic and Ohrid) and two bronze (Doha and Nantou).

However the ultimate leg of the FINA/CNSG Marathon Swim World Series 2019 – held in Chun’An on September 29 – was highlighted by the performances of Olympic title holder Ferry Weertman of the Netherlands who won the men’s race in 1h56m00s13 and Italian rocket Arianna Bridi, who touched home first in 2h04m05s44.

Matteo Furlan (ITA) came second in the men’s race (1h56m05s30) and Russia’s Kirill Abrosimov completed the podium in 1h56m12s24 on Sunday. Ana Marcela Cunha (BRA, 2h04m05s78) and Xin Xin (CHN, 2h04m06s69) secured the silver and bronze medals at stake in Chun’an.

Medallists in Chun’An (CHN)

MEN

1. Ferry Weertman (NED) 1h56m00s13, 2. Matteo Furlan (ITA) 1h56m05s30, 3. Kirill Abrosimov (RUS) 1h56m12s24

WOMEN

1. Arianna Bridi (ITA) 2h04m05s44, 2. Ana Marcela Cunha (BRA) 2h04m05s78, 3. Xin Xin (CHN) 2h04m06s69

Overall 2019 ranking

MEN

1. Kristof Rasovszky 4750, 2. Matteo Furlan 2910, 3. Marcel Schouten 2434, 4. Andreas Waschburger 2420, 5. Dario Verani 2080, 6. Ferry Weertman 2050

WOMEN

1. Rachele Bruni 5000, 2-3. Ana Marcela Cunha 4600, 2-3. Arianna Bridi 4600, 4. Olasz Anna 2878, 5. Caroline Jouisse 2700

Calendar 2019:

- #1 - Doha (QAT) - February 16
- #2 - Seychelles (SEY) - May 12
- #3 - Setubal (POR) - June 8
- #4 - Balatonfured (HUN) - June 15
- #5 - Lac St Jean (CAN) - July 21
- #6 - Lac Megantic (CAN) - August 3
- #7 - Ohrid (MKD) - August 28
- #8 - Nantou (TPE) - September 7
- #9 - Chun’An (CHN) - September 29



Medallists of the women’s 10km in the season-ending leg in Chun’an: Cunha, Bridi and Xin

FINA NEWS

FINA Champions Swim Series 2020

FINA recently announced that next year’s FINA Champions Swim Series will comprise two legs in January 2020. The first event will take place in Shenzhen (CHN) on January 14-15, while Beijing (CHN) will stage the second meet of the Series on January 18-19. Olympic and

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World Championships medallists, World Cup stars, World Records holders and top-ranked athletes in the world ranking will be invited to the competition, successfully launched by FINA in 2019.

Following the very positive feedback from athletes and coaches, the programme of the Series will include 28 individual events and two relays (mixed 4x100m free and 4x100m medley) over two days of exciting competition. Maintaining also the popular 2019 formula, only finals will be held, with four athletes per race. The competition will be staged in 50m-pool.

The sport performances will be completed by an attractive entertainment show, both for spectators on site and fans around the globe.

The allocation of prize money will continue distributing US\$ 10,000 for the first in each race, US\$ 8,000 for the second best, US\$ 6,000 for the third-ranked swimmer and US\$ 5,000 to the fourth in the final. Prize money will also be available for relay events. Moreover, appearance fee will be provided to all invited athletes, who will have their travel, accommodation and local meals also covered.

The main goals of this new international gathering are to give high-level swimmers increased attention and additional occasions to compete, thus generating stronger international TV, digital and media interest, and creating another world-class platform for Swimming on a yearly basis.

The 2019 edition included three meets in Guangzhou (CHN, April 27-28), Budapest (HUN, May 11-12) and Indianapolis (USA; May 31-June 1). 110 swimmers from 25 nations took part in this inaugural edition.



The Champions Swim Series will return in January with back-to-back meets in China

DOPING NEWS

FINA DOPING PANEL DECISIONS

Hiromasa Fujimori (JPN)

On 14 December 2018, FINA conducted an in-competition doping control test on the swimmer Hiromasa Fujimori (JPN) on the occasion of the FINA World Swimming Championships held in Hangzhou, China. The athlete was tested positive to the substance Methylephedrine at the extremely low estimated concentration of 16 micrograms/mL (Class S.6 Stimulants).

According to the decision of the FINA Doping Panel, Mr. Hiromasa Fujimori has been found to have committed an anti-doping rule violation under FINA DC Rule 2.1 and he has been sanctioned with a two year (i.e., 24 month) period of ineligibility commencing on 1 January 2019, a date fixed by the Panel pursuant to FINA DC 10.11.1, and

ending at the conclusion of 31 December 2020, for his first anti-doping rule violation. All results obtained by Mr. Hiromasa Fujimori on 14 December 2018 were disqualified.

Gabriel da Silva Santos (BRA)

Mr Gabriel da Silva Santos is found to have committed an anti-doping rule violation under FINA DC Rule 2.1, presence of prohibited substance Clostebol in the Athlete's sample.

Mr Gabriel da Silva Santos receives a twelve (12) month period of ineligibility commencing on 20 July 2019 and ending at the conclusion of 19 July 2020 for his first anti-doping rule violation. This is the minimum period of ineligibility possible pursuant to FINA DC 10.5.2.

All results obtained by Mr Gabriel da Silva Santos on or after 20 May 2019 and through and including the date of this decision are disqualified. Any medals, points and prizes achieved during that period shall be forfeited.

All costs of this case shall be borne by the Brazilian Swimming Federation in accordance with FINA DC Rule 12.3.

DOPING OFFENCE

Conor Dwyer (USA)

On 15 November 2018, FINA conducted an out-of-competition doping control test on the swimmer, Conor Dwyer (USA). On 27 November 2018 and on 20 December 2018, USADA also conducted out-of-competition doping control tests on the same swimmer. The three samples collected from the athlete were tested positive for an anabolic agent of exogenous origin (Class S.1.1B Endogenous Anabolic Androgenic Steroids).

The proceedings were consolidated and the American Arbitration Association Panel decided to impose on the athlete a period of twenty (20) months' ineligibility, starting on the date of his provisional suspension, 21 December 2018, and ending at the conclusion of 20 August 2020, for his first anti-doping rule violation.

Furthermore, all results achieved by the athlete on or after 15 November 2018 were disqualified together with the consequences thereof (forfeiture of medals/prizes, reimbursement of prize money).

CHANGE OF NATIONALITY

Ms Ema CAREVIC (Water Polo), from New Zealand to Croatia

NEW CONTACTS

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FINA CALENDAR

2019

December 12-20 FINA WORLD WP JUNIOR MEN CHAMPIONSHIPS Kuwait City KUW

2020

January 14-15 FINA CHAMPIONS SWIM SERIES N°1 Shenzhen CHN
 January 18-19 FINA CHAMPIONS SWIM SERIES N°2 Beijing CHN
 January 26 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°1 Rosario ARG
 February 2 FINA ULTRAMARATHON SWIM SERIES N°1 Santa Fe ARG
 February 14-16 FINA DIVING GRAND PRIX N°1 Madrid ESP
 February 15 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°2 Doha QAT
 February 20-23 FINA DIVING GRAND PRIX N°2 Rostock GER
 Feb 28-Mar 1 FINA DIVING WORLD SERIES N°1 Montreal CAN
 March 6-8 FINA DIVING WORLD SERIES N°2 Beijing CHN
 March 20-22 FINA DIVING WORLD SERIES N°3 Kazan RUS
 March 22-29 FINA MEN'S WP QUALIFICATION TOURNAMENT Rotterdam NED
 March 27-29 FINA DIVING WORLD SERIES N°4 London GBR
 April 21-26 FINA DIVING WORLD CUP Tokyo JPN
 April 30-May 3 FINA ARTISTIC SWIMMING OG QUALIFICATION TOURNAMENT Tokyo JPN
 May 3 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°3 Victoria SEY
 May 14-17 FINA DIVING GRAND PRIX N°3 Windsor CAN
 May 29-31 FINA DIVING GRAND PRIX N°4 Singapore SGP
 May 30-31 FINA MARATHON SWIMMING OG QUALIFICATION Fukuoka JPN
 June 5-7 FINA DIVING GRAND PRIX N°5 Kuala Lumpur MAS
 June 6 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°4 Budapest HUN
 June 13 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°5 Setubal POR
 June 17-20 FINA DIVING GRAND PRIX N°6 Cairo EGY
 July 3-5 FINA DIVING GRAND PRIX N°7 Bolzano ITA
Date to confirm FINA WOMEN'S WP QUALIFICATION TOURNAMENT Tokyo ITA
Date to confirm FINA WORLD MEN'S YOUTH WP CHAMPIONSHIPS (18&U) Istanbul TUR
Date to confirm FINA WORLD WOMEN'S YOUTH WP CHAMPIONSHIPS (18&U) Netanya ISR
Date to confirm FINA WP AGE GROUP WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS (16&U) Volos GRE
 July 11-12 FINA HIGH DIVING WORLD CUP Kazan RUS
 July 19 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°6 Lac St-Jean CAN
 July 24-August 9 OLYMPIC GAMES Tokyo JPN
 July 25 FINA ULTRAMARATHON SWIM SERIES N°2 Lac St-Jean CAN
 August 8 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°7 Lac Megantic CAN
 August 21-23 FINA WORLD OWLS JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS Seychelles SEY
 August 22 FINA ULTRAMARATHON SWIM SERIES N°3 Ohrid MKD
 August 24-30 FINA WORLD JUNIOR ARTISTIC SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS Quebec City CAN
 August 29 FINA ULTRAMARATHON SWIM SERIES N°4 Novi CRO
 August 30 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°8 Ohrid MKD
 September 4-6 FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP N°1 Singapore SGP
 September 5 FINA ULTRAMARATHON SWIM SERIES N°5 Capri-Napoli ITA
 September 10-12 FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP N°2 Jinan CHN
 September 19 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°9 Nantou TPE
 October 2-4 FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP N°3 Kazan RUS
 October 8-10 FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP N°4 Doha QAT
 October 16 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°10 Chun An CHN
 October 23-25 FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP N°5 Berlin GER
 October 25 FINA MARATHON SWIM WORLD SERIES N°11 Hong Kong HKG
 Oct 30-Nov 1 FINA SWIMMING WORLD CUP N°6 Budapest HUN
 November 6-8 FINA DIVING GRAND PRIX N°8 Gold Coast AUS
 Nov 29-Dec 6 FINA WORLD JUNIOR DIVING CHAMPIONSHIPS 15th FINA WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS (25m) Abu Dhabi UAE

2021

July 16-August 1 19th FINA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS Fukuoka JPN
 August 3-12 FINA WORLD MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS Fukuoka JPN

2022

December 16th FINA WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS (25m) Kazan RUS

2023

Date to confirm 20th FINA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS Doha QAT
Date to confirm FINA WORLD MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS Doha QAT

2024

December 17th FINA WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS (25m) Budapest HUN

2025

July 21st FINA World Championships Kazan RUS

2027

July 22nd FINA World Championships Budapest HUN

OTHER INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS

2019

December 4-8 European Short Course Swimming Championships Glasgow GBR

2020

January 12-26 European Water Polo Championships Budapest HUN
 May 11-24 European Championships Budapest HUN

BIDS FOR FINA EVENTS

Bidding deadline: December 15, 2019

- FINA World Junior Swimming Championships 2021
- FINA World League WP Super Final Men 2020
- FINA World League WP Super Final Women 2020
- FINA World League WP Intercontinental Tournament Men 2020
- FINA World League WP Intercontinental Tournament Women 2020

Bidding deadline: June 30, 2020

- FINA World League WP Super Final Men 2021
- FINA World League WP Super Final Women 2021
- FINA World League WP Intercontinental Tournament Men 2021
- FINA World League WP Intercontinental Tournament Women 2021
- FINA World League WP Europa Cup Men 2021
- FINA World League WP Europa Cup Women 2021
- FINA WP Challenge Cup 2021
- FINA World Junior WP Men Championships (U20) 2021
- FINA World Junior WP Women Championships (U20) 2021
- FINA World Junior WP Men & Women Championships (U16) 2021
- FINA High Diving World Cup 2021
- FINA Artistic Swimming World Series Super Final 2021
- FINA World Artistic Swimming Youth Championships 2021
- FINA World Diving Junior Championships 2022



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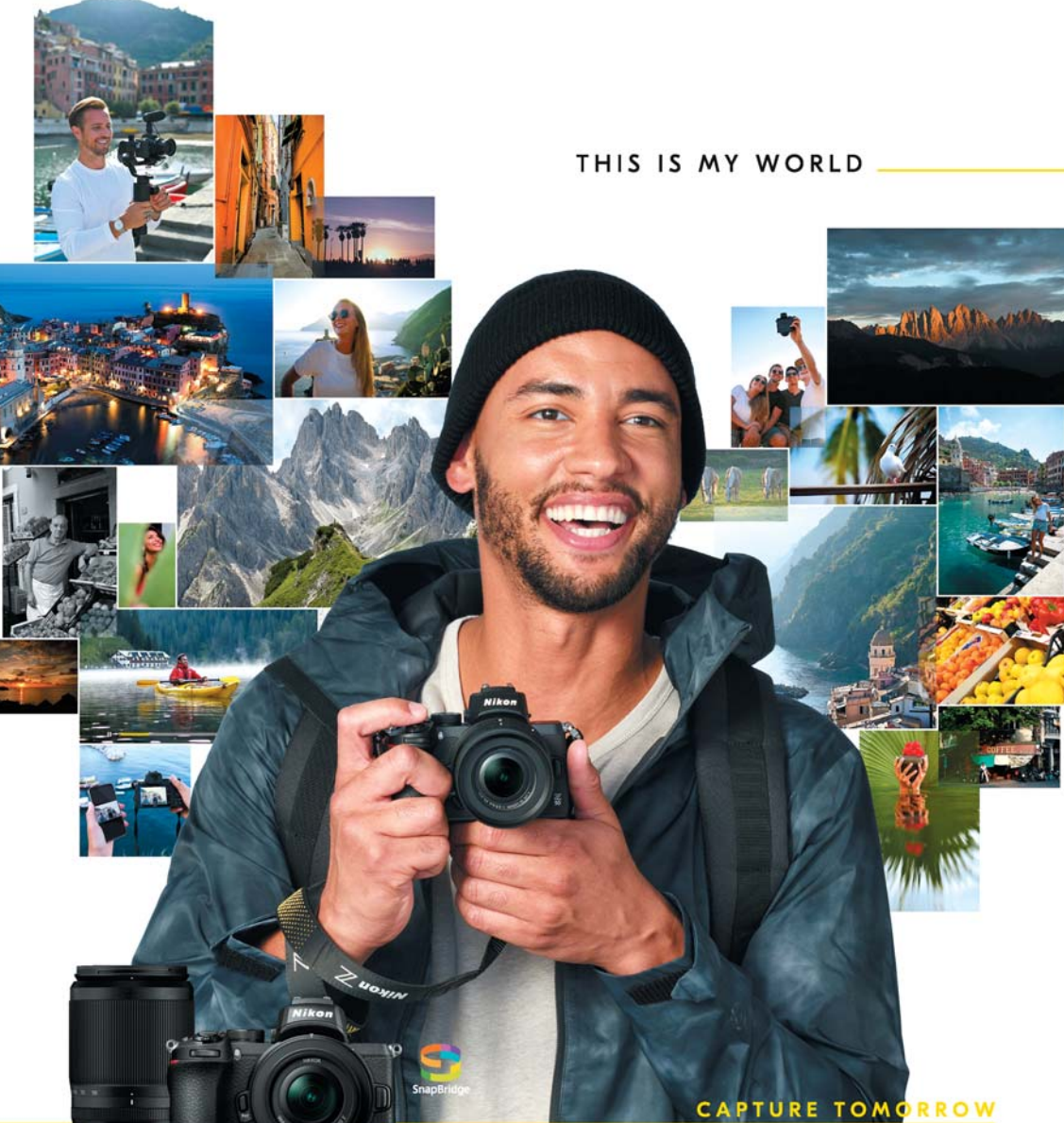
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