



MARIA KISELEVA: YOU NEED TO WORK HARD TO ACHIEVE SOMETHING IN SPORT AND LIFE

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INTERVIEWS



Russian synchronised swimmer, three-time Olympic gold medallist, Kazan 2015 Ambassador and Pilgrim show stage director of synchro swimming routines, Maria Kiseleva, dwelt on her mission at the FINA World Championships in Kazan and major rivals of the Russian national team.

– You were responsible for staging synchro swimming routines for the Pilgrim show. Can you reveal how the ideas for the routines were born and innovative ideas you implemented for the brilliance of this large-scale show?

– I am very happy to cooperate with Igor Krutov's production centre and director Alexey Sechenov. They exercise a very creative, accurate and outstanding approach. Working out the idea for the Ceremony together with the director, we developed a concept especially for our routines. We wanted to embody and complement that image which was initially made up. Our routines seem to be full of harmony, so we decided not to make any changes. We usually perform in traditional sports pools, but a small-diameter area is quite a new form for us. However, we came up with beautiful images, which look advantageous, particularly in a circular pool.

– Did you face any problems in staging the numbers for the Opening Ceremony?

– We always create special movements so that every routine is a masterpiece, what I mean is that we create something new every time. We don't take our old routines and perform them to a new music. We never work like that. We start creating a brand new routine. Of course, we have a stock of some elements and we have experience, as we know what figures are alluring and what are not.

– In your opinion, did the artists do a good job?

– I am not an unbiased spectator at all. I know the backstage from inside out and have worked on this project for a long time. The viewers' reaction spoke for itself. The show proved to win acclaim from the audience. I might say the Opening Ceremony has been the best among all the Ceremonies at the FINA World Championships I have ever attended throughout my whole life.

– What is your main duty as an Ambassador of these very Championships?

– The main idea is to boost the popularity of aquatic sports and the 16th FINA Water World Championships as well. To tell people about the athletes, the host city, the Championships and the tournament itself. To speak about the aquatic sports, about people that are involved in these sports. We also encourage as many kids as we can to join aquatic sports, and it doesn't matter whether they are going to be Olympic champions or not. The main idea is that from early childhood they get used to a certain lifestyle which will help them in their future. Being a mum of two wonderful kids I state with confidence: health and sports are the most crucial things in our life!

– Your career was full of obstacles wasn't it? You didn't like swimming; however you became an Olympic champion. In your opinion how important it is to be able to overcome personal fears?

– Indeed I was afraid of water, only at ten I went in for sports, which was pretty late for starting a sports career. Back then I wanted just to learn to swim, to be a healthy person; I didn't have any Olympic thoughts at all. Later, over time the fear has gone away, goals, interests have come instead. Eventually sport became a crucial part of my life as all these obstacles made me stronger as a person first and then as an athlete.

– Before topping the podium at the Olympics you've already grabbed several gold medals at Russian and European Championships. Although I guess winning at the Olympics is something incomparable. Will you please describe all the emotions you've experienced after claiming your first Olympic medal?

– Back then all emotions were overwhelming, my lifelong dream came true bringing the feeling as if I was truly soaring in the sky. Joy, euphoria, pride and of course boundless gratitude to all those people thanks to

whom I've made it onto the Olympic podium were overflowing me! However, afterwards, being in our room at the Olympic Village I remember feeling absolutely the opposite, sort of devastation, I mean, something strange and completely unexpected for me. To put it another way, you have a dream, no one and nothing can distract you from it, and when it comes true you start wondering: what is next? And the next things were other victories and other Olympic medals!

– And now after your sort of retirement from sport you've become a successful director and script writer of your own projects, it definitely brings new emotions and feelings. Is it somehow different or the same in sports?

– To be honest, there are so many emotions in our life but the main thing that we should keep in mind is what cause we dedicate our life to. You strive to become better and improve yourself, never stay in one place. I also have a dream I'm striving for – I will not tell you about it – but I want to achieve it very much. People keep comparing an athlete and a coach, what is more challenging? When you are an athlete? Or when you are a coach? It's hard to give an answer. When you are an athlete, you feel nervous but you are the one who is accountable for your actions whereas being a coach is quite a different story: you've done your part and when your athlete goes to compete, there is absolutely nothing you can do. It can be compared to staging a play, when we create a piece of work and our main task is to ensure that spectators experience the most vivid emotions and will want to see it again. If after the play there are happy faces and sparkling eyes, it means that all our hard work wasn't done in vain.

– Is team spirit important in sports? After all Olga Brusnikina and you are known in the history as the first Olympic gold medallists for the Russian team, but outside sport you are also godmothers for each other kids.

– Of course, sport brings you up, it gives you strength and a good base, but anyway it is very hard to do anything in life being alone. You should always have someone to trust and to lean on.

– Could you please tell us more about the Russian national synchronised swimming team? Is there anything that has changed in the athletes training since 2000?

– First of all, our main coach Tatyana Pokrovskaya has been with us since 1997 and she is with us now. Athletes' generation has changed but we still take the top positions, and we owe it to our coaching staff. From a long time ago till now we have always trained for ten hours a day, and I would never say that it was easy. Synchronised swimming competitors are always self-critical and they would never leave the training saying: "Everything was perfect today" because it would be nonsense, there is always something to work on in our sport.

– What are the strong points of our team?

– One takes a leader for a role model, and it means that the leader needs to be the best in everything. Our team has the same goal: our functionality and technicality, flexibility, choreography, body control, acrobatics, emotionality, make-up and the main thing – creativity of the performance – should be on the highest level.

– Who are Russian team's major rivals at the Championships?

– Judging by the last results, our major rivals are China, Spain and Ukraine. We haven't seen Chinese athletes for quite a bit, so it would be interesting to see what they can offer.

– Does our national team have a chance of winning the competition?

– I don't want to try and guess the results, but I would like to add that the Russian team has always been a leader in synchronised swimming, and there is no country as good as we are in this event. I wish lots of strength and luck to the Russian team; our girls should show their best so that their coaches could be very happy for them! And, of course, I wish more gold medals for Team Russia!

Press Office of Organising Committee for 16th FINA World Championships



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