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Daiya Seto thriving to make a hat-trick in 400 m medley

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We might as well say that currently Daiya Seto is the king of 400 m individual medley, if we look at his results from previous World Championships (in short course he claimed three, in long course two consecutive gold medals in this event). But how can anybody be considered a king, without winning the most important race, the Olympics?

Daiya Seto first saw the greatest swimmer of all time, Michael Phelps, live in Rio. He saw him live but not face to face, according to the Japanese competitor the American idol did not make eye contact with anyone at the venue: *'He was always in his own world, his level of concentration was scarily intense. Seeing such a powerful focus really made an impression on me. Becoming world number one requires 100 percent dedication - giving it your all, all day, every day.'*

Seto puts all his eggs in one basket in the next three years to achieve his biggest aim, to become Olympic champion in Tokyo.

Daiya dedicates this year as 'time for self-reflection and getting to understand myself better' and wishes to establish a firm foundation for the following three years. Certainly, the World Championships in Budapest may fit into his plans, where he aspires to complete the hat-trick in 400 m medley. However, before considering his chances, let us elaborate a bit more on the Japanese talent's career.

He started swimming at the age of five and like any young children he learnt all the strokes, but in contrast with others, he proved to be talented in all, he specialised in medley, but beside that he has claimed excellent results, moreover medals in major international competitions, even in butterfly and freestyle alike.

He just missed qualifying for the London Olympics in 2012, since he finished third in both 200 and 400 m medley at the Japanese trial (the first two qualified). Then his career accelerated quite fast. He won his first significant international medals at the FINA Short Course World Championships in 2012. In 400 m medley he claimed gold with new Asian record beating the second-placed László Cseh by more than one and a half second. Then in 200 m medley by spurting once again the Hungarian swimmer he finished as the runner up of Ryan Lochte.

Despite his success he attended the World Championships in Barcelona in 2013 without being well-known. However, he finished the tournament as a world champion again. In 400 m medley he qualified for the final with the best time, then with the time of 4:08.69 he beat the American Chase Kalisz by almost half a second and collected his first long course World Championships title.

In the following years he defended his titles in 400 m medley both in short course (in Doha) and long course (Kazan). However, he could not consider the competition of 2015 as fully successful one. In his first two events, in 200 medley and 200 m butterfly, although he had expected medals from himself, he could not step onto the podium in any of them. Then came the 400 m medley and his father's motto came into his mind: *'My father is a really positive person. If I say that something is impossible, he'll always reply: Say something positive and your actions will follow your words.'*

He wanted to win desperately, he stayed positive and believed to be good enough for gold. And he was! He won with excellent time (4:08.50) and immediately got his ticket to Rio.

In Rio Olympics 2016 he planned to complete his medal collection and claim the only missing gold medal in 400 m medley. However, unfortunately for him, his compatriot and friend, the other versatile swimmer of Japan, Kosuke Hagino also set his eyes on this medal, not to speak about the American Chase Kalisz, who intended to continue the 24-year dominance of the US in this event. Seto's rivals wanted it more or at least they had a luckier day, anyway Seto had to settle with the bronze medal (Hagino won the event, Kalisz finished second).

In conclusion, Daiya Seto has been preparing for Tokyo because, although most swimmers could be satisfied with bronze, he is only after gold. At the beginning of the four-year Olympic cycle the World Championships will take place where in the longer medley event he has to race with challenging contenders. He has to beat his compatriot, Hagino, the American Kalisz and the home crowd favourite Dávid Verrasztó. A really exciting battle is expected in the men's 400 m individual medley in the last day of the 17th FINA World Championships on 30th July in the Danube Arena. Do not miss it!

Daiya Seto

Born: 24th May 1994., Moroyama, Japan

Top results:

Olympics: 1 bronze (400 m medley - Rio)

World Championships: 2 gold (400 m medley - Barcelona and Kazan)

Short Course World Championships: 3 gold (400 m medley - Istanbul, Doha, Windsor)