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Zsuzsanna Jakabos may fly high thanks to her love for swimming

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She believes in hard work and humility. She loves to train, she loves laps and she is delighted to receive praise. She decided to become a professional swimmer at the age of 9-10, now she may join the dot at the age of 28 in Duna Arena. „Uncle Gyertya”, head coach back from Italy considers the European class swimmer of Győr a real jewel who may achieve just about anything if she manages to create her own environment. Zsuzsanna Jakabos loves to race in Hungary, after the European Championships staged in Debrecen and Budapest she can now do so at the World Championships hosted by Hungary. She has tasted the water of the grand pool of Duna Arena, as she always does, and since she liked it, she has positive feelings about the event.

Her parents were athletes, she was meant to follow their footsteps but eventually she found home in the pool. Her family used to attend water tours regularly and as little „Zsu” loved water from an early age, after a while her parents thought it would be a good idea for her to learn to swim. She did so, what is more, her coach told the parents already at the beginning that he wanted to take her to competitions. However, at first she was hesitating because she was into skiing, as well.

„My father was a P.E. teacher and in winters he took his students to skiing tour where I could join, too. I was about 7-8 when daddy registered me for the Olympiad held in Mecsek Mountain and I finished second. I loved skiing so much, but when I started to engage in swimming on a professional level, I had to quit it in order to avoid injuries” - Zsuzsanna Jakabos recalled in an interview earlier.

In fact, she did engage in swimming on a professional level in Pécs. Her parents were professional athletes hence there was no question about trainings, effort, diligence. Swimming became an integral part of her life at an early age.

Proper motivation, quick success

„I got used to the routine of going to the swimming pool in the morning, then school, then back to the pool in the afternoon and finally home. The agreement was that if I do well at school I can attend swimming trainings. I studied well to be allowed to go swimming. This was my motivation” - she told about the beginnings, and this motivation was further

strengthened when she clinched 3 gold medals at the 2003 European Youth Olympic Festival (100m butterfly, 200m medley and relay). This was the time when she eventually decided to stick to swimming - it is an interesting coincidence that the 2017 European Youth Olympic Festival will be hosted in her new „home”, Győr.

Then results and achievements came one after the other: *„Up to now one of the most remarkable memories of mine is related to the 2005 European Junior Swimming Championships on Margaret Island. I still get goose bumps thinking about the blast in the pool when we won. Nothing compares to the atmosphere at a locally hosted major tournament!”*

Zsuzsanna Jakabos, who considers Krisztina Egerszegi as her idol, attended the Olympics as early as age 15 and since this experience in Athens she has been living the life of a professional athlete in every respect.

At the 2010 European Swimming Championships hosted by Budapest she claimed bronze in 400m medley and silver in 200m butterfly as the runner-up to Katinka Hosszú. At the end of 2011 she was a member of the European team and a year later she finished second in 400m medley, 200m butterfly and 4x200m relay at the European Championships.

„I believe that hard work always pays off. Determination is the key to achieve something, however, it is not always enough. Sometimes a bit of luck comes handy, this is what we mean by being at the right place at the right time. In swimming hundredths, tenths and nuances may make a huge difference just like your condition at the time. Nevertheless, knowing that I did my part makes me calm every time” - said Zsuzsanna Jakabos, who changed her HQ in 2013.

Change: From Pécs to Győr

She and her coach, Iván Petrov transferred from Pécs to Győr. Unfortunately, after moving she had to undergo shoulder surgery due to chronic inflammation. It was not clear how long the recovery would take, but thanks to doctors and medical therapists it did not take too long and a year later she finished 4th in solo and claimed bronze with the relay team at the 2014 European Championships.

Everything was back on track, with the 4x200m relay team she could top the podium at the 2016 London European Championships.

What is Zsu preparing for in Duna Arena?

Her unspoken goal at the 17th FINA World Championships is to make it to the podium, however, achieving so it rather demanding in her events. No doubt, the four-time Olympic swimmer belongs to the top, still her tally lacks World Champs medals yet. She would like to make up for it this summer in Budapest.

She may enter multiple events in Budapest, the basis will probably be 200m and 400m medley (one taking place on the first the other on the last day of the World Champs). These events are dominated by her friend and source of motivation, crowned queen of swimming,

Katinka Hosszú. She may gain new strength from 100m freestyle and of course relays, still the focus is on medley events in which so far she has achieved a 6th World Champs placement- something she aspires to improve this time.

„My personal best in 200m medley is 2:10, in 400m it is 4:34, if I manage to improve these I would be quite content, this is what I am aiming at. Preparations went well, this weekend we are travelling to Rome, the tournament there is one of my favourite ones, it will show where I am with the preparations right now. There is a lot to be improved in 400m but both events require intense concentration. My weak point is breaststroke and turning, beside these I must learn to catch the rhythm and prepare mentally, too. I like to focus on myself, in my experience it is more efficient than to focus on others” -Jakabos summarised, who is in a quite good form now.

Praise by the coach: for the first time!

In order to achieve this form it was necessary to receive some help from Tamás Gyertyánffy returning home from Italy at the request of Iván Petrov. He had prepared World Championships silver medallist and Olympic finalist Fabio Scozzoli, by the way he learnt the profession by the side of Hungarian coach icon, Tamás Széchy. As he put it, he received an excellent team in Győr, each swimmer has great potential, especially Zsuzsanna Jakabos:

„Her diligence is incredible, she can take extensive workload, I enjoy working with her as well as with the others. Our value systems are quite different; we need to bring them closer but these youngsters have a great potential. If they manage to create their own environment they can become world class swimmers really. Zsuzsa has high diligence and humility towards swimming and hard work, she is a perfect candidate and her appetite for victory is insatiable. We shall continue to work on and refine her technique in order to be ready for the World Championships in Budapest. Working with her is great and it is also important that in her events, especially in medley, one of the contenders is Katinka Hosszú. Her performance serves as a drive for us and encourages Zsuzsa to do better and better. If she gets out of the pool knowing that she did her very best, we will be content” - said Tamás Gyertyánffy.

The new season brought about numerous changes and new things for Zsuzsa, the time spent with „Uncle Gyertya” is sometimes rather hard but definitely it is useful and pays off.

„I like to have hard trainings and I enjoy working hard. We have learnt a lot during this season, he has brought a lot of new things home which we try to integrate in our swimming. He is not the kind of guy who praises you all the time, but when he does you know it is for real. After the morning training he has just given me some good feedback, he doesn't often do it, after all spoken words have power. Now I will go home jumping around in joy because of him. I have learnt several new things from him, mostly related to the technique: for example, how to hold water in breaststroke, what to think about while doing so. Lately I have been breaststroking quite often, which I don't like as much as he does. It is really important for me to get out of the pool at the end of a training knowing that I did my best” -Zsuzsa Jakabos emphasized her point.

She liked the water in Duna Arena

The top class swimmer of Győr tried Duna Arena first at the Nationals in Budapest and she found it fantastic. She did not miss her usual ritual this time, either:

„I like to taste the water, for me it is a ritual. It tasted good and the Arena is even better. The Arena is awesome, the pool is deep and fast and I am happy that we would not have to race in a temporary pool. I like to see the tiles ahead of me while swimming and I look for the letter T when turning. I am sure the organising and the conduct of the tournament will be great as well as the race itself. I love racing in Hungary because we host the best events in the world. I get goose bumps just talking about racing in front of the home crowd.”

According to 28-year old swimmer Zsuzsanna Jakabos swimmers tend to stay active in competitions for longer and longer, „ *Laci Cseh beats the world at the age of 32, as well, our generation of 1989 with Katinka Hosszú, Evelyn Verrasztó love swimming just like we did ten years ago*”.

Beside swimming Zsuzsa Jakabos does not neglect her studies, she is learning to graduate as a mediator at the Human Resources Department of Wekerle Sándor Business College. She and Iván Petrov (who has established a brilliant workshop in Győr) get on well not only by the pool but in their private life as well. It might happen that Iván Petrov will be engaged in cheering her not only as her partner but as a tv commentator. He made his debut well in this role recently.

Zsuzsanna Jakabos loves to attend the swimming pool in Győr, she is an icon for future generations of young swimmers thanks to her modesty and kindness.

Finally, we should not forget that Zsuzsanna Jakabos is among the faces of the 17th FINA World Championships promoting the love for swimming within and beyond borders.

She intends to continue this mission from late July with a World Championships gold medal in her pocket.

Zsuzsanna Jakabos

Born on 3 April 1989 in Pécs.

Clubs: ANK Pécs (-2012), Győr ÚSE (2013-)

Coaches: Petrov Anatolij

Iván Petrov (2012)

Tamás Gyertyánffy (2017)

Notable results: sixth placement at Olympics (4x200 freestyle relay, Beijing, 2008; Rio, 2016), seventh placement at Olympics (200m butterfly, London, 2012), European champion

(4x200m freestyle relay, London, 2016), four-time European Championships silver medallist (200m butterfly, Budapest, 2010; 200m butterfly, 400m medley, 4x200m freestyle relay, Debrecen, 2012), four-time European Championships bronze medallist (400m medley, Budapest, 2010; 4x200m freestyle relay, Berlin, 2014; 400m medley, 4x100 mixed medley relay, London, 2016), two-time short course European champion, two-time silver, five-time bronze medallist