

Irina Viner-Usmanov: In The Academy of Sports, the children are trained to become Olympic champions

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After every Olympic Games she says: 'That's it! Now I'm going to work less!' But during the last ten years she doesn't keep her word. We have spent one day with the Head Coach of the National Team of Russia in Rhythmic Gymnastics Irina Viner-Usmanova to see how and where the gold medals are being made.

A little star named Masha

'After London I stayed for this pearl, Maria Titova - says Irina Viner with a smile on her face. Remember this name! If God gives her health, she will have big future.'

'Mashen'ka (polite from Maria), try to do like this. Make three pivots here. '— A coach who is always strict melts with a smile watching her gymnast performing a perfect element. The training is over and Irina Alexandrovna takes care of the girl.

'I've brought you something to eat.'

'Dates?'

'Yes, the huge ones from Israel. Always eat them before the competitions. They give real power. Alexandr Makedonsky used to give them to his soldiers before the battle.'

'Look at her! Manya (derivative from Maria) is so thin. — says Irina Alexandrovna. — But she is full of power and energy. I am afraid to break her. I always bring her kefir, goat cheese and mix it with linden honey. And I also get her some fruits specially dried in the darkness.' At this moment, on a nearby carpet other girls trained for the group exercise.

'How is that movie, "The Legend no.17?" ' She says to them.

In the evening, the girls went to the cinema for the premiere to have an idea about a great ice-hockey player, and now share their impressions.

'And I was one of the last people who had seen Valery Kharlamov while he was still alive,' Irina Alexandrovna recalls. 'I remember, how he came out after the fateful conversation with Viktor Tikhonov, where he told him not to take part in the World Cup in Canada. A few days later Valery, with his wife, had a car crash. The spouse was on the driving seat. You know, I am even afraid to go and watch the movie. Scary ... We trained side-by-side in the same room.'

After the relaxing chats, the training continues. However, the exercise of the girls does not turn out well, so the debrief begins.

'How much do you weigh?' Irina Alexandrovna asks one of the Olympic champions the most dreadful question.

'1.5 kilograms above normal ...' the girl says hardly.

'And do you know that this is very dangerous to health? You've already got your leg injured. Could you imagine that the load on it is 3 times higher during a jump. Injury will come because of it. And what about the general health state?'

'unsatisfactory ...,' says a specialist among the technical group.

'It is over, pack your stuff and go to the recovery procedure,' Irina Alexandrovna commands.

'For me, the girls' health is the most important,' explains the mentor. 'I can shout at them because of the extra weight, but if it is because of poor functional status, I will not kill them.'

Many people have weight concerns nowadays. Extra kilograms for gymnasts are a tragedy.

'It is necessary to eat small portion, but five times a day!' Irina Alexandrovna recommends, 'so that the stomach will not be stretched. If there is no time to eat, take with you some snacks to the hall, such as dried apricots, prunes, raisins. I take care of myself too, and maintain my weight. Every morning I get up and walk ten thousand steps.'

As the champion group has gone to the recovery procedure, she changes the second composition with all the new twists: balls, ribbons, throw, catch ... Irina Alexandrovna personally keeps her hands on the training process.

'We have lost three world championships in the group exercise,' she laments. 'And it was all because the base in Novogorsk has no place to train the group. The girls were trained in another place with no control, and thus the results were as such. Before the Olympics, I brought them here, and they worked hard every day until midnight, did a 'cosmos-class' routine and won the Olympics. Now I continue to work with them, so that the victory in London is not to be the only one time. However, I still have to look after the little ones, because soon they, too, will stand in the first line-up. There is one problem that there is nowhere to train them in Novogorsk. So they work in St. Petersburg, and make short visits here. In Kazan, Penza and Irkutsk, the local authorities have built huge standard halls (for 6-11 carpets. - Ed.), And, here, we have nowhere for the first team to train.

The Academy of Sport where the champions will work in

Recently, Irina Alexandrovna has to be, to some extent, a builder. The legendary coach's dream has come to fulfillment. In the Khimki district, Novogorsk will be a unique object: within its territory there will be dozen of sport and creative schools for boys and girls from the nearby areas.

'Are you building the entire Irina Viner-USmanova Sports Academy in the Novogorsk Olympic Village?'

'I promised that there will be training facilities for every ordinary kids from all over the Khimki district. It would be great if there will be some way to accommodate our juniors, and have them motivating the kids. But we'll see.

'You see, I have long had a dream to start an educational and sports cluster, which includes a kindergarten, a school, a swimming pool, a health center, a sports complex, and a hotel. I have long voiced it at various meetings, including the Council of the Presidency. Once upon a time in the Soviet Union, we had boarding schools, but the forms in which they existed in the past do not work today. A modern version is needed. In China, for example, boarding schools are very common. And they do not nurture only athletes, but also programmers, diplomats, etc. There, they simply get specialized at an early age, and from childhood they are equipped to be professionals. After all, children have to be dealt with from the time of birth. When a pair of parents came with their 2-week old child to the famous children doctor Benjamin Spock, and asked when it would be necessary to start bringing up the child, he replied: "You are late." So we must begin to develop our children from an early age. For these purposes, I want to open in Novogorsk a British-styled secondary school, which will give diplomas in two languages - Russian and English.

'Tell me, which school do your gymnasts study at?'

'They have to travel to the other side of Moscow to a school in the New Olympic Village on Udaltsov Street. The girls do external studies and just go there to pass tests and exams. It is not necessary to attend all the lessons. Even on their own they can deal with their study. You know, I have no fools here and all of them finish school well, although it will be much smoother when there is a teacher nearby explaining everything. And when there will be a school in the Novogorsk Olympic Village, I want to put the girls there. They will be able to attend classes without spending time travelling. In addition, the school will be strong in English language, so that girls do not feel ashamed when an interview is given.

'For the sports session we have already invited top sports professionals to be there. For

example, Olympic boxing champion Alexander Lebzjak did not have his own hall, and we asked him to start his own boxing school in Novogorsk. For the Olympic swimming champion Alexander Popov, we build a huge swimming pool. In general, the director of the educational center "Sambo-70" Renat Laishev has everything, but located in the south of Moscow. We asked him to start a similar school in the north. Nikolai Patrushev, head of the Russian Volleyball Federation, agreed to set up a volleyball school in our center. We talked with Tatiana Tarasova, so she finally builds her own Ice Palace. But it turned out that figure skating and ice-hockey are very different according to the rigidity of the ice. Of course, there will be gymnastics, and ballroom dancing. And the most important thing is to work with the children, and we plan to bring the Olympic champions and the world champions. Once a week, they will be completely free to carry out their studies (ie. their chosen sporting activities –ed.) in the academy.'

'Who will be able to engage in these sections?'

'All residents in the Khimki region. Novogorsk Olympic Village is open to all. Our unique sports complex will be completed in 2014. The main thing is to have enough space for everything. You see, we want this to be a cluster of Khimki, the same as it is in Kazan, for example. But the one in the capital of Tatarstan was built by the state, while here exclusively by private money. This is a rare case in which 35 thousand square meters of housing and 21 thousand social sectors are constructed at the expense of investors. Nowadays they built "ghost-houses" without any infrastructure - there are no nursery schools, no sport centers around. The owners get the profit and the government must use its money to build the objects necessary for children. But this is wrong. In our Novogorsk Olympic Village we will just do everything for the children. I have long developed a method of exercise, for which 3-4 year old boys and girls are on a single program. They will become stretched, flexible, nimble, and then be divided to do their preferred sports. The boys can go to do boxing, athletics, and wrestling. Girls can go to do dancing or stay in gymnastics. My program has been adapted throughout the world. I want it to be fully utilized in the Sports Academy.'

'Why did you choose Novogorsk to build a sports education cluster?'

'Here has very good nature, and the aura. The recriminations is that: "Of course, this place has wonderful nature because it is a protected area." But, in fact, we do not touch the protected zone. Before planning the construction of the Novogorsk Olympic Village at this place, we have consulted the environmentalists for a long period. As a result, by using special steel technology, the construction took place in the low land where the swamp was.'

In the Olympics, the girls did the cosmos-class program

In the mean time, the training continues. The hall, which has four carpets, is open from 7am till evening. Two for the main group members, and two for the junior girls who do individual programs. Besides, there are Japanese, Koreans, Bulgarians and an Egyptian who come to Russia for training ...

'We train half of the world,' smiles Irina Alexandrovna. 'It can be more, but the conditions do not allow.'

During our conversation Irina Alexandrovna, like Caesar, handles a lot of things at the same time. She sees who works well on the first carpet, who get slack on the second, and who fails to catch the hoop on the fourth. She moves from one gymnast to another gymnast, gives advice, signs important documents, provides guidelines to the administrators - who will buy tickets for the next start in Sofia, and whom will leave.

'Do not forget to buy 25 cans of caviar,' she tells the assistance. 'For gymnasts this is the number one product. There is nothing better than it, with energy and huge benefits.'

'Dasha, catch the hoop with one hand!' This is the remark given for another young star. 'Dasha Svatkovskaya - who works on the far carpet with her mother, an Olympic bronze medalist in rhythmic gymnastics Oksana Skaldina (the father of Dasha, Olympic pentathlon champion Dmitry Svatkovsky).'

At this moment, Irina Alexandrovna meets with the Sports Minister Alexander Shamko, and they say something briefly, and an official delegation from a neighboring country asks to leave.

By the way, the conditions for the gymnasts in Novogorsk have changed beyond recognition in the past four years. A new hall with four carpets (but promised to six) was built. There are two huge plasma on the wall of the hall, which can make any theater envious. The training of all gymnasts are recorded on camera, so videos can be watched anytime to spot where the mistakes are made. Plus, there is its own monitor installed next to each carpet, which also shows the training.

In addition to the doctor, massage therapist, psychologist, research groups, administrators, and a huge number of gymnasts of all ages and nationalities, there are also personal trainers of each of the national team athletes in the hall. And Irina is responsible for general management. How general? She knows every routine of each of her performers, and monitors the results of numerous competitions, in which almost every week one of the girls performs, there are also indicators showing her the health/fitness of all the gymnasts.

Before and after training, each girl uses the "Omega +" (our Russian development) to do a mini-survey. It provides a comprehensive assessment of physical fitness. If before training the condition of an athlete is not good, she will be sent to recovery.

Restore base is also at the highest standard. In addition to the sauna, swimming pool, massage, there are lots of mechanical procedures. It is a whole factory for manufacturing champions. Holy of holies. Just a few years ago, when Alina Kabaeva and Irina Tchachina were being trained, there was enough room for two carpets, two personal trainers, doctors and Irina Alexandrovna, who led the process. And now, it is an industry that produces champions on a regular basis in our country at any tournaments of all levels.

'Irina Alexandrovna, gymnastics develops a speed like an ultrasonic aircraft. Or rocket.'

'Yes, because it is not possible to stop. To stop is like death. We lost three years in group exercise, but did a cosmos-class program at the Olympic Games - and won. Although the girls said never in their lifetime could this exercise be done, I spent day and night there until the result was achieved. God punishes me severely, though. I have arrhythmia if I overwork. Fanaticism is also punishable, as well as idleness.'

By the way

On April 27, on the channel "Russia" we will see Irina Viner-Usmanov in the final of the show "Big Dance", where she will chair the jury.

'I want to bring our team of group exercise to the final "Big Dance", says Irina. 'But not for the reason that the girls will perform and show class, but for them to look at ordinary people when they dance with passion and swagger, and to learn from them. Because when I judged the semi-finals of "Dancing," I said, "pity, the team of rhythmic gymnastics did not see this as they could learn so much from these people.'