

A SYNCHRONIZED SKATERS' MAGAZINE

SYNCHRO NICE

*coach of
champions*
**Irina
Yakovleva**

Finlandia Trophy
21st Edition

#ISU PRESIDENT
Make it more exciting!

**"To live my
biggest dream."
Saara Shephard**

published by synchrophoto.eu

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SYNCHRONIZED SKATING

#WhyNotSynchro2022

Hi There, SYNCHRONICE FANS

Did you really believe we would leave it at that... at that one magazine? No Way!!! We are very proud to present to you a second issue of "SynchroNice". The first and only full color, glossy magazine, exclusively for the Synchronized Skating community.

Publishing a magazine is quite a challenge. The only way to accomplish a project like this, is with the unconditional help of all portrayed in this magazine, skaters, coaches, officials and others. It's because of them, all sharing the same goals... to make Synchronized Skating bigger, more popular, more exciting and more professional, that we did succeed.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude, to all of you, who participated and contributed in the realization of this new SynchroNice. We especially would like to thank Mr. Jan Dijkema, ISU's new Council President who despite a tight schedule, managed to plan lunch with us and do an interview.

It's our goal to present this high-quality magazine to you at no cost. By including some pages containing commercial messages we hope to be able to continue this. If you're interested in using our magazine for a commercial message, we will gladly get in contact with you.

Although the first issue of SynchroNice was highly appreciated and well received, we still found that some improvements could be made. We sincerely hope you like SynchroNice 2 even better.

Please like our Facebook pages or take a little time to rate us, your support for SynchroPhoto.eu and SynchroNice is necessary to keep us going.

Thank you for reading and we hope you all will be waiting for SynchroNice 3 next year.

Richard & Patricia,
SynchroNice
SynchroPhoto.eu



Photo: Val Photo Design

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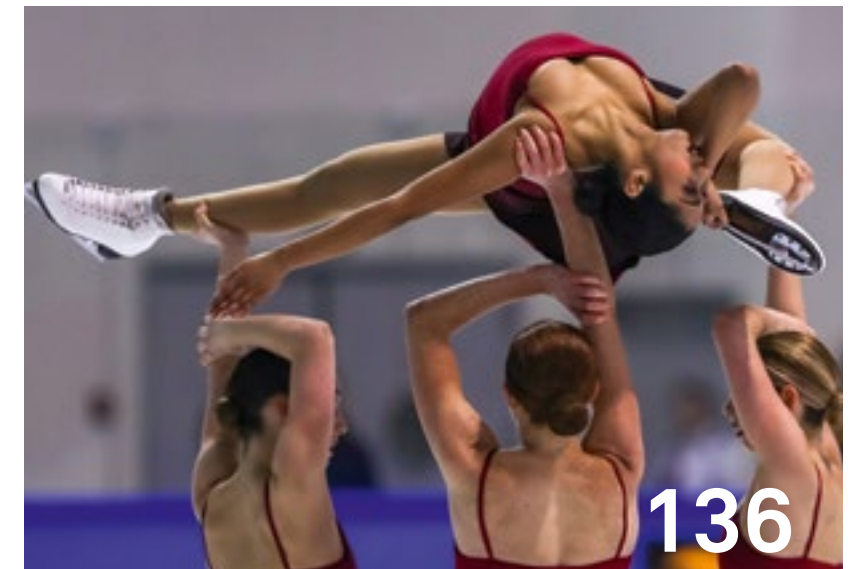
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Finlandia TROPHY ESPOO 2016

Every year near the end of a season, we're sort of done with Synchronized Skating. Spending 5-6 months traveling from competition to competition, spending every weekend in some ice rink and every spare hour behind our iMacs post processing the photos, isn't that easy. After such a period, one starts longing for some time off to do other stuff like a walk in the park, visiting family or a concert or doing some major shopping. But we have a hunch you all know the feeling. You all spend so much time training for and traveling to competitions and then there's choreography lessons, fitness or other work-out time. For a big part of the year, the team is your family and you spend hour after hour together. We can imagine that you're all tired at the end of any season and longing for the necessary break.

Once season has ended however... there's only one thing on our minds... The new season. While working through our final and unpublished pictures we already started talking about our plans in the new season. As the summer holiday progresses the talking about the new season flows over from longing for the new season into yearning for the new season. Synchronized Skating is addictive...

This season we made an early start by visiting Espoo in Finland to capture the Finlandia Trophy - the season's first competiton with some of the finest Synchronized Skating teams in the world. Finlandia Trophy was held 6 - 9 October 2016.

Finlandia Trophy was organized for the 21st time and already for the 5th time in cooperation with the City of Espoo. Espoo can be found at a ten-minute car drive west of Helsinki. The Event is part of the Challenger Series of the International Skating Union. By developing year after year it became one of the more important competitions for Single Skating, Ice Dance, Synchronized Skating and also - back after a long break - Pair Skating, at the beginning of a new season.

For SynchroNice and SynchroPhoto a first visit to this Mecca of Winter sports. From our hotel in Helsinki we took a taxi to the Espoo Metro Arena where the Event took place. We had our hopes up high towards the quality of the Ice rink and indeed we weren't disappointed. What a warm and great atmosphere we found here in this arena. Clean, perfect lighting and everything extremely well organized. A special area for the press and photographers with all the facilities one might need. Our first impression was, it's just perfect and we knew we were up for a great weekend of skating.



Senior final result		
1 Team Paradise	RUS	65,61
2 Marigold IceUnity	FIN	64,57
3 Team Unique	FIN	62,04
4 Revolutions	FIN	54,52
5 Rockettes	FIN	48,76

Too bad Synchronized Skating is just such a small part of this whole Trophy. We saw 5 teams performing their Short and only their Short. We saw the defending World Champion Team Paradise from Russia and from Finland we saw Marigold IceUnity, The Rockettes, The Revolutions and Team Unique. As the teams entered the Metro Arena building one could immediately feel the tension rising. More visitors entered, there was more noise, more movement, more laughter and more merchandise selling.... The start of a new Synchronized Skating Season had arrived. We did a final check on the camera equipment, made sure the battery packs were fully charged and the memory cards empty. Yes we are ready for a new season. 5 Teams proudly showed off a new Short Kür. Of course all teams were in new dresses or costumes fitting this year's chosen theme and although most of the teams were still a bit

nervous and shaky, we were treated to some really high level Synchronized Skating. Beautiful performances where World Champion Team Paradise appeared to be quite confident but World Champion runner up the Rockettes bumped into a bit of bad fortune and took a fall probably due to the excitement, but costly in points. Never the less we enjoyed their beautiful mirror dresses and performance enormously. So it's not the quantity that matters here, it's the quality that is important. We can't wait for the next competition and see all the other teams. Good luck to you all in your preparations and don't forget to smile..... because we'll be capturing you and your team.

Happy Skating. ■



MUSIC

FINLANDIA TROPHY 2016 ESPOO

Team Paradise
Marigold IceUnity
Team Unique
Revolutions
Rockettes

Listen
El Toreador
Ramalama
Wololo Whetenoyou
Mirror Mirror



FINLANDIA TROPHY 2016 ESPOO



Comments SYNCHRONICE

#SYNCHRONICE

Press, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram; We get a lot of positive feedback, some of it we would like to share with you.

Christopher Buchanan The SynchroNice Magazine is a wonderful innovation. Congratulations on producing an amazing magazine that is loved by all that have the good fortune to get their hands on a copy - now the world will see the love and passion you put into producing this wonderful publication! **JenniferGomesx** #awesome #love #it **Giulia Gandini** The magazine is really stunning with those photos! **Sarah Baatout** Wonderful initiative. Great pictures & great articles to read. **Chantal Coderre** I had the chance to read it and it's indeed a very 'NICE' publication! **Taryn Morgan** We all enjoyed reading this in Budapest! **Budapest Cup** We love your pictures! Thank you for this awesome SynchroNice magazine. **Jorik Hendrickx** Belgian Olympic Figure Skater Expanding my figure skating knowledge in my break! Very interesting magazine about the synchronize skating world! Several interview with world class coaches in this discipline! Also cool insights from a few synchronize skaters. What makes this magazine so special, are the amazing shots of this beautiful sport! Taking pictures in motion is very difficult and they are taken spot on! A must read for the figure skating community! Thanks Synchrophoto.eu for the copy! Keep up the good work! **Chiara Arienti, former teamcaptain Hot Shivers** Very nice job with the magazine! Sharp brilliant photos. Nice graphics and nice stories! Keep it up! **Karin Ris** Thank you so much for your great magazine! **From a 'synchro mum'** I loved it! You do a lot for the sport of synchronized ice skating! Please keep going! **Stéphan Deschênes** Un nouveau magazine de qualité internationale dédié au patinage synchronisé. **Maria Buglar** The first edition was a fantastic showcase of all the wonderful skaters. I cannot wait for the next edition. **Theresa Katzlinger** Das Heft ist wirklich toll. Vor allem wenn man bedenkt, dass Patricia und Richard das in ihrer Freizeit machen! **Sarah Baatout** 1st synchro skating magazine with interesting interviews of top synchro coaches and skaters as well as truly beautiful pictures of synchro skaters. **Lieve Westerlinck** Helemaal gelezen en vond het subliem. Proficiat!



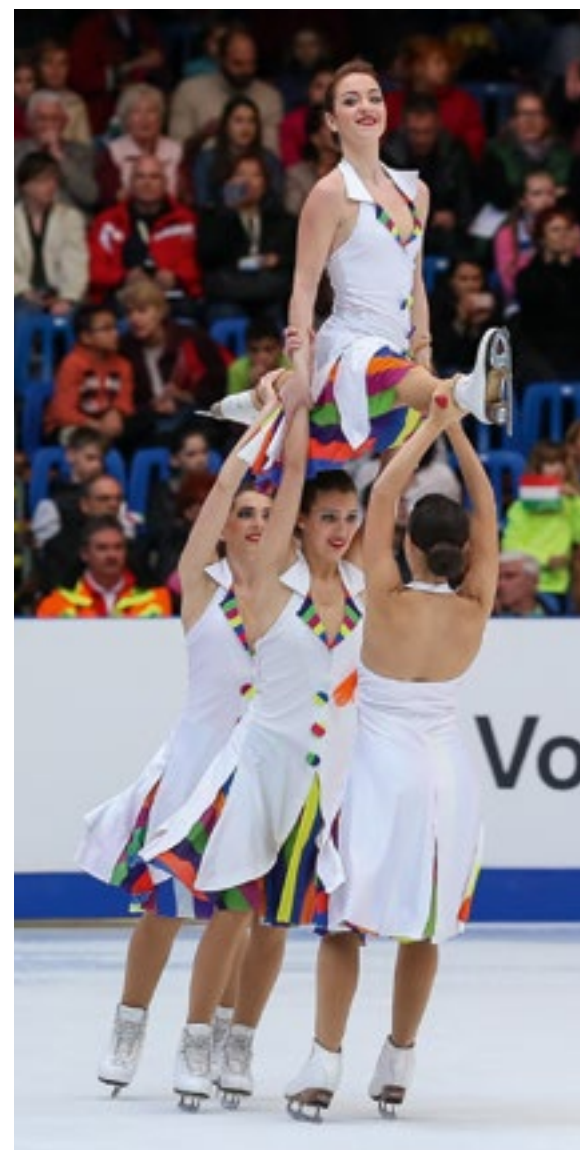
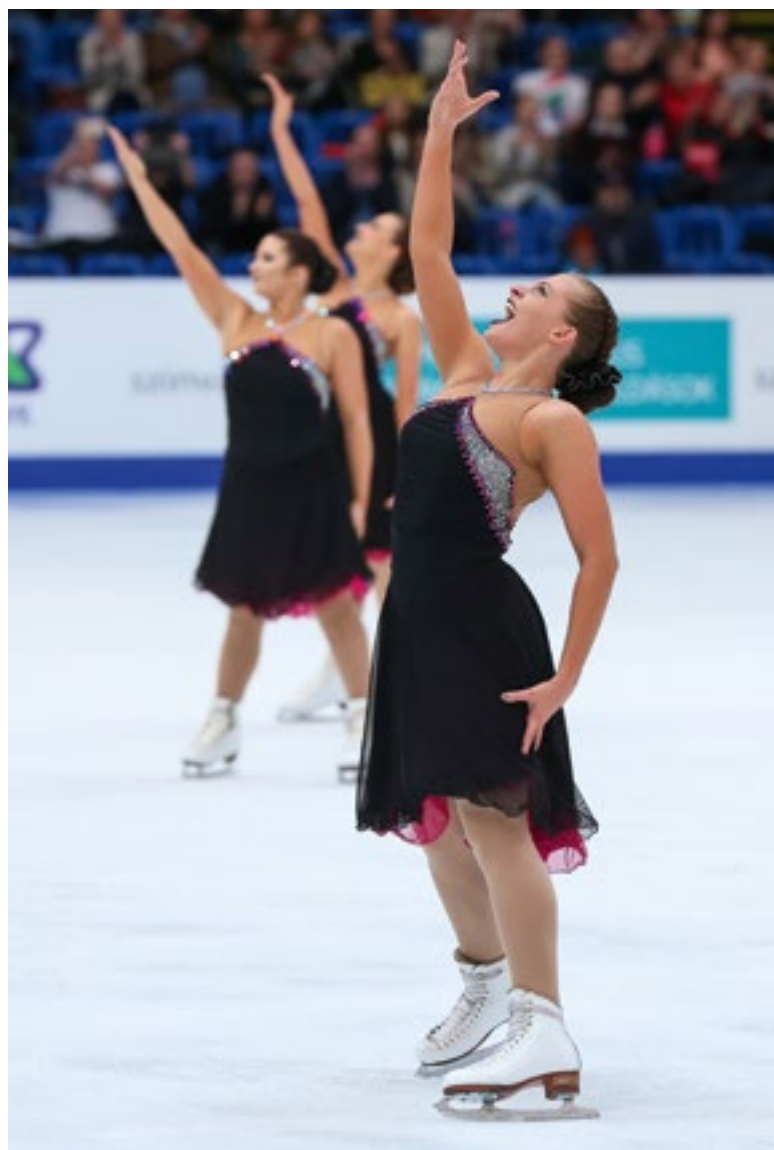
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**World Synchronized
Skating Championships**



Highlights



Highlights





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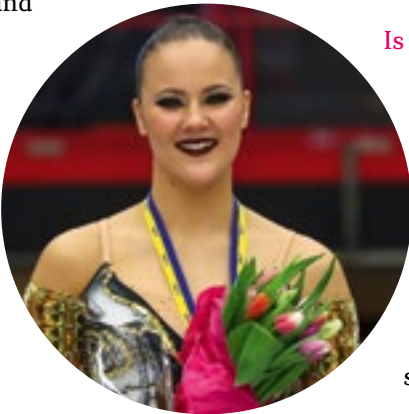
‘BEING A ROCKETTE, WAS MY BIGGEST DREAM’

ANNA VUORELA - ROCKETTES

Anna is a beautiful 24-year-old psychology student at Helsinki University. Although born in Espoo not far from Helsinki, these days she prefers to live in her own apartment in Helsinki. Of course, the apartment is near the Helsinki Ice Hall where many of her team mates live.

Unlike many other students, Anna likes studying and is doing her fourth and final year. After she finishes this study she would love to go on studying and do her major in sports psychology. However, there's no need to get all stressed about it and rush into working life. "Skating is very important to me at this point in my life, maybe even the most important thing. So maybe I'm not studying as hard as some of my fellow students but I'll be happy and satisfied if I graduate in say, like 3 years or so."

Because of all the skating and school hours there isn't much room for a job on the side, although Anna does work during summer holidays. Two previous summers for instance, she worked in a tree-top adventure park as an instructor. Besides synchronized skating she doesn't have any specific hobbies but when she was younger, she played football as well (until she had to decide between the two hobbies due to time problems "and the choice was pretty easy!" Anna laughs.) In her spare time, she loves to go and see her family, friends and her boyfriend. Not in that particular order. Her boyfriend lives and studies in another city, Jyväskylä, approximately 180 miles from Helsinki. Anna also enjoys her 3 little nephews (9 months, 6 and 7 years old); she can play for hours with them.



But there must be some things you like to do besides skating we asked Anna,
Yes sure, I like to try new foods and restaurants, sleep well and watch TV-series. I also like baking! Doing needlework and crafts is also relaxing for me. I'm generally interested in sports and watching them on TV. Especially ice hockey, athletics and of course figure skating interest me. And no pets to take care of? I don't have any pets.

If we were to ask your friends or teammates, what would they tell us about Anna?
They hopefully would say... that as a person, I am calm, happy, accurate, team player, social and trustworthy. That I like to be around other people but that I also appreciate alone time every now and then. And I believe they would say, that I usually don't stress about little things that I can't change. That I'm a good listener to my friends if they have something they want to talk about.

What does your family life look like, any brothers and sisters?
Well, at the moment I live in Helsinki where I moved about year and a half ago. I was born in Espoo, the second biggest city in Finland, where I also went to school before. I have a big brother and a big sister. My big brother is married and has three children (the nephews). My big sister is currently in Australia as an exchange student but lives and studies in Helsinki too. They are both into sports as well but we're close anyway. My parents still live in the house in Espoo, where I spent my childhood. My family and friends are my biggest fans, they support me in many ways. Having fans is something unreal anyway. Every time someone comes up to me and tells me they are a fan of me and look up to me, or is a Rockettes fans, it feels strange... I don't think I'll ever get used to it, but then again it's such a honor to be part of the Rockettes team!

Is there a quote you live by, do you have a text you hold on to?
I have many favorite quotes for different situations but one of the most inspiring quotes for me is: "Make today so awesome, yesterday gets jealous". Once I got that on a card from one my team mates, I have cherished that quote ever since.

When did you start skating?
I started skating when I was 5 years old. My sister was skating and my mom took me skating once too. When I was 6 years old, I was told that I had to choose between synchronized and figure skating. Synchronized skating teams' practice times were better for my mom so she made the choice for me! But the choice was right. I went to audition for a team and I never looked back. In synchronized skating the team is the main thing for me. I could never imagine going to the competition ice alone without my team's support. I'm also fascinated by all the things a team or a small group can do together on ice. The things you can't do by yourself. I skated 12 years in Espoo (ETK) in teams Rainbows, Blue Arrows and Reflections. After that in 2011 I decided to audition for a team that I had always looked up to, Rockettes. One of my biggest dreams came true when I was finally told that I made it to the team! Now it's my sixth season in Rockettes and I think it gets better every year.



Do you have a favorite kind of skating brand to skate on?
I have Riedell skates but every one of our team does too. And of course, very important Wilson Coronation Dance Parabolic blades.

What's the program during Off season, do you still meet your team mates?
Our off-season, means a summer break for about six weeks long. During the break, we follow a fitness program that our physical coaches have made for us. We also have a habit of getting together once a week to train together and develop some new lifts and tricks for the upcoming season. Otherwise I like to relax, see my friends and of course work. I also like to travel and for example last summer I visited Amsterdam. At the very beginning of the season in spring, we focus on basic skating skills and unison. We also get to know each other better and make ourselves a team as soon as possible. Usually we build the first version of our short program before summer break and at least try out some elements for the free program. This season we also built the first version of the free program with our choreographer Reija Wäre before summer. I think it's great to hear our themes and music early in the season so we can get familiar with it in an early stage too.

Why are the Rockettes the best?
One of the best things in our team is our strong common motivation which you can see every day in our trainings. Every one works hard towards our goals and we all know and appreciate that. We also share our thoughts together whether they are good or something that bothers us at the moment. Many of us, including our coaches, have been working together for many years, so we know each other well, which makes our everyday life easier. Our goal is to get a little better every day both individually and as a team. And of course we have our wonderful coach Kaisa. She often asks us after a training session what we have learned that day. That's good for us and helps us realize why we do what we do every day. Kaisa is the best coach our team could have and she gives so much of herself to us in every training. She also wants to know all of us personally, which is great. We also have many assistant coaches who all together give us different kinds of feedback. That is a huge benefit for us.



It's always so much fun to spend time together and make new memories.

So, you spend a lot of time training?

Yes we do, we have ice trainings six days a week, Tuesdays are our days off. Two days a week, Mondays and Fridays, we even have two ice sessions. On ice, we train always with the whole team. Once a week we have also a figure skating coach with us. In addition to ice trainings, we also have physical trainings, ballet, choreography, flexibility, recovery and mental trainings. On average, we train 18 hours a week, which 13 of them are on ice. In addition to that, we also have about three training camps per season. On average, we participate in four competitions in Finland and two international competitions per season. Besides those, we have often participated in the World Championship which is our main goal of the competitions. However, the competition in Finland is such a high level every year, we do have to give our best in every competition to finally get to represent Finland in the Worlds.

Who decides which competitions you will enter?

We always discuss together which international competitions we would like to participate in but our coach has the final say in this matter. We choose our competitions based on our time schedule and of course we always seek for any competition with a list of strong contestants, hoping that the competition will be of a high-level.

Do you never get tired of the traveling?

I love traveling with our team! It's always so much fun to spend time together and make new memories. I also like skating in different kinds of ice rinks. I haven't won the World Championship yet, so that is of course a big dream for me to achieve. I also believe that this season we have all the opportunities to win the title. I really like both of our programs and I can also imagine them to be the winning programs this year. Another dream of mine is to, at least once more, win the Finnish Championship title. I've won it once before, in my first season with Rockettes, and I think it would be great to win that trophy again. It's always such an honor to win the title in such a high-level competition.

How about the music you choose for the competition, any favorite styles or artists?

I have many favorite music styles to skate to. This season I do like our free program music, especially the very last part of it. It is so powerful and vivid and I love to perform to it. One of my other favorites is last season's short program music (Shindler's List). It was so beautiful and peaceful and full of emotion. And my first free program with Rockettes was Goddess of the Wind and I loved the

slow part of the music (Listen to the Wind). In that music, I was able to put my soul in to that performance and got to perform from the bottom of my heart. I'll never forget how much I enjoyed skating to it.

Any favorite other teams?

I think highly of many other teams and I like to watch their programs every season and try to find out what it is that they have extra that we could learn from. I think all the high-level teams have their own strengths and I can appreciate that very much. I think it's only good sportsmanship to praise other teams on doing something really well. I think that in general... synchronized skating teams get along well and don't fear each other's competition.

So why Synchronized Skating anyway?

As I told before, I (my mum) chose synchronized skating due to time issues, but it has always been the natural choice for me. I enjoy spending time and working with a team full of different personalities. I also get inspired by the power of a team in both success and failures. I think it's also fascinating what a team can create on ice together. In the recent years, I have really been enjoying watching ice dance too. I admire their skating skills and cooperation. I think it is a very beautiful sport. I like figure skating and pair skating too, especially the lifts and jumps, of course. In Finland however Synchronized Skating is the biggest and most popular sport on Ice. And I'm still so happy that we chose Synchronized Skating! It's definitely my sport.

Will it ever become an Olympic Sport?

I do hope that someday synchronized skating will be in the Olympics. I think the athletes deserve it and it would be very interesting for the audience. Of course, it's an issue that there are almost every time the same five countries in the top placement. Those five countries are also those who can send two teams to the Worlds. I think that might be one reason why those countries get better every year. Or at least in Finland I think one of the biggest reasons why the competition is year after year so tough, is the fact that many great teams compete for the two places in the Worlds. The sport is also bigger in those five countries which maintains the level of the teams. But of course, there are great teams outside of the five countries that could cut into it, for example Germany and Japan.

Thank you very much Anna. ■

SKATERS PASSION

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Thanks to Team Surprise – Sweden



IRINA YAKOVLEVA (RUS)
team paradise

Budapest, April the 9th Team Paradise just finished their free program and are anxiously waiting in the Kiss & Cry for their points. There's not a single noise in the Arena, one can hear a pin drop, the tension is choking. She of course stands in the middle, holding her Girls firmly. It's just in her eyes that we can discover now, how excited and tense she is.

Then the moment we've all been waiting for, the speaker announces the score of team Paradise .. "And that brings it to a total of 212,69 points ". The crowd starts cheering and Team Paradise starts jumping and screaming, some of the girls start crying, but after a motherly comforting hug here and there, she the Architect of this success steps down from the Kiss & Cry and applauds her team. She proudly enjoys her team having their moment of fame and glory with a modest smile on her face from the side-line.

She is... Irina Yakovleva, coach of Team Paradise.

This elegant and well-dressed lady saw the first light of day on January the 1st in 1951 downtown Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Her maiden name was Irina Filippova. Having just turned 8 years old, the virus of figure skating grabbed her. Only 8 years later her talent and skills were noticed by Konstantin Bojarsky, Artistic Director of the Leningrad Maly Theatre of Opera and Ballet. He invited Irina to be the leading lady in his new Ballet "Leningrad Ballet on Ice" Irina was so taken by the idea, that her parents couldn't resist her enthusiasm and charm and just had to let her join the Ballet. Here Irina worked with the world's greatest and most famous Ballet dancers, Konstantin Sergeev and Natalia



Dudinskaya.

While working the ballet, she finished High school, even with a recommendation. She went on to university to start a study in psychology. One day she decided however to apply for the St. Petersburg Conservatory which she finished some years later with a degree in Choreography. After that she kept working at the ballet, together with her husband Alexander Lakovlev for almost 25 years. Irina had the honor to work with the best and most famous choreographers and ballet dancers in the world throughout her entire career. When the time came to say farewell to the ballet she was working as a coach and choreographer at the Academy for single figure skaters. In 1994 the headmaster of the Academy asked Irina to form and organize a team of ynschronized Skaters. At that time there were only 5 teams in all of Russia. Irina didn't even know the existence of such a skating discipline. There were teams like Samara (Dream Team) from Moscow, Tartarstan, the team from Kazan and team Lipetsk. In November of the same year Irina had her first national competition with her team and they came in 3rd, which was not bad at all. So on the 25th of November team Paradise was born and now 22 years later, team Paradise is the Russian champion for the 19th consecutive time. Irina immediately believed in the idea, that Synchronized Skating could be a major success. However, first she had to fight and

PERFECT JUST
ISN'T PERFECT
ENOUGH

overcome the prejudiced opinion of many people thinking Synchronized Skating was only for the poor. From the initial Precision Skating, which was based only on crossovers and change of formations it became Synchronized Skating based on figure skating. Today besides intricate footwork the teams can include different figure skating elements. And to Irina's opinion today one has already the right to enter the figure skating family as a new very exciting figure skating discipline. Though there is very little information about Synchronized Skating as a discipline, every year more and more skaters want to join Synchronized Skating teams.

team Sunrise

Irina also started the Junior team "Sunrise". With Sunrise, she took the national gold in 1997 but unfortunately the team has disintegrated, because there wasn't enough Ice available for them and it was hard to find new talent for the team. In those days Synchronized Skating wasn't very popular in Russia. Irina herself never skated on any team, she had to find her way with her experience as a pair skater at the ballet. There are still only a few senior teams in Russia but the positive fact is that many novice teams have appeared in different regions of this country. This means that the sport is developing and has a future. Also at the Worlds, new teams have appeared. Irina says, "the more, the better! It motivates and develops the sport and the growth of skills within the teams. I'm proud that my skaters who finished their skating careers are now working successfully all over the world and are making new and good solid teams. There are a lot of professional coaches from Finland, Sweden, Canada, who skated in their teams for ages, have a great experience in synchronized skating and know what is it to be part of the team, that now work throughout the world. Every year the level of the teams (not only the top teams) is becoming higher and higher."

At this moment Irina holds the title World Champion in Synchronized Skating with her Team Paradise. They again have a very strong program for the season 2016/2017 so the rest should come up with an even stronger program. Irina works with her usband on the team. He is her best friend, her support and her assistant coach. By the way they have been together forever. They met each other on the ice when Irina was only 8 years old. They have a daughter, a grandson and a granddaughter.

The team became their second family. We have good terms in the team. Our motto: "One for all and all for one". Although I can be strict, the girls trust me. Alex is the softer one. This year Irina is working with Lena, who is another assistant coach and one of their former skaters. Lena skated in the team for 15 years. She understands me at a glance, Irina says. When she chooses new girls for the team she prefers to take beautiful slim girls. They must have good stretch, flexibility. Of course, she'll pay attention to skating skills. But in her practice, there were girls who were rather strong skaters but they still had to leave the team, one for being lazy, another wasn't a team player. Irina hates lazy people. To her talents she says: "it's about some ability and lots of hard work." She does like confident and motivated skaters who know what they spend their time for on the ice rink. They should have a goal in their life. These are things you can learn only in the process of communication. Irina would never take a skater if she felt that she couldn't change her for the better. After becoming the World Champions the girls reached their goal but they didn't slow down. They kept working hard and they will try to defend their title and that is not easy at all. There are 6 top teams from Finland, USA, Canada and Sweden beside Russia who are eager to step up to the highest podium. Each Team has its own style. All of them are and will be worthy competitors. All of them work hard. Irina believes that in Colorado the fight will be exciting and tough. The Technical Panel and judges will decide which team is the best. The main thing for team Paradise will be to overcome their nerves, fears, hesitation and uncertainty.

Irina hopes and wishes her skaters will enjoy skating their programs and touch the hearts of the audience. Paradise's short program for this season is made on the song by Beyoncé "Listen". For the free skating program Irina chose the music of Richard Addinsell "The Warsaw Concerto" written for the British film "Dangerous Moonlight". She hopes that people will like their new programs. When ones work is already highly appreciated it is very difficult to decide what to come up with next. It feels like you can't do any better, but you can't produce anything less. This gives you the inspiration, the power and desire to create something new and unexpected. Inspiration I usually take from music and of course from my team.

To our question, what Irina thinks about the future in Synchronized Skating and the possibility of being part of the Olympics, she answers. "Of course, as a person sincerely devoted to synchronized skating I will say YES, our discipline should be an Olympic Sport! I think this is a matter of time. Our sport is very spectacular. The growth of skating skills, the increasing complexity of the programs, introduction of new lements will make

it even more exciting. Yet many people haven't even heard of such a sport. It is necessary to promote synchronized skating by broadcasting it, press coverage and giving more information to attract more people. And I believe that it will happen soon."

In the meanwhile, Irina in her modest way, is enjoying her team's performances at several competitions. So, the next time when you see Irina walking besides the Ice rink... you know where all this grace and elegance is coming from.

■



highlights

14th ISU Synchronized Skating Junior World
Challenge Cup 2016

11 – 12 March 2016 in Zagreb



highlights



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NEXXICE EMILY VAN BERKEL

How old were you when you first started skating and how did you get in touch with skating? I started figure skating at the age of 3 because of my mother. She was a figure skater when she was younger, competing in both singles and synchro, as well as being a coach. The ice rink has always been my “home away from home” since I have been skating for almost as long as I have been walking!

Why is it you made at one point the choice to start Synchronized Skating? As I mentioned before, my mom was a synchronized skater so synchro has always been in my blood! My best friend is also a skater and started synchronized skating before I did. I watched her practice one day and asked my mom if I could try synchro. I skated on a team in my little hometown for 2 years and after my best friend switched teams and started skating at a larger club, I joined her. I skated there for 6 years. This is my first year on Nexxice Junior, and I am loving every minute! What is it you like most about Synchronized Skating? My favourite thing about synchronized skating is the feeling of having a second

family. Through the ups and the downs, all members of the team are there for each other. I love the feeling of stepping on to the ice and knowing that your 17 sisters, 2 managers, and amazing coach are behind you and supporting you in every movement you make. With that being said, travelling the world with my second family is another one of my favourite things. I would never have the opportunity to see new countries and meet new people, while doing the sport I love, without synchronized skating.

Why is your team the best team in the world for you? When I was selected to be a part of Nexxice Junior, I did not really know any of the girls on my team. In a few short months, we became family. No matter what happens at a practice or competition, there is always a teammate around who is there to listen or to make you laugh. We push one another to be at our best all of the time. We work extremely hard and are dedicated to each other and the success of our team. I am extremely proud to be a part of this group of girls, which I know can compete with the best in the world.



Do you have a favorite senior team that you look up to and would like to be part of one day? Team Unique and Nexxice Senior are two teams that I look up to. I aspire to be as intense, confident, and powerful as Unique skaters, while having the gracefulness, flow, and quality of Nexxice Senior skaters. I want to have the ability to cast a spell over an audience while I skate, like Team Unique and Nexxice Senior do. The work ethic, commitment, and pride that these two teams have are an inspiration to all synchronized skaters.

What would the best ever theme or music be to skate to in your own opinion? The best music to skate to is a piece of music that has a unique story. Our short and free programs this year both have very different but distinct stories. They are journeys which my team and I can easily relate to and express through our movements and real emotions. Personally I love skating to uplifting and upbeat music, although I love to skate to classical or instrumental music as well!

Do you have dreams or goals in your Synchro-life? I have many goals and dreams in my “synchro-life”. Skating on Nexxice Junior and competing as Team Canada has actually been one of my biggest dreams for a very long time! Travelling the world while skating is another one of my biggest dreams. Competing at the Mozart Cup was my first time travelling to Europe, and it was amazing to meet new people from different countries and see all of the beautiful things that Germany and Austria had to offer! Finally, one of my biggest dreams, along with many other synchronized skaters, is to proudly stand with my team and sing along to my national anthem at either a Junior or Senior ISU World Championship.

What can you tell us about your coach, is she any good do you think? This is my first year skating for my coach, Trish Perdue-Mills, although she makes me feel as though I have been skating for her forever. Trish loves each and every one of my teammates and wants nothing but the best for all of us. She knows our capabilities and makes sure we are working to our fullest potential. She reminds us of all the time and energy we put into our programs and skating skills, keeping us calm and confident on our blades. Trish's passion for the sport is inspiring and she creates programs that will always have a special place in your heart. We love you Trish!

What would your all-time favorite competition dress look like, if you would get the change to assemble and choose it? If I could design the competition dress of my dreams, it would look very similar to our free dress this year. The dress would have sleeves, full length or 3/4 length. The skirt would be full and flowy. The front would reach just to my knees and the back would be a little bit longer. The dress would have to have some sparkle on it of course, the kind of sparkle where when you breathe each crystal catches your eye. The colour however, is hard to decide because I think so many colours look amazing on the ice! My top choices would have to be blues, purples, or reds!

Is there anything you would like to say to all other Synchronized Skaters in the world? Something I would like to say to synchronized skaters all over the world is to always follow your dreams and to know that you can do anything if you believe in yourself and work hard! My favourite quote and a quote that has brought me to where I am today is, “Wherever you go, go with all your heart”. This inspires me to give 100% of my effort and energy in whatever I am doing, in life and in skating. Never settle for anything less than your best! ■



Ana Cecilia Cantu Felix

inspired

by the Olympic Games

Ana here on the right side of the picture



SynchroNice: How did you come into contact with Figure Skating?

As I grew up in one of the warmest states in Mexico, my sister Michele (4 years old) and I (6 years old) were watching figure skating at the Olympic Winter Games in 1992. One simple question my mother asked us changed our lives forever.. “Would you like to do that?”. Michele and I fell in love with and were totally hooked on to Figure Skating. We had a tiny Ice skating rink in our hometown, measuring only 20 by 15 meters. That’s where we had our first lessons and made our first steps on the Ice.

After a few years, my sister and I still loved the sport that much that we decided to move to Simsbury, this was 2011. This is where we got to train with some great coaches like Galina Zmievskaya and Vladimir Petrenko. Our choices ever since have been inspired by the love we have for this sport. Funny story, 2 years ago I met Paul Wylie (the skater I watched that time on TV) and it was a delight, it felt like I had made a full circle in my skating life.

SynchroNice: Is Michele your only sister?

We have one more sister and one brother. Our sister Paulina started her own Dance academy after graduating as a Psychologist from University, she is a very talented Dancer. Our brother is still in Law-school but play’s a serious game of golf as well. Both will have a lot of opportunities to choose from. As you can see, the family is very much into sports and competing.

SynchroNice: How can we describe you best as a person?

I can be described best as a doer. Whenever an idea comes to my mind... I’ll do the necessary research and then get it done. That is what I for instance did with the synchro team, in a country where no synchro skating had been practiced before. Besides a doer you may say I’m someone who’s determined, disciplined, a hard worker and a perfectionist as well.

SynchroNice: What does your life look like now?

Quite recently we moved back to Monterrey, Mexico, but from 2013 to 2015 I lived in California in the Bay Area for my husband’s job who was working for Google.

At the moment, I was married, 31 years old and although I graduated from Law school in 2012, I now am the Sports Director at Ice Complex, an Ice rink

in Monterrey Mexico. This is where I also coach singles and synchronized skaters.

And I do have a pet of course! He is a Cockapoo named Kuma, he is 7 years old and I taught him how to do an “Axel”... it’s so cute, he does a single rotation clock-wise on command!

Thru the years I learned to appreciate all kind of sports, I played softball at school, took Karate lessons, I started running to stay in shape and even did some Speed Skating for a while... I like almost any sport except.... Basketball.

Figure Skating however has been my biggest passion, I had the honor to represent my Country Mexico on several occasions. First time as a Junior Single skater, after that 5 times as a Single Senior Skater and to top it off, 4 times with our Synchro team.

SynchroNice: With a track record like that, you must have a lot of fans?

Well as far as fans... people have mentioned their interest in my skating. Once I was at an International B competition and I realized that what I was skating to, was not attracting the public... the music might have been what judges expect and like most, but it certainly felt like it was not me. Against advice, I switched music and went for songs such as “Get Ready for This” or the theme for “Beetlejuice”, ever since people started contacting me and expressing their support. They found me entertaining! Even this Christmas, out of the blue, I received a private message on Facebook from someone mentioning their admiration for that time when I made the final round at a ISU World Championship... That felt great!

We heard your favorite quote is “We are what we believe we are” by C. S. Lewis. Why is that?

Well that’s mainly because during my life a lot of people have told me I wouldn’t be able to do something. Coaches said I was never going to land 2Axel or triples. I wasn’t going to make Worlds. I wasn’t going to be able to make a final round. I wasn’t going to be able to study a career and train. It was going to be impossible to get 16 people together to start a synchro team, a sport we knew nothing about... and so on. I think we can limit ourselves if we let negativity in our lives or if we listen to other people’s negativity. Yeah, maybe I never had a skater’s body type, but I sure tried my best to be recognized by others as what I believed I was!

SynchroNice: Is there someone you look up to or maybe a role model in your life?

My role model has always been my father. No, he is not a skater, but he has always been a determined person and has always looked to do more and what's right. He is a doer like me.

SynchroNice: A few short questions, for short answers. Your Favorite Skate brand? I LOVE JACKSON SKATES!

Why? Perfect skates and everybody on their team are always so nice and helpful.

Hobbies? Running and reading it helps me relax and stay in shape

Favorite Team besides Merging Edge? Nexxice

Why? Their skills of course plus they melt the ice as they skate! Such a delight!

SynchroNice: What can you tell us about your team?

Merging Edge (Team Mexico) is such a fun team. Mexicans have their own ways, we are loud (that's what everybody says...) and part of that means we always have great inside jokes and a fun attitude. The downside is they are loud and always joking! Sometimes it takes a couple of calls to get them to position, but closer to events it flows nicely.

We were training 5 to 6 times a week 2 hours a day, sometimes 3. Unfortunately, this year we lost a lot of skaters that wanted to focus on school and our new skaters don't have the age to go to Worlds. Hopefully the 2016-2017 season we will be at Synchro Worlds again.

What influences which competitions we do is our income. We have no economic support other than what each parent gives to their own skater. We do fundraisers but the amounts collected could never help a skater pay for a flight to Europe! So the closer to home, the better! I did for instance hear about the new ISU competition in the Netherlands and I know it would be amazing to go! Any synchro event is always so friendly and fun, I bet it will be amazing!

SynchroNice: What is your next goal?

My personal goal is to get the economical funds for the team to be able to train harder. That way we could purchase more ice time, more off-ice training time and all the necessary equipment so the team looks and feels their best and it shows in their performance.

SynchroNice: Do you have a favorite program or kind of music to skate to?

My favorite Merging Edge programs included "Bésame Mucho", which was the program with which we debuted and it is also a Mexican song, that meant a lot to me. The other great song we skated to was "When I get Famous" by Jamie Cullum. To me the program personally represented my will to keep going and being whatever I believed I was.

SynchroNice: Is there anything you still want to do on Ice, that you didn't do yet?

As a single skater, I even tried 3Axel once. Tried is the key word, I fell so hard! I have really tried everything I've liked on ice, including hockey and short track. I'm happy with my skating choices!

SynchroNice: Why Synchro?

Well, I did do singles for 18 years and I loved the freedom it brought to me. But synchro is fun, it is easier, which makes it more enjoyable during competitions and it brings other challenges you can't even imagine as a single or a couple! Plus, there is always 15 or more other skaters that have your back!

SynchroNice: How about the future of Synchronized Skating, do you believe it to be Olympic someday?

I hope synchronized skating makes the Olympics and soon for the good of the sport. Yes, maybe some nations have a lot of support from their Federations or other inside programs that help the sport grow within their country, but that it is not our case. If it were an Olympic sport, the incentive for skaters to join a team in a developing synchro nation like ours would be greater! We personally have no competition within our country so the only hope is to spend so much money to fly to another country to compete if we want to see how we are doing. That problem extends to having new coaches and multiple teams... as a new sport you could encourage 2 or 3 individuals to do a local competition but in 2 or 3 teams you are talking about 20 or 30 people at least which increases the difficulty.

SynchroNice: Will other countries ever be able to seriously compete the big Synchronized Skating countries?

I do think other countries could mingle with those top 3 to 5 countries mentioned, but it all goes back to the support of their Federations and/or the team's ability to have sponsors. It is an expensive sport and at the end of the day if there is no Olympics and your country's Federation doesn't have the funds to contribute to the team economically, other big sponsors won't contribute unless the team is winning World medals... it's a "chicken or the egg" situation.

SynchroNice: How do you get through off-season?

Off-Season is just a time to listen to your body and take it easy where needed, but I love running and I love being on the ice so that is what I do! Whenever I can get at least one person on the ice with me, even off-season, we do synchro elements or drills, they are just so relaxing and fun to me! Plus off-season means more coaching work anyway so I am on the ice all year-round if possible. ■

it's a "chicken or the egg" situation



January 6–7 2017
26 Teams from
12 different nations!

Cup of Berlin Germany



And it's already finished again, the first European ISU Competition in 2017, how time flies. Every 2 years, just for a weekend, Berlin is the main capital of Synchronized Skating in Europe. Germany with Team Berlin1, under the lead of Gert Hofmann, is getting closer to the top teams year after year and their effort is showing. Synchronized Skating in Germany is increasing in popularity, as the extremely well-visited venue "Wellblech Palast" during the Berlin Cup underlines. So, there's music, thousands of singing and dancing spectators, a very nice atmosphere, some serious contestants, and an exemplary, perfect white Ice-rink. That's your Berlin Cup 2017.

Anu Oksanen's Team Marigold IceUnity was favorite for the Berlin Cup 2017 title from the beginning and they didn't disappoint. With the season's best performance on both programs (195.11 points), they "naturally" took home the Golden Medal. Runner-Up, the lovely Haydenettes from the USA,

didn't leave much of a gap and performed beautifully with a total score of 188.08 points. Berlin 1 were aiming and hoping for the 3rd place on the podium, but unfortunately it wasn't their weekend. With a score of 153.82 points after some bad luck and a collapsing lift in their free-style Team Berlin had to watch the Crystallettes overtake them and rightfully claim the Bronze Medal with a score of 166.70 points.

Outstanding was the performance of the Dutch as well. With an all-time personal best of 90.57 points, Coach Danielle Spijker's team Ice-United outperformed themselves. It goes to show, no matter what challenges there are to overcome, if you take things seriously.... anything's possible. 7th place for the Dutch.

It was SynchroPhoto's first visit to the Berlin Cup, but it certainly wasn't our last, we had a great time. Thank you Berlin, thank you Organizing Committee.



Senior result			
1 Marigold IceUnity	FIN	195,11	
2 Haydenettes	USA	188,08	
3 Crystallettes	USA	166,70	
Junior result			
1 Skyliners	USA	150,44	
2 Dream Edges	FIN	133,77	
3 Valley Bay Synchro	FIN	122,91	







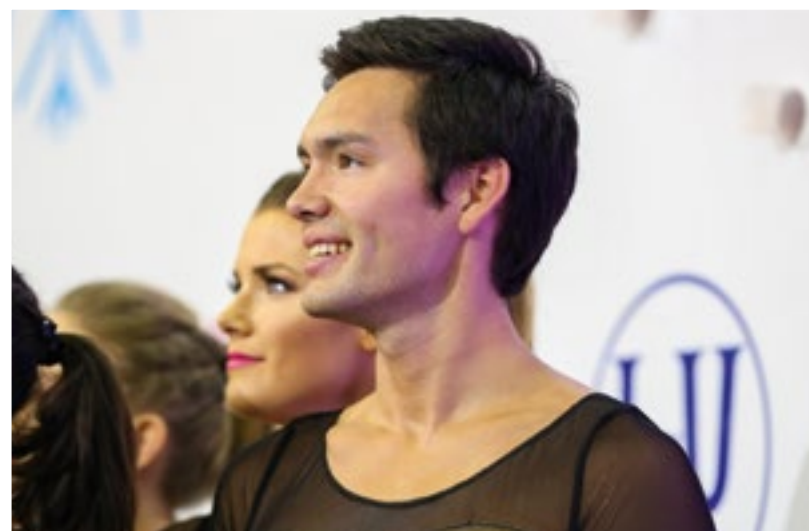
**IT'S OUR
MISSION TO
SHOW THE
WORLD, IN AND
OUTSIDE THE
SYNCHRONIZED
SKATING
COMMUNITY,
THE BEAUTY OF
SYNCHRONIZED
SKATING.**

#WhyNotSynchro2022

Lee Chandler *interview*

The first chilly Winter winds are blowing down Dutch City streets... It's cold, it's dark and to top it off, it's raining. We're talking a typical Dutch late autumn evening. SynchroNice is in Utrecht, the Netherlands and we have an appointment... So we ran from the car in the parking lot, through the rain and cold weather straight into the Lobby of NH Hotels where our meeting was planned, to find the warmest smile of nobody less than..... Lee Chandler.

Photo Credits; Joachim Kloock



Lee Chandler in the Netherlands?

That's the first question that came to our minds. Lee has been a dominant part of Team Nexxice from Canada for many years, but retired from the team after season 2015/2016.

Because of his love for Nexxice and his coaching qualities we expected him this season to be working with one of the younger teams, but adventurous as Lee appears to be, he accepted a position at the Holiday on Ice Cast to be touring Europe as of this coming December. It came to our attention that Lee had been cast and rehearsals were taking place in the Netherlands.

We saw Lee performing with Nexxice several times and we noticed that Lee seemed to be quite popular amongst the other Synchronized Skaters and fans especially with the female fans. All the more reason to do an interview with him and learn some more about his background.

27-year-old Lee Chandler grew up being an only child with his parents in Boissevain, a small village in Manitoba Canada and hometown to approximately 1000 people which had 1 school for some 300 children. In the peace and quiet of his parent's farm, Lee had all the time to think and fantasize about his future. "It was so quiet; you could drive your car for an hour without seeing a soul," Lee laughs. Although his parents were farmers with cattle there seemed to be spare time to spend the annual family vacation abroad. This is probably how Lee developed his love for traveling and adventure.

After Lee graduated from High school, he went to University where he spent only one year before the big city made its final call and the start of a promising Ice skating career was a fact. Lee started out as a Solo Figure Skater, but once Lee realised that the gold might not be achievable, Patrick Chan was a rising star at the time, he decided to choose another path, the path of Synchronized Skating.

In 2011 Lee joined Nexxice and for 5 years being the first and only male on the team, he stepped down in 2016. Five successful years leaving him with an incredible track record: 5 times Canadian Champion, 3 times Silver Medallist at the World Championships Synchronized Skating and the crown on all the hard work was collected in 2015. Nexxice with Lee grabbed the Gold in the World Championships in Synchronized Skating in 2015 witnessed by a roaring crowd in a fully packed arena downtown Hamilton Canada.

And now instead of coaching you joined Holiday on Ice?

Yes, but that came somewhat out of the blue. They asked me to do an audition, so I did and it got me a position with Holiday on Ice instantly. For me it felt like a nice challenge I wanted to pursue, it was way out of my comfort zone and therefore very alluring. There's no pressure and it's also reasonably paid, so that helped to make a more balanced decision as

well, hahaha.

At Holiday on Ice I'm part of a bigger cast and all of us are now rehearsing the brand-new show "Time". Time is a skating show for all ages with all different styles of music and lots of ice dancing and acrobatics. On the 24th of November we start off in Germany, where we'll be touring for 3 months and after that we leave for France to do another tour for 3 months.

When I first arrived, I knew nobody, but now it's very similar to Synchronized Skating, one big happy family and of course with some of the cast you develop a closer relationship.

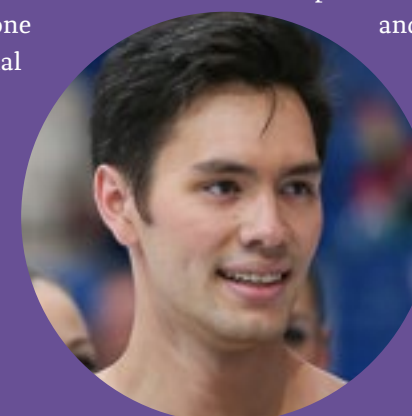
Of course, I still love coaching and I love to help and coach other teams abroad as well. I have been coaching in Scotland, Australia and the U.S.A. so far. At the end of May 2017 I'll decide on my next move in skating.

How about the future in Synchronized Skating?

Well I think there are some countries that are performing reasonably well at the moment and making some great progress. I hope that this will continue, because if you ever want to make it to the Olympics you must have some 5 to 10 countries to deliver the World Top 10 in Synchronized Skating. France, Germany, Italy and some others are doing a great job right now. Of course, it's all a matter of time and money and particularly the money is hard to find in Synchronized Skating. I was happy to have parents that supported me enormously, but still needed a part-time job to get by. To make it to the top, you must at least be able to train for 20+ hours a week. There's your on and off-ice training, cardio, choreography, fitness etc. etc. It takes a lot of time and it's really hard work if you want to make it to the top. In the months before our Gold medal in 2015 we trained up to 30 hours a week and we even simulated the roaring and screaming crowd on our sound system... just to be 101% prepared. The decision whether the Olympic teams should be exclusively female or perhaps mixed teams will be made someday. At this point, Synchronized Skating is not ready for the Olympics anyway, but perhaps in 2022 it will be... let's hope so.

And Canada...?

Canada... I'll be Back ■





**SAARA
SHEPHARD**

**“To live my
biggest
dream.”**

In Finland, downtown Helsinki at the Finlandia Trophy, we met Saara Shephard, one of the lovely and familiar faces in the team of Marigold IceUnity and we asked her to do an interview with us for SynchroNice. If you weren't born in Finland and still made it in to one of the finest teams in Finland not to say in the World, then you probably have a story we would like to hear.

First of all Saara, tell us a little about yourself

Well, my name is Saara Shephard, I'm 24 years old and at this point in my life, I'm lucky enough to get to live my biggest dream, on a daily basis, being a skater on Marigold Ice Unity, surrounded by my idols.

We heard you weren't Finnish?

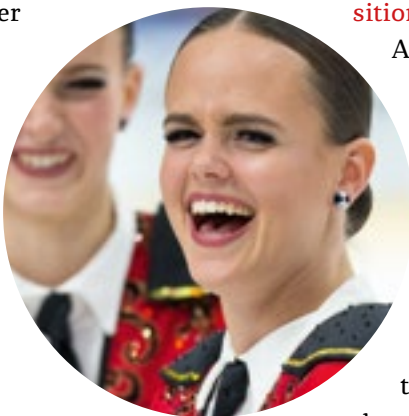
No, that's not totally correct, I was born in Florida, USA, but I'm 50% Finnish on my mom's side. At an early age, we moved to Finland. I started skating in Finland at the age of six, when my mum decided to take me to skate school. From skate school, I continued with singles skating. After that, when I was about 10 years old, the family moved to Sydney Australia. What was originally supposed to be just one year... turned into many as my family decided to stay. Down under I continued with singles skating until I was 15. My singles skating ended abruptly due to an ankle injury which left me off the ice for almost a year, after which getting back into jumping was really difficult for me, not to say impossible.

How about family, do you have any and are they into Ice skating as well?

Yes, I do have a little brother and a sister, who have both also always been involved with ice skating. My little sister even represented Australia at junior Worlds in pair skating.

And you, how did you end up in Synchronized Skating after that injury?

One morning I was at the ice rink watching my little sister practice when one of the synchro coaches in our club approached me and asked me whether I would be interested in trying out synchro. That same day I went to Fire on Ice's practice and even though I was completely clueless at the beginning, I found myself competing at my first synchro competition a couple of weeks later.



Did Synchronized Skating feel good for you, after all these years as a single?

It was at my first World Championships in Croatia in 2009, representing Australia, when after watching the top teams in the world compete that I became convinced that synchro was my thing. It was especially Marigold's Pandora free program that made me decide that one day I would go and skate in Finland.

What team were you skating for in Australia?

Well for four awesome years, I skated in Australia with Fire on Ice. I even got the opportunity to compete at the World Championships each of these years. The highlight for me was always getting to watch the rest of the competition after our own skate and being inspired by the top teams in the world.

So, you had yourself a dream, skating for Marigold IceUnity. You could have picked an easier dream to chase. Did you just try out or how did this transition come about?

After worlds in 2011 I decided that I was going to try out for Marigold in a year's time. I worked extremely hard that whole next year, spending about 15 hours a week outside of team training working on my own skating skills. Marigold was my first choice of teams to try out for. I'd fallen in love with this team because there had never been one program they did that I hadn't thoroughly enjoyed watching. So, one day I just sent an audition-video to their coach Anu Oksanen, with all the skills she needed to see. One Monday night about a week later I came home from training to the news that I had made the team! This meant that after the 2012 Worlds in Göteborg Sweden, I would be heading straight to Finland to start training with my dream team.

Does that mean dreams do come true?

Yes sure, almost five years later, there are still times that I can't believe just how lucky I am to get to skate in MIU.

Why is the team so perfect for you?

I believe one of this team's greatest assets is the astounding team spirit - we all genuinely care about each other and love spending time together.

“We always have fun.”

I love that every single person in the team is free to be their own weird and wonderful self and we are open with each other about everything. Though we train extremely hard, we always have fun- people would not believe the crazy things we come up with together. This team is also capable of skating to and interpreting many different kinds of music; and I find it extraordinary how each year our coach manages to create such amazing programs which are always so different from the previous year.

Is there time for anything else but skating?

It's a matter of fact that, over the past five years in addition to skating, I've worked hard to entirely fund my own skating. Though it's been exhausting at times, it has been completely worth it and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. This has also

been entirely worth all the homesickness and being away from my family and pets, we have three dogs; Wynston, Jack and Mia.

For the first two years that I lived in Finland I didn't see my family for two whole years, that was rough, but my team has been a second family to me and I'm so grateful to get to be surrounded by such amazing people and athletes that I look up to so much day by day. Furthermore, I also have a spot at the University of Helsinki, though my studies as an English major are currently on hold.

Is there any future in Synchronized Skating and for you in it as well?

Synchronized skating is a sport which is rapidly gaining momentum in the skating world. It's an exciting sport which is continuously developing and I believe it will only continue to gain popularity. This is why I definitely intend to become a coach following my skating career, I can't even imagine not being involved with this amazing sport and I can't wait to see what the future holds for synchro!

Saara Shephard, definitely a lady with a passion, so this probably isn't the last you will hear of her. Thank you Saara for this interview and all the best to you and your team, we hope you make it to Worlds this year as well. ■



chat

**A chat with Mr. Christopher
(Chris) Buchanan**

An ISU official who believes we're ready for the Olympics

It's the busiest time of the season, still Chris finds the time to do an interview with Synchronice. That's to point out what type of man he is. We think the Synchronice Community couldn't wish for a more charismatic and driven ambassador for their sport. Chris: "Yes of course I would love to contribute to Synchronice, you're doing a great job for the Synchronice Community. Everybody should support that if in any way possible."

Okay Mr. Buchanan, Chris, for those who don't exactly know yet, what is your official title/role at the ISU?

Well that is maybe quite a mouthful, the full title is: ISU Chair - Synchronized Skating Technical Committee

We always see you talking with all kinds of visitors at all the competitions, you hug people, shake hands, laugh with them and cheer for all athletes. So, we assume you're a people person, is that correct?

I enjoy being with people and honestly enjoy listening, talking, discussing and supporting all of the people who make it possible for us to hold our events - not just the skaters / coaches /

officials but all of those people that give so generously of their time to organize and look after the skaters and officials but never get the applause or the best seats to watch the event, they do it for the love of our sport. When you share a common passion, it is easy to share time together.

And is this the reason you're in this business, how did you end up at ISU anyway? We can't imagine a young man thinking in High school I want to be an ISU Official when I'm older. What happened, can you tell us a little about your life before ISU?

When I was at school and up until my early days at universi-

ty, I was an international Latin and Ballroom dance competitor, I had always enjoyed watching figure skating on TV and decided to go along to Murrayfield Ice Rink in Edinburgh to give it a try. It wasn't very long before I was hooked and became a competitive Ice Dancer as well as a competitive latin dancer. This lasted through my time at university but finally, skating won out. However, in my day, after you finished competing, if you wanted to have an on-going serious involvement in the sport, you made the choice of coaching or judging. Remember, this was a very long time ago when the rules about amateur and professional skating were very strict. As I was already

embarking on my career after university, I made a clear decision to begin judging. From there, it was a clear progression through the national ranks to the international ranks and becoming an Olympic class Judge, Referee and Controller for Ice Dance. As this was all going on, Precision Skating was getting started and I was one of the few who saw the potential in this branch of the sport and got involved right from the very beginning, that involved fighting hard to get the discipline recognised by the ISU and all the way through the journey to getting full World Championship status for our Junior and Senior skaters. As this was going on I also became a very active official for Synchronized Skating and also became a championship Judge, Referee and Controller. Finally, in 2010 at Congress in Barcelona, I was elected as Chair of the Synchronized Skating Technical Committee.

ISU is a large organization, normally all kinds of changes and processes consume a lot of time before they take place, that takes a lot of patience, are you waiting for any changes to be made?

Like any organization, change won't happen by its own volition, change is made to happen. As I have said, it has been a long road to get Synchro to the point where we have full recognition within the ISU. It is still a bit of a struggle to ensure that we are treated equally but I have to say that the ISU Council, the President (and former President) do support our discipline. We have to remember that there is no entitlement to a seat at the table, this should be earned. It isn't good enough to say 'We

want', we have to earn our place in the ISU family. My hard message is that if you want to be an Olympic discipline, you have to train like an Olympian - there are no passengers or easy rides to that achieve that goal.

You were running for president of the ISU, however a majority chose Jan Dijkema. Is it politics to get that position, or is it just, may the best man win?

Jan is a very experienced ISU officer and brings a huge level of experience from both his skating and professional background to the role of President. He is a pleasure to work with and is always open to discussion. I have found him to be fair in all of his work for the ISU and he is a true gentleman. I did feel it was time for the ISU to have a president from the Figure Skating side of the sport and felt that there were a number of areas where my business, as well as my experience having to earn our place in the ISU family, would equip me to bring some important changes to the way the ISU works. However, I was very honoured to be re-elected as the Chair of the Synchro Committee and am fully committed to doing my absolute best for our wonderful athletes.

Why is it, you wanted that position anyway, aren't you happy in your current job and tasks at ISU? Do think you could make the changes?

I still feel that there is a lot to be done for our discipline and I felt that getting representation at the highest level of the ISU would show that Synchronized Skating was an important discipline within the skating family and hopefully, my run at the

Presidency, managed to raise the profile of Synchronized Skating and allowed me to address the whole of the ISU membership showing that Synchro and its officials were a force to be reckoned with at all levels.

Synchronized Skating a small sport within the ISU package of sports, what's your favorite Ice sport?

Of course, I have to say that Synchro is my favorite but that would be too obvious. My first love was Ice Dancing but very quickly, Synchro joined it as an equal favorite. I love them both for different reasons. I also thoroughly enjoy Pair Skating (probably related to my Ice Dance background). When I was judging the Olympic Games in Sochi, I had the opportunity to watch the Short Track discipline and had a great time, as it was exciting and fun to be part of the audience. This was one of the reasons why we worked hard to set up the Shanghai Trophy, to showcase both of these exciting disciplines - and it proved a great success.

We've seen a lot of change in Synchronized Skating over the past decade, it's really getting more professional and of a higher performance level. Do you feel that Synchronized Skating should be... or maybe better, is ready for the Olympic games?

I absolutely believe that we are ready for the Olympics. This is why we put so much effort into the Olympic application for inclusion in the 2018 Winter Olympics in Korea. Even though we were unsuccessful last time, this will not stop us making a further application for the 2022 Games in Beijing.



Success comes from dealing with failure after failure with no loss of enthusiasm and commitment. The sport has progressed beyond all recognition through the hard work and dedication of the Synchro coaches and skaters. I am certain they will continue to drive the sport forward to help support our application process. Our top teams are absolutely putting in the training time and effort that is to be expected of Olympic athletes but that is not the case for all of the teams competing in our World Championships. Every skater would love to have the opportunity of competing at the Olympics but not every skater is willing to put in the training time or effort to reach the standard needed by an Olympian. I tell skaters that feel they have a right to be part of the Olympics to look at the training time and effort the other skaters in their country put in to qualify for the Games and then to compare that to the time and effort they are putting in. If the teams are not putting in even more effort, why do they think they will reach the goal of earning a ticket to the Olympics - it will take as much effort from our skaters as from those preparing the application if we are to be successful in getting into the Games. That being said, the quality of skating and creativity shown in our programs gets better and better each year. I would absolutely support the movement WHY NOT SYNCHRO FOR BEIJING 2022!! The Synchro Technical Committee have been driving through a program of change in the regulations to also make the sport more Olympic ready and broadcaster friendly and we will continue that work.

We understand that there's a growing number of Synchronized Skating teams and skaters all over the world. So, that means the sport's popularity is growing. All teams and skaters have to deal with the same problem however... The budgets are limited. Ice and training facilities are expensive, so is traveling etc. etc. If there's no publicity for the sport, there will be no sponsors. What has to be done before the ISU and the world will realize that Synchronized Skating is so much more than just some boys and girls floating over the ice and give it the attention and spotlight it deserves?

Synchronized Skating is part of the package of sports that are included in the ISU Broadcast and advertising / sponsorship strategy. We have not had enough media exposure but that is not something that can be addressed centrally but has to come from working with national broadcasters in the individual member countries as well as getting Synchro shown on the major TV channels. We have ensured that Synchro has been part of the Figure Skating World Championship opening, closing and ceremonies as well as being included in the event exhibition. Again, we can't afford to sit back and wait for everything to be done by the ISU, we need to be more proactive and find ways of getting our sport into the mainstream broadcasts. I was made aware of how a new country to Synchro - Georgia - took up this challenge, by applying to be part of their country's national 'Georgia's Got Talent' television program. They were successful and they got national tv coverage for our sport. Finland has done a great job of making Synchro a mainstream figure skating sport for their national broadcaster. It would be easy to say that this is because they are successful but they have worked for a number of years to raise the profile as well as raising the standard of Synchro for us all. We need to work in each country, as well as centrally, to promote and increase the profile of the sport. This will be a critical factor in our Olympic acceptance challenge.

We meet you at all kinds of competitions all over the world, that means you are away from home a lot. That must be tough for the ones you leave behind. Are you married, do you have children, pets etc. that miss you while you're away?

Most years, I am travelling somewhere on the planet for ice skating 26 weeks of the year. This is not always a whole week but generally, from mid-August until mid-April, I am travelling every weekend for skating. Outside of those months we also have ISU meetings and seminars to do - so it is a fairly hefty time commitment. I don't have a family at home to

worry about, which gives me the freedom to use my time without neglecting any duties at home. I was married a very long time ago but not anymore - if I had been still married, I wouldn't be able to commit as much time to skating as I do. However, this is my choice and privilege. There are times when trying to balance work (yes, I have a proper job as well) and skating commitments can get a little tricky, but I have managed it up until now. However, it is good to get back to my house sometimes to visit where my clothes live! ■



chat

**DARIA
RAKHVALSKAYA**
team's captain



“IN THE PAST FEW YEARS WE ALL WITNESSED THE RUSSIAN RACE TO THE TOP.”

In the past few years we all witnessed the Russian Race to the top. Getting better year after year until they took the gold at the World Championship Synchronized Skating 2016 in Budapest. Of course, we want to know all about the skaters and the team. In this SynchroNice you will also find an interview with Team Paradise’s Coach, but now we are talking to the team’s captain Daria Rakhvalskaya.

Well, hello Daria, thank you for taking the time to talk to us. Could you just tell us some basics, like your name and where you live etc. etc.

Sure, my name is Daria Rakhvalskaya and I live in the most beautiful city in all of Russia, St. Petersburg. At this point I’m honored to say that I’m the captain of team Paradise and I’m only 25 years old.

What do you do for a living, do you have a job?

No, I don’t. I did graduate from High school and University, but that’s already a while ago, in both cases. I would like to do something with sports but, my mama told me that there’s already enough sports in my life, hahaha. That is why I decided to take up another study, so, I chose economics and now I have a diploma in HR management. If I were able to make my favorite choice in this matter, I probably would have chosen ‘Acting’ in-

stead. Problem is that I probably would have to quit skating in that situation... You see, missing some theory classes wouldn’t be a problem, you can always copy somebody else’s notes, but what are you going to do if you miss the practical classes/lessons... you can’t copy those, can you.

How would you describe yourself as a person?

I’m an absolute animal lover and I’m a very active type of person, who can’t sit still. If I must describe myself in a few words, they would be: patient, creative, kind, romantic, active, but also maybe demanding towards myself and to others.

Do you have any other hobbies besides Synchronized Skating?

Since this sport takes a lot of time in our lives, there’s not much time left for any other hobby. Our training schedule mostly takes place in the evening. During the day, I don’t to go to school anymore but I teach the children and adults how to skate. Besides skating, I love to read and I couldn’t live without music, music is very important to me. Sometimes I even love to write poems, but they’re just for the people who are dear and close to me.

Do you still live with your parents? How about your family, what can you tell us about your youth?

Well I was born and raised in the very beautiful St. Petersburg and I always loved my city. I have a wonderful family. My papa and mama are also athletes; they are masters of sport in rowing. I have a brother who is seven years younger than me, who used to do gymnastics, break dance and judo, but recently he quit sports and dreams of being a drummer. Now, he’s a first-year student at the university.

When I was little, I was a very active child. My parents still tell me the funniest stories from my childhood in which they had to take me down from fences or a transformer vault and how I was reading the poems and singing the songs out loud in buses and in the subway. That’s also why my kindergarten teachers always said that I would be a great drama actress sometime.

As I already wrote I love animals, but my parents didn’t share my love, that’s why I only got my first pet when I was twelve years old. They promised me that if I qualified for a Russian junior championship, I would get a kitten, and I DID IT! Nowadays my cat lives with my parents and I live by myself.... with 6 parrots and two turtles and dreaming about having a lemur, a raccoon, a little monkey and a dog...



As a skater on the World Champion team... you’re for sure an inspiration to younger skaters, do you get a lot of fan mail?

I don’t have fans, because I’m not skating alone...we’re a team, but our team becomes more popular every year. This makes me very happy because we work very hard to get to these results. Of course, I’m also proud of our achievements and that people like what we do.

How old were you when you started Skating?

I started skating when I was only 5 years old. My mama took me to the ice rink, probably because when she was young she wanted to become a good skater herself. I didn’t share her love for skating, but, reluctantly I agreed to go to the trainings; despite my dreams of becoming a singer

at the time! But I was a very responsible child and I certainly didn’t want to disappoint my parents so, I continued skating, but more for them than for myself. At this point, I couldn’t imagine my life without ice skating and I am just extremely thankful for everything they did for me, for their patience, their work and all their time. Thank you Mum and Dad for introducing me into this wonderful sport.

In the beginning I used to skate at what was considered the best figure skating school in the St. Petersburg region. For many years, I was considered one of the top 6 skaters of St. Petersburg, but after an severe injury, I wasn’t allowed to jump for a long period of time and my parents decided that it was time for me to stop the singles skating. We went all the way to

Moscow to look for an ice dance school, because here in St. Petersburg we didn’t have one. But to have me live and skate in Moscow was too expensive for my parents. That’s why I didn’t have a choice: it was either to stop skating overall or maybe try synchronized skating and as you can see... I am still “trying”. Thanks to synchronized skating I fell in love with all figure skating and find my own story published here.

Any favorite quotes?

If you want to talk about my favorite quotes, you better make some time because there are many of them. In the past I even had a small notebook where I used to write everything I liked. First there were one-liners about love and stuff, but now I’m more into humor and the paradox of life.

What can you tell us about your team, Paradise?

What do you want me to tell? They're just perfect. I like that we become closer to each other and we have more and more in common. We are all one big family so to speak, even with the girls who already stopped skating, we still love to meet and hang out together. I like that team members help each other and not only on the ice, but also in life. My team brought me some true friendships.

It's hard to reflect on the negative issues within the team because I can't find any, but I think that one of the disadvantages in Synchronized Skating is the fact that this is a team sport, your mistake automatically affects the whole team. You're not only responsible for yourself, but also for the people around you. I believe that there's no room for individuals on the team, because they couldn't suppress their "ME" and "I" when you instead have to think about the common interests. Now my team and I are training hard focusing on the Russian championship. The next step is the French Cup. I have been skating in this team for eleven years now.

How much do you train or work-out and who decides what competitions you will enter?

We train 6 times a week. Off season maybe around 13-14 hours on the ice and 10-12 hours off-ice and during competition season, we spend a little less time on the ice, maybe 10-12 hours. We also have special camps where we make our programs and another camp just before the competition season. Our coaching staff decides where we will participate during the season. We decide nothing, therefore we totally trust our coaches to make the right choices for us. We have just one month holiday during the summer. That's why when there's no training I like to travel. I love to see the world, to explore more and more new places!

And your favorite competition?

My favorite competition is any Worlds competition for sure. I love to see and meet so many different teams from different nations. It always creates a special atmosphere and opens huge possibilities to make new friends and not in the least, World Championships are the most important competition of the season, which makes it more emotional and exciting.

World's in Colorado Springs this year, do you have any dreams on the matter?

Of course, I have a dream! A new Victory at Worlds



would be awesome. The other goals for this season are still the same - to win all competitions where we will participate and consolidate our leadership, not only in Russia but all over the world. We would also like to take our skating on to a higher level of unison and quality, so that no one will have any doubts about our victory. We won't give away our position without a fight at Worlds 2017, but at the same time we understand that to remain at the top will be more difficult than to win it for the first time. That's why we work hard and hope that luck will be on our side.

But is there anything you still want to do before retiring from the sport?

If you ask me about what I would like to achieve before my career is over, my answer would be that one fine day, I hope to participate in the Olympics, but I'm afraid that my chances are very small. By the way last year my first biggest dream came true - to hear the Russian anthem with our team standing on the highest podium at the World Championship. I wouldn't mind hearing it again from that same podium spot!

Team Paradise has its own style; we love it and want to keep it like that. We certainly follow our main competitors and try to analyze their strength and maybe even their weaker spots.



“I HOPE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE OLYMPICS”

I believe that, in the end, synchronized skating will finally take part in the Olympic Games. Every year it is becoming more and more popular and professional, this means we are on the right track. Thanks to the competition organizers who provide the internet live streams, making it accessible and appreciated by a bigger audience. I think that in the last few years our sport has developed a lot: new teams have appeared all over the world, new elements, the programs have become more and more difficult and so spectacular that, with no doubts, sooner or later, it will catch the Olympic committee's attention.

From year to year the level of the teams are improving, that is why, undoubtedly there are more and more teams reaching that top in the long run. That is also why it is so difficult to predict which team will become the new sensation. You cannot deny that there is a constant change of leadership in our sport. For this reason, it is very important to keep working hard and most important... believe in yourself and nothing is impossible!

Anything more you want to share with us...?

This year I was running for representative of the athletes of synchro for the ISU Athletes Committee, but unfortunately, there was also a representative from Russia for the Figure skating department, so they had to withdraw my candidacy because of the rule that only 1 candidate per country was allowed. Too bad, but I strongly believe in the good our Swedish colleague Nathalie Lindqvist can and will do for the sport.

Thank you, Daria. We certainly hope you will make your Olympic dream come true, but for now you're the World champion and an inspiration to many young skaters. Thanks for your time. ■

One of the familiar and friendly faces we see at several competitions is the face of Alain-Daniel Hostache. A very popular Coach with definitely his own signature. SynchroNice just had to ask him some questions.

How old are you Alain-Daniel? And how did you end up in Synchro Skating anyway?
I'm 54 years old... or young if you prefer.

My skating career started rather late, I was already 15 years at the time. I was very attracted to Ice Dance, but I only performed on a national level. After 3 years skating with the same partner we decided to stop as a team and I continued as a solo skater. Parallel to my first years in ice skating I took on a study in Economics to end up with a degree/diploma in Interior Architecture. So, I started working at a company that provided in office interior arrangements, besides assisting my coach in Ice Dance lessons.

That's about the time when I decided to become an Ice Dance Coach myself. I can still remember my first job as a Coach... It was somewhere in the mountains in France, and I thought I was living a nightmare... total quietness, no traffic, no noise. I'm a city kind of guy, I need traffic, noise, pollution and people around me, I missed city life. So, I quickly returned to Lyon, and had to take a job at a floral decoration company, because there were no vacancies for coaches in Ice

Dance, neither in Single or even in Ballet. But then I heard about Synchro, but nobody in the greater Lyon area knew it or were practising it. So, I decided to start this new discipline myself in downtown Lyon, this was in 1991... a long time ago.

Synchro however is totally different from Solo, Pair or Ice Dance, how did you know this was something for you?

I love building, I love creating, and I am a 3D specialist... therefore Synchro was just perfect for me. I also coached for 10 years at

Lydie Bontemps Ice Dance school next to my own Synchronized Skating, but I was totally happy. Coaching the Ice dance was sort of my holiday, there's just 2 skaters to manage, hahaha!

What kind of person are you, are

there words that describe you as an individual?

Sure, there are, I'm first of all a curious person, I always want to know what's the reason, what's behind it, but you can call me humanistic as well, I sincerely care for people. Furthermore, I like to think of myself as an artistic, original, never understands what budget means kind of individual. And last but not least... I'm a Missionary, passionate for skating and always on a quest for better rules and circumstances for Synchronized Skating.

Can you remember your first program?

"Our first program... Oohh my god !!! It was to

ALAIN DANIEL HOSTACHE

interview

some African music, and all the other French team's names were something like Diamond this or Amethyst that... etc. etc. blabla. That's why we picked the name "Zoulous". Z became the first letter for all my teams: Juveniles named Zigoto, Novices named Zouaves, Junior named Zazous and the Adults were named Zoulala.

It's a matter of fact that from the very beginning I started with Synchronized Skating I was a very lucky guy: Because back in Lyon we had 2 very good Ice Dance institutes "Lydie Bontemps" and "Muriel Boucher-Zazoui". They always provided me with some very good skaters to build my team. That's the reason why, from the start in 1991 Les Zoulous were always on the French podium and mostly on 1st place. So quite soon after we were founded, we also went on international tours to enter and participate in the various competitions. And now you also know why I belong to the group of dinosaur synchro coaches.

I still consider myself a very lucky coach. From the very beginning I have always been surrounded by the best, positive, well organized Skating

Professionals Family there is. A positive circle like this is very important for any organisation and of course for any Coach.

What can you tell us about the team?

Well if you want to hear about the characteristics of Les Zoulous, I would say that there are a lot of strong personalities and, for me very important, I never try to mould the personality of any skater. They all know very well that they belong to an "Old Family". They're always joking around and have a lot of nice humour. But, on the other hand they're also like "If something's bad.... it's bad, period" and that makes it difficult to change their perspectives!

Zoulous train at least 5 times a week on Ice, 2 times for fitness, 2 times off-ice and they don't get a say in which competition we participate. To me this is and should be a tactical decision and is therefore to be made by the staff and of course taking the I.S.U. Calendar into account.

Do you also coach or help other teams?

Yes, I do and I did. I consider myself very lucky to have worked with many foreign teams. I



worked with teams in the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland and Great Britain for instance. What I love about working with these teams is, the chance I get to help them improve their skating quality. And to make them believe more in their own skills and qualities. It's also very interesting to be facing other mentalities and cultures, and different approaches in training and tactics on skating and synchronized skating.

You helped coaching in the Netherlands, did you hear the Dutch started a new competition, to be ISU level in 2018?

Yes, I heard about this competition in the Netherlands, but this date is unfortunately not good for us.

What are your goals, or do you have any plans?

My first goal is and it's already for a while, to enter the world's Top 10. And after that I want to be in the Top 5 in the world, so France will get a second team to compete in the World Championship in Synchronized Skating.

And plans... it's more like I have dreams. Like a lot of coaches, I dream to have my own Ice rink, organized and equipped exactly as I want it to be. I also dream to have no more money restrictions, I mean no more financial stress for skaters, no financial stress for travelling to competitions, no more financial stress to hire a good choreographer. I also dream about having a male team winning the Senior World Championship and finally I dream of making the perfect free program together with Philippe Decouflé, a French choreographer who also did the grand opening choreography during the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville.

Will Synchronized Skating ever be Olympic?

I'm very convinced that we can be Olympic. Our discipline needs better skating quality though and we must be even more attractive and surprising. In the last 5 years, the Synchronized Skating family improved so much in quality and started matching the other disciplines, but still we have to make those last steps, and we have to be ready in November, to stop the criticism from others.

At this point there are always the same 3-5 countries that split up the medals, but we saw some nations like France, Germany and Italy knocking at the door of the establishment, they're getting close and have everything to join this group of 5 countries.

Are there any other teams besides your own that you favour?

When I began in Synchronized I admired Team Surprise (remember the spin !) and les Pirouettes for their originality, but also Marigold for its creativity (Jungle Georges, Olympic games).
My master though is Cathy Dalton, she's the one who makes me more elegant, and orderly.
Myself, I coach SKATING (in capital letters) first... not single skating, not Ice Dance nor

Synchronized Skating, which all should be the same. It's all about how to use the space while gliding, moving and giving an emotion to the audience. We practice this form of Art in singles, couples, Ice dance and in synchronized. In this I feel real close to Anne Shelters.

How about the new ISU rules and regulations?

About ISU regulation, I think that we are on the right track, less element for more creativity and freedom, that's very good.
On the other hand... creativity is difficult to "quantify", and therefore subject to personal interpretation....I know it's a dream, but all the TS and TC should get the same information at the same moment, to ensure that the whole panel gets the opportunity to be consistent.

You are into this sport with all your heart and soul as we can hear, is there any time left for other hobbies or sports: No other sports but occasionally I watch a movie or read a book and of course I love music. And for my more creative side I like to watch shows and architecture and still love decoration.

Thanks, Alain-Daniel, we wish you all the best and hope you make it in your top 5 someday. ■



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Synchronized Skating



OneTeamMVMT

redefines

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Synchronized Skating



Members Team Illumination wearing OneMVMT T-Shirts

Written by Kristen Loritz, Edited by Tiffany Elliot & Maggie Head

Colleagues, friends and sometimes even acquaintances you've just met — they all want to know more about this elusive sport that you compete in, coach, or have dedicated years of your life to. Whether you're a newbie to the sport or a die-hard veteran, there's one question we've all been asked: what is synchronized skating?

We should feel proud to tell people we're part of an incredible synergy of movement; part of a community that wows crowds with technical skills and moves them to tears with artistry. Instead, we're often met with confused looks and apologies. "Sorry," they say. "I've never heard of it," or "is it in the Olympics?" or "is it like synchronized swimming?" The list goes on. And it's cringe worthy, we know.

WHAT IS OTM?

Out of a need to elevate syn-

chro and advocate for it on a world-level, a small group of alumni, current skaters and colleagues in the Greater Toronto Area joined forces in the spring of 2016 to create OneTeamMVMT (pronounced "One Team Movement" or OTM in short).

Every synchronized skater dreams of competing in the Olympics, and while we cannot flip a switch to make this goal a reality, we can exert our influence, over time, to move the sport in the right direction. OTM's immediate

priorities include: 1) increasing public awareness of the sport (Promote), 2) aiding in the development of the sport from the grassroots to elite levels (Develop), 3) sourcing and implementing funding opportunities for synchro teams and skaters (Support), and 4) promoting unity amongst the existing synchro circle and within the figure skating world as a whole (Unite).

OneTeamMVMT calls on skaters, coaches, officials, and anyone passionate about synchro to join together, spread the word and contribute to the community; we invite everyone to come be part of something bigger.

WEAR YOUR PRIDE

One of the easiest ways to unite and spread awareness of OneTeamMVMT is by getting skaters, fans, and community members in OTM t-shirts. The shirts are not just another black article of clothing, but a way for everyone to show their support of the move-

ment, which advocates for synchronized skating. They are also great conversation starters, generating a buzz around the sport by inviting people to ask "what is OneTeamMVMT?" All proceeds from T-shirt sales go toward funding OTM's initiatives that promote, develop, and support the sport, while uniting the synchronized skating community.

Skaters are invited to submit photos and videos of themselves, and/or teammates, wearing OTM t-shirts by tagging @OneTeamMVMT (Instagram) or #OTMvmt (Twitter). Creative submissions are welcome. Details on T-shirt sizing and placing an online order can be found at www.oneteammvmt.com/t-shirts/

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

In October 2016, OneTeamMVMT launched the #OneTeam1k contest, to provide a team with \$1000 of funding for their season, and 10 OneTeamMVMT T-shirts (over

\$1250 CAD value). Teams were encouraged to submit their answers to two simple questions: why are you excited about the movement? And why should synchronized skating be an Olympic sport?

Lisa Miadovnik, a former Team Canada member and founder of OneTeamMVMT, was thrilled with the quality of the entries and the warm reception they received from the synchro community and beyond.

"OneTeamMVMT is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization, so as funds started coming in from the sales of our popular (and soon-to-be iconic) OTM T-shirts, we wanted to follow through on our promise to give back to the synchronized skating community," Miadovnik said. "Our goal for this contest was to create a fun way to engage athletes, and in return, offer some much-needed financial support to a synchronized skating team." ■

Quietly and sort of incognito, she does her work from the stands. Maybe you've even sat next to her and never noticed. She is Manuela Buyny, Manu to friends, a journalist covering Synchronized Skating for the German figure skating magazine *Pirouette*. Furthermore, she keeps up her own successful *Synchro Blog* which celebrated its 7th birthday just last month. Because of her sharp eye and pencil, we invited Manuela as a guest editor and asked her to write an article for *SynchroNice* on Synchronized Skating in Germany. Take it away Manu..



Synchronized Skating in Germany LOVED BY ITS AUDIENCE, NEGLECTED BY THE UNION

It must have been 1995, when I had my first encounter with Precision Skating (that's how it was called in those days). There were many Precision Skating teams in that specific period, but to be honest, it was rather strange to watch. Later, at an Ice-Show, "Stars und Sternchen zur Weihnachtszeit", I got used to it and even liked it. But I really got the Synchronized Skating Fever in 2008, that's when my daughter started skating at Team Berlin Juniors and somewhat later the magazine *Pirouette* asked me to write about Synchronized skating for their magazine. I also started my blog in that year 2011.

Synchronized Skating is having a hard time at the moment in Germany. You might say it's the unwanted stepchild in the eyes of the German Skating Union. Although Synchronized Skating is one of the most successful

skating disciplines and loved by the audience, there are none to only very small funds to lift the sport. German officials still believe Synchronized skating to be inferior to other disciplines.

But no matter what I still believe that Synchronized Skating will be a very popular sport one day. It has it all, great music, teamwork, athletics, authenticity, your Wow moments and its high-performance sports, so it has everything to be a crowd-puller in Germany. The atmosphere during competition is amazing, it's nothing like Single or Pair skating where everybody must be quiet, no it's more like soccer where everybody is cheering and partying.

In my opinion it all started in Germany in the 20's, Ice shows were extremely loved by the



audience. It was in those days that only the best came to perform at, for example the "Berlin Admiralspallast". People for instance came to watch the show 3 times or more. Olympic champion Sonia Hennie from Norway and especially the girls who skated in a row used to be extremely popular. If tales are true dancing with the girls in row, was a sure way to find yourself a handsome and wealthy husband. Later, they started making revue movies, even on ice like "The White Dream" starring Olly Holzmann, a very popular actress and Figure skater. Sonia Hennie starred in 11 successful figu-

re skating movies.

However, it was somewhere in the 60's that Figure skating became booming. Pair skaters Marika Kilius and Hans-Jürgen Bäumler won in 1963 and in 1964 the world championship and became the 6-time European champion in a row in Pair Skating. You won't believe it but people were celebrating their victories like they celebrate a soccer or football championship nowadays. Going on the streets, partying, cars in a traffic jam honking their horns, flags and all. And it went on

for quite a while. German states, both on the east side and the west had great athletes on Ice, the famous Katarina Witt from the DDR ahead of all of them.

They called her, “The most beautiful face of Socialism” and she won a gold medal at the Olympics twice. In the DDR, before they had Kati (Katarina’s nickname) they had Christine Errath, European and World Champion, then after Katharina came Gabi Seyfahrt, European and World Champion, but also winner of Olympic Gold, both the best audience magnets you could think of. But also, Western Germany had its great athletes like Dagmar Lurz, the peculiar Norbert Schramm, “The little Prince” Rudi Cerne and Marina Kielmann.

It was just after the reunification of Germany, that it got more difficult for the sport. But, there wasn’t a show or gala left without a group act, and the audience loved them.

Then all the way from over the big ocean, Precision skating came to Germany which lead to a new explosion in Figure skating popularity. In the mid 90’s Synchronized Skating became booming and that lead to a German Championship competition in 1995 where 13 top teams competed. Regretfully after that, popularity decreased and probably that was because of Team Berlin 1 winning competition after competition. But still everything was fine so far and Germany assured their second starting position year after year until they were outpaced by the Russian and the second starting position at Worlds was gone. Next to Team Berlin 1, there were also the United Angels who performed at many World Championships and from Saxony there were the Skating Graces, who still perform well at an International level in spite all the difficulties they must overcome. I hope they’ll be able to get back to Worlds one fine day. Another major reason for the shrinking number of teams is the bad Ice conditions all Synchronized teams (except for Team Berlin) in all cities

must endure, little Ice time, expensive Ice time and terrible hours.

But what is the secret of Team Berlin 1, the 22-time German Champion and therewith the most successful team of all Ice-sports in Germany?

The answer to that is not very exiting or strange at all, it all comes down to hard work, lots of training time, at least 5 or 6 times a week. Here I also must admit that they get sufficient and reasonable Ice hours and these are partly covered by the Skating Federation of Berlin and their Club “Berliner TSC”. Berlin also has a great learning program and they start with the youngsters at a very young age and help them through Juvenile, Advanced Novice and Junior teams. Therefore Senior always has enough new talents and the Coach of Team Berlin1 Gert Hofmann, can choose from some serious backup from the younger ranks. Because of this situation one can establish that more and more single skaters find their way to this beautiful team sport.

It’s not only Gert Hofmann, of course, many specialists around the team make it as successful as it is. In this we have to mention Co-Trainer Marco Derpa (former ice-dancer) and Josephine Buyny (former skater Team Berlin 1), both educated as Technical Specialist. There’s also Bianca Jancker (Former Team Berlin1). Then you have your Team Managers who keep it all together, Team Berlin’s solid rock Peter Fröhlich (Team Berlin 1), Motherly Constanze Kahlenberg (Team Berlin Juniors) and the couple Saskia Köhler/Petra Müller (Team Berlin Novice) and to finish it off the manager for Team Berlin Minis, Kerstin Seidler.

The two experienced captains, Desiree Graichen and the between competitions graduated doctor Patrick Stein, put in so much effort, love and passion, to make them the perfect role models for the rest of the team.



Still, the success of today’s Team Berlin1 is mostly the effort of Coach Gert, who has so many good and wonderful ideas, he could drown in them. Beautiful programs like for instance last season’s Short are totally his work. The way he selects music and puts together the choreography, is only done in this manner by the very best in the world. If only technically they could do the extra mile, anything would be possible. The cooperation however with former Marigold IceUnity skater and world champion Ida Hellström is already paying off.

Like in many other countries, the main goal for German teams to finally make it to the Olympic family. If you ask me... It will take a while. If you want to make it to the Olympics, more work is needed. For instance, the Synchronized Season is way too short and should be longer, at least as long as the other figure Skating disciplines. This will make it for sponsors more attractive and you cannot change

it anymore but the Olympics are big business nowadays.

On the other hand, there’s not enough excitement. It’s for instance unthinkable for last year’s number 15 at Worlds to become this year’s champion and vice versa, number 1, 2 or 3 won’t finish among the numbers 10 to 20, all cards are already shuffled. And we should stop with this crazy calling out of nations... people want to stay in touch with and cheer for their own home team. Not Germany but Berlin1, Not Finland1 but Marigold IceUnity or Rockettes and so on and so on. But still despite all that must change or must be done.... I do believe it would be an extreme enrichment for the Olympic Games if Synchronized Skating were to be accepted, because it’s the most beautiful sport on earth.... Don’t you agree?

MANUELA BUYNÝ ■

10 Questions for Junior Synchronized Skater



CAMERON FEELEY

Hi Cameron,

How old were you when you first started skating and how did you get in touch with skating? I first started skating when I was 6 years old. No one else in my family skates, but, they took me to a public skating session at a young age. After that, I kept begging my parents to take me skating again. I wanted to go back every day. I joined a learn to skate program, and later on, I began taking private lessons.

Why is it you made at one point the choice to start Synchronized Skating? When I was 10, I decided to try synchronized skating. My coach was also the coach for the synchronized skating team at my rink, so she encouraged me to try it. I never really knew what synchronized skating was, but I was interested in the fact that it brought about a team aspect to the sport of skating. Once I learned how much fun it was, I fell in love with the sport.

What is it you like most about Synchronized

Skating? The thing I enjoy most about synchronized skating is the team and the way in which we all come together over a common love for skating. It does not matter where a skater comes from; after only a few minutes of talking or skating together, you feel a special bond. This is something that I think is so unique about the sport.

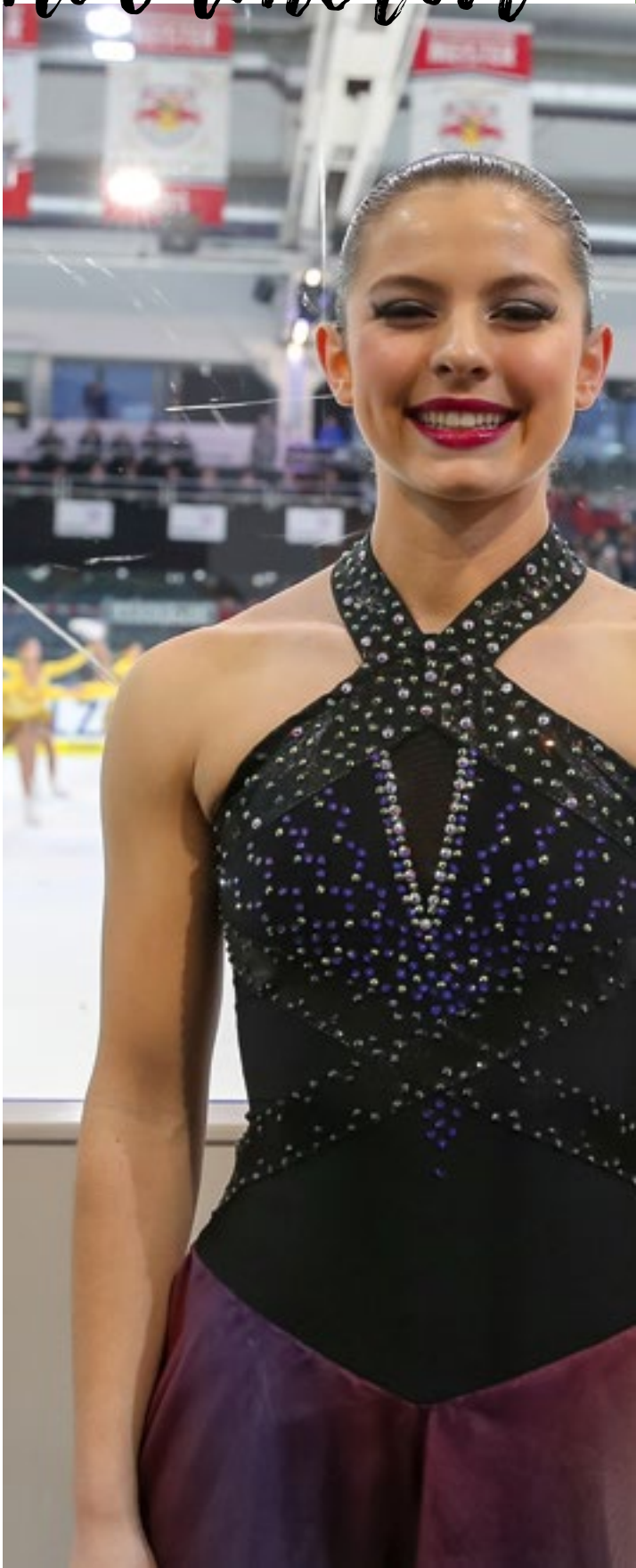
Why is your team the best team in the world for you? My team is the best team in the world for me because my teammates and coach are always there supporting me. We all work very well together and understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. When one skater is having a bad day, the rest of my team is there to help her through it. Also, all of my teammates come to practice every day ready to work hard to reach our goals. I could not ask for a better team or coach.

Do you have a favorite senior team that you look up to and would like to be part of one day? Of course I look up to and would love to be a part of the Haydenettes one day, but besides them, I really look up to Marigold Ice Unity. I love their effortless style. They are very sharp and precise, but they are also very fluid in their movements. They always have very unique, intricate, and exciting programs, which I love to watch.

What would the best ever theme or music be to skate to in your own opinion? The best ever theme or music to skate to would probably be Burlesque. This is because my team and I really enjoy singing along to all of the music, and we would love to skate to it.

Do you have dreams or goals in your Synchro-life? My dream and goal for this season

hi cameron



on Lexettes is to medal at Junior Worlds. As a team, we have been working extremely hard to become more internationally competitive so that we can reach our goals. Beyond that, my dreams and goals in my synchro-life are to be on the Haydenettes and win a world medal.

What can you tell us about your coach, is she any good do you think? My coach, Maikki Merilehto, is an amazing coach. She is extremely knowledgeable about the sport

of synchronized skating, and she helps to spread that knowledge to me and my teammates. Maikki is very approachable and is always there to answer any questions that we may have. It is incredible to have a coach so devoted and committed to my team. Whether she is working with us on ice or doing hot yoga with us off ice, we know that she is with us on our journey every step of the way.

What would your all-time favorite compe-



tition dress look like, if you would get the change to assemble and choose it? I have never really thought about what my all-time favorite competition dress would look like because I have been lucky enough to have gorgeous dresses that match the themes of my programs perfectly. If I had to design one, however, it would probably be navy blue because I love the way it contrasts against

the ice. Also, it would have a skirt that is very flowy to show movement, and it would, of course, have a lot of beading.

Is there anything you would like to say to all other Synchronized Skaters in the world? “Do your work with your whole heart, and you will succeed – there’s so little competition.” –Elbert Hubbard ■





coach “Team Passion”

Erika Gulyás

You probably noticed her at several competitions, this lovely looking coach. We at SynchroNice call her the dancing coach, she never stands still, but is always dancing to the music at competitions, while her team is skating their routine on the ice. And her team seems to have as much fun on the ice as she does at the rinkside and it shows, because together with the help of the Swedish top coach Andrea Dohany they are making enormous progress in their skating and programs.

SynchroNice asked her to introduce herself to a bigger audience, what's your name and if we may ask, what's your age? You look so young.

Hi my name is Erika Gulyás, coach of the beautiful Hungarian “Team Passion” and I’m soon to become 32 years of age. I’m Coach of Team Passion, but not alone. I’m always working together with my right-hand Bettina Sárközi. Bettina and I have a very long skating history together and took on the coaching of Team Passion in 2014. As a team, we’re perfect.

Is coaching your full-time job? No, I was graduated as an economist and I am working as an assistant lecturer and researcher in the Sport Economic and Decision Research Centre at the University of Physical Education... and only part time, I’m coaching TEAM PASSION.

And what kind of person are you, we can see you’re a happy and optimistic lady, but are there any other word's that will tell us what's driving you? Well, I’m first of all determined, committed, passionate as a person, but also as a coach, you can also call me a 100% team player, an analyst and I like learning.

Could you tell us something more about yourself, perhaps where you live and how you ended up in Synchronized Skating? My Synchronized Skating story starts at the age of 6. It was then I went to skate with my parents at the local ice rink in Miskolc, about 125 miles from Budapest. One of the ice-rinks was open for public skating and another one was reserved for skate training of the local skating club. My parents explained me, while we are watching, that this was a skate training. Instantly I knew that this was what I wanted to do, so I told my parents. On the next day, already I started to participate in those practices and I fell totally in love with this sport. The circumstances were not the best at the time in my home town. There only was one ice-rink and it was an outdoor, open air ice rink, so we could only train for like 4-5 months in a season. I kept skating in this club though, until I moved to Budapest because the University was situated in Budapest. Of course, I

kept skating there as well. In Colorado Springs 2010 I skated my final world championship as an athlete. Another highlight in my skating career was in 2008 when Budapest organized the World Championship. I can say, that season was the most wonderful season of all, because in that year were given the opportunity to train and work out like real athletes and we had great coaches, tough preparations and an unforgettable competition in front of the home crowd. In Hungary, the circumstances for Synchronized Skating have never been so great but we always tried and managed to find solution to the problems we faced. Forming a team and keeping Synchronized Skating live and kicking was one of them.

Many times, even the forming of a team was our only goal. That is why I'm still extremely grateful that in 2015 we got the chance to start working on a completely different way, provided by our skating federation.

What can you tell us about your team and what it is you especially like about your team, but perhaps also what you might like a little less?

The team is in a word, amazing. They are so terribly determined, they have an amazing bearing capacity and they're great fighters who really want to show the world that Hungary can have, (is having) a good team. We appreciate the important values, in which a team can create as a unit, very highly. I am really proud that our team's cohesion is so very strong and despite the fact that every year we lose skaters and have to find new ones, we are still able to hold on these. I guess all the coaches would answer this question almost the same, because I think this attitude is what you need to be an athlete and to be able to train 20 hours per week next to school or work.

You were talking about the challenges you face, are there any specific Hungarian pro-

blems in Synchro Skating that you must deal with?

Oh that is clearly our youth. We don't have enough have enough young entrants and if we have any there's always a huge problem with the quality and skating skills. So num-

What competition is your favorite anyway and why? Did you hear by the way, there will be a new ISU competition in the Netherlands? No I didn't hear about it, but it would be great to visit new competitions in new countries. I am looking forward to this one.



Many coaches do more teams; do you coach only this one team or do you help other teams/countries as well? As I have a full-time job at the University, I'm mainly working with team Passion but this year we helped the junior team Shinning Laces in their choreography.



bers and quality! This could be the result of the lack of ice times and the lack of qualified coaches. It is a huge barrier right now for the development in Synchronized Skating in Hungary.

You mentioned 20 hours per week? How often do you train and work out with them?

The team works 2-3 hours every day from Monday to Friday on ice, and in addition they must workout 1,5 -2 hours off-ice every day as well. Yep, all together it will be approximately 20-22 hours per week.

Does the team have any influence in choosing which competition you will or will not enter?

The selection between the competitions right now are simply based on our financial possibilities.

We love to hear about your goals and dreams, about the traveling with the team... about the chances winning the world cup this year or any other competition.

I would be extremely happy to have and skate at a Synchronized Skating competition somewhere in Asia;) But... of course, our long-term goal is to take the team to the highest skating level and fight for the World Champion title. The biggest dream however is to be included in the Olympic Games. I really hope that Synchronized Skating will be able to show its power and its beauty, somewhere soon at an Olympic Game, it could change everything!!

Are there any other teams or coaches that you admire? The answer to this question is really simple for me... I feel very blessed and lucky that I had the chance, first as a skater than as a coach to work with Andrea Dohány.

If you didn't work with her, you cannot even imagine her super genius. She gave us so much and not just guidance in skating, forms and steps but even more important what we learned from her as a person. Andrea's passion, her working ethics and all of her attitude is simply stunning. Along my career I had the opportunity to work with many, many different coaches from many different countries but she's the one who's really different.

Why are coaching in Synchronized Skating and not for instance in Ice dance, pair skating or solo? First of all, I did only Synchro as skater, but secondly I'm a teamplayer like I said earlier so therefore I prefer team sports, and also because of what you can learn from it. I think because of what you can learn from it, is making Synchronized Skating to such a miraculous and valuable sport.

Your dream... the Olympics, but what must be done to make it there? ? I really believe that we can do this someday. That is my biggest dream to take part on the Olympic with the whole Synchro family. But therefore we must:

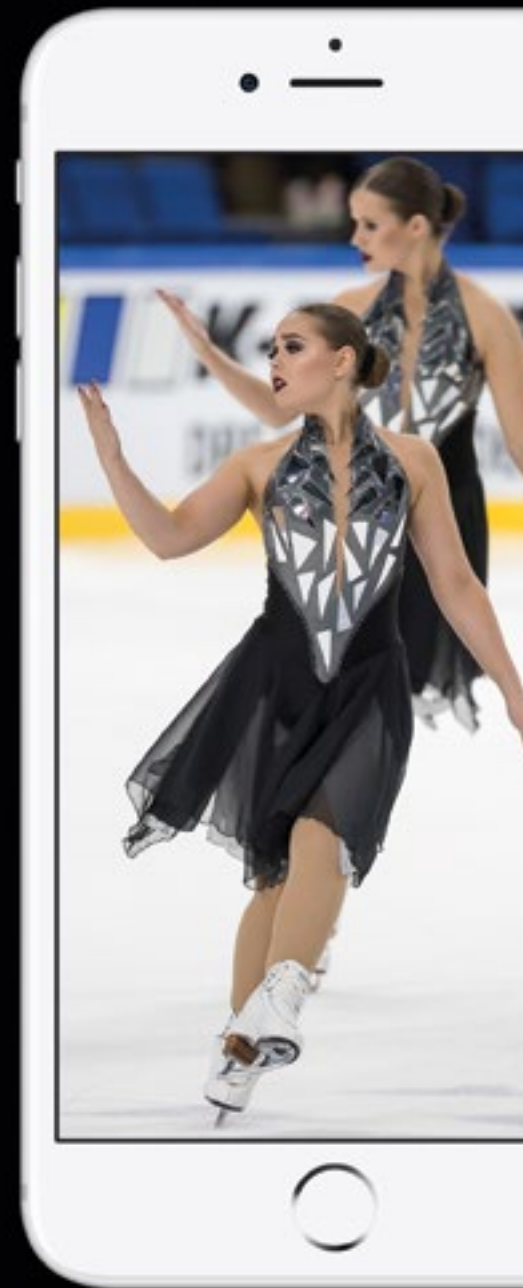
- increase the average level seriously
- introduce some minimum points criteria for taking part at the World Championship
- simplify the rules to as simple as possible so that the audience can understand them as well or at least make some sort of explanation for them.

How do you feel about the ISU rules and regulations; can it be done better? How about the judging in general, is there some comment to make on that part? If changes are made to help us to develop our sport, I wouldn't have any problems with those, because it would give new challenges for the skaters and for the teams, but sometimes I have the true feeling that changes or requirements don't match with reality.

Of course, as a coach from a country which is not belonging to the top nations we felt many times that were not judged based on our performance, but more to our nationality and we sometimes felt we needed to be rewarded the double amount of points. It's just not good/fair at times. The worst of it all? It makes our job even harder to keep motivating our skaters. I think that is a huge barrier if we also want other countries to invest their time, money and effort in this sport.

Thank you, Erika, very nice talking to you. We sincerely hope you and your team will be battling for the Gold at a World Cup someday. Keep up your good and inspiring work and hold on to your dreams. ■

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Saga Krantz

Saga Krantz is one of the very talented Coaches working with the Haydenettes. We remember the name Saga Krantz however as a former skater at the Rockettes... are we talking the very same Saga Krantz here? SynchroNice invited her to do an interview and ask her herself.

Hi Saga, how did all this come about and how did you end up in the U.S.? Please tell us something about yourself and your skating history. Like many of us, I started skating at a young age. Singles at first, but after a short career in singles, I joined a junior level Synchronized Skating team in my hometown Turku in Finland called "Filiae Aboenses". After that, when I finished my juniors career, I moved to Helsinki to skate on the Rockettes.

But how did you end up in the U.S.? In addition to skating on a team myself, I have always been somewhat involved in coaching but never thought it would take me where I am today. The opportunity to coach in the United States happened unexpectedly but looking back now, I am so glad I found the courage to accept the position without knowing much about my future life. So currently, I love living in Boston and am the full-time director of synchronized skating for Hayden Synchronized Skating organization where we have 9 synchronized skating teams, competing at all levels.

And do you live all by yourself in the United States? No, I have a fun-LOVING family: twin boys (now 1 years old) and a fantastic, supportive husband.

We already asked some other coaches, but we like to ask you as well what type of person you are? Just mention a few words that describe you: Well, those would be probably hard working, grateful, fair, attention to detail, free-spirited :-)

Is there anything else that interests you besides Synchronized Skating? Sure there is, outside of skating I love interior designing, decorating our home. I like painting, home improvement and enjoying life w/ my family and friends.

Most athletes will say "my coach is the best"

and coaches will probably say the same about their teams. But sometimes it also shows... and is paying off like in your case. What is it that's making you and your team so special? I consider myself lucky because of how wonderful the group of athletes is I am working with! We all share common goals and challenges in life. I am inspired not only by their skills and work ethics but also because of how many personal life experiences they have overcome. For us, life isn't always fair or easy and the way my athletes get through these life changing moments, it really stays in your heart forever. On top of all these things that are out of our control, many of my athletes work several jobs and are FULL time students along side with a professional training schedule. They just are the best.

How often do you train and work out with them? The team practices four days a week collectively and extra days and hours individually. I lead all on-ice practices and off-ice program practices. The team's off-ice includes everything from strength and conditioning, ballet, yoga, and indoor cycling. During our off-season, we hold clinics that focus on basic skating skills and also hold a choreography camp to start the never ending process of building our programs. Not only is it important to have great individual skating skills but we have really strived to incorporate jumps, spins, and pair elements into our training.

Does the team have any influence in the competition schedule? No... but they have many great requests though, haha.

Do you have a favorite competition and if so why is that? I think the ISU World Synchronized Skating Championships are my favorite competitions. For me it is the biggest event of the year where all athletes feel well trained

and ready to perform. The pressure is on for everyone and every team is there. Every year I feel like there are more fans coming to watch the sport and they get really into it. And of course since I love to travel, I like it how it is held in a different country each year. I would love to travel to a competition in Japan and/or maybe Hawaii in the near future :)

Did you hear about the new ISU competition to be held in the Netherlands next year?

I did hear about it and I look forward to bringing my teams there someday. It is so nice to see new countries hosting synchro events.

Do you coach only one team or do you help other teams/countries as well?

I truly enjoy working with all levels and ages. I am also the coach and choreographer for our novice and junior teams. Working with the different levels brings challenges but I love this challenge and believe that anyone can learn the skills it takes to be a great synchro skater.

Our readers would love to hear about your goals and dreams...

My biggest dream is to choreograph a program that will forever stay in everyone's memory; a program that will inspire and wow everyone at the same time; a program that will get a true standing ovation. I always have my skaters' best interest in my mind and like any hard working coach, yes, I hope someday I can give my skaters all the right tools to skate a winning performance. And for once in my career, I would love to choreograph a program at the beginning of the season and not have to make any changes to it at all!

The choice of music seems a reason for much discussion at the beginning of any season, who picks it and how do you choose from so many possibilities:

It is hard to pick just one because I love many genres of music and I believe in versatility. I

often find myself working endless hours cutting and creating my music to be able to choreograph programs. To me, music is one of the key things in our sport and I often catch myself doing the steps/choreography alongside the team.

- To name a few of my most memorable programs/years:
 - 2010 What a Wonderful World, short program
 - 2012 Lady Gaga, Free Program
 - And currently, Prince.... we are having a lot of fun with this one!

Is there anything that you haven't done with or on skates, but want to do before you ever retire from skating? My skating bucket list is: to do a group lift 4 on the ice with both an entry and exit as the skater who is lifted, to land a throw jump, and to go alpine lake skating in the mountains :)

Are there any other coaches that you like or look up to? I have been very lucky to have skated for Kaisa Arrateig (Rockettes) for many years. Aside from skating for Kaisa, she has not only been a mentor to me but is also one of my dearest friends on and off the ice. As a skater, I also participated in seminars and learned valuable skills from amazing coaches like Andrea Dohany and Anne Schelter. No doubt, these three coaches have been and continue to be the most influential and inspiring coaches in my career. Of all the coaches in the world, there is one more coach though who I wish I skated for and that is Lynn Benson, the founder of the Haydenettes.

How about the future of Synchronized Skating, do you believe it to be Olympic someday? We will be there one day if we continue to work hard! There is still room for more speed, creativity and maybe even spins and jumps but that will come with time. Think about what the sport looked like even just

5 to 10 years ago - we have already made so much progress that I do not doubt that there will be more growth in the future.

There's always the same 3-5 countries that will split up the medals, do you believe there are some other countries making serious progress and will it be enough to catch up with the top teams. Absolutely, especially if we get closer to the Olympics. However, I do believe it is not easy right now to build up teams knowing they have to carry large financial costs, at least until Synchronized Ska-

ting achieves an Olympic status. After that sponsorships and funding can make it more realistic. There are so many talented skaters in the world that can make a push for being on a top-level team and there are plenty of top level coaches who can take these skaters where they need to be.

How do you feel about the ISU and their rules and regulations, are there some comments to be made on that part? Rule changes are challenging but they have done great things for the sport. I am happy with how they have

pushed the sport. Synchronized Skating is still relatively young but rules and regulations are necessary to keep us moving in the right direction. It is not always easy for a coach to learn or interpret the rules but no question has ever been left unanswered.

Okay, so much for now Saga, thank you very much for your time. We think you inspire more skaters and coaches to follow your example and jump in to the unknown to follow their heart and passion for Synchronized Skating. ■



President of the I.S.U. Council Jan Dijkema

‘GOOD GOVERNANCE THAT IS WHAT YOU MAY EXPECT FROM US’

June the 10th 2016, the I.S.U. elected a new president during its Congress in Dubrovnik, after Mr. Ottavio Cinquanta, earlier that year announced he was stepping down from this position. There were 4 eligible candidates; the Hungarian György Sallak, Frenchman Didier Gailhaguet, the Dutchman Jan Dijkema en the British Chris Buchanan.

After the 1st ballot the situation was already brought more in perspective, which led to an early withdrawal of Chris Buchanan and Didier Gailhaguet. In the 2nd ballot Mr. Jan Dijkema came out with a clear majority of the votes, 63 against 52.

Hmmm, Jan Dijkema as the new President of the I.S.U....

but he's Dutch. So, is this going to be all about Speed skating? Time for Synchro-Nice to ask Jan Dijkema some questions.

Well prepared and loaded with information material and questions on Synchronized Skating, we showed up at our lunch appointment with Jan Dijkema, which he invited us to. The meeting took place

somewhere in the Dutch out-back. We agreed to meet first at his ISU Office to get acquainted before we would visit a restaurant for lunch.

Not at all the type of location to be expected for this Chair. No, just a modest but warm office in a renovated farmhouse. The same in fact, to be said for Mr. Jan Dijkema, totally not the type of per-



Jan Dijkema

son you might expect to be holding an office like this. Instead we met a very friendly and approachable person who received us at the front door with arms open wide.

After our first coffee, we started the interview, in which Jan seemed very open and empathetic towards Synchronized Skating.

Our first question whether his election would also be any good for Synchronized Skating, or just a plus for

Speed Skating, was dismissed by Jan, “My Job is at first to set the outlines and preside over the I.S.U. There certainly will be no favoring of any sport within the ISU.”

Of course, we do not doubt for a second your managerial qualities but we would love to know if there's also an emotional connection with skating, do you skate yourself for instance? Of course, I'm Dutch, but I'm a big fan of marathon skating myself, I love to skate distances

like some of the well-known Dutch Marathon tours.

You're not the youngest man anymore and therefore you probably saw, or witnessed some Dutch successes in Figure Skating many years ago, but did you ever actually visit Figure Skating competitions or even Synchronized Skating competitions yourself? Yes of course I did, I would even say that I visited many competitions, including World Championships. My wife and I love to watch Syn-



‘IT HAS TO BE MORE EXCITING, MORE SURPRISING FOR THE AUDIENCE’

chronized Skating, it's very spectacular. I however think, if shown on television, you don't always get to see the sport in its full beauty. They should work on that.

Will you be visiting World's in Colorado Springs this year? No, unfortunately our schedule is very full and tight and in that specific week there's a General Assembly of International Olympic Winter Sports Federations in Denmark. It's not always that one gets to choose.

Do you feel, that you're sufficiently informed concerning matters that are subject to discussion nowadays within the Synchronized Skating community? For instance, the movement to get included in the Olympics. Some say, we're not included because the teams are mixed (male/female), some say the level isn't high enough or the amount of countries that compete on top level is too small. About the Olympic Inclusion, it's my understanding that IOC is trying to reduce the number of athletes taking part of any Olympics. The Synchro teams are big and wouldn't contribute to that goal very much. One thing is for sure and that is; I.S.U. is on top of it all and is keeping a close watch. As far as I know they are even investigating the possibilities of smaller teams. To answer your question though, I'm fully aware of what's going on in the Synchronized Skating scene.

Now that you hold the Chair of the Council, do you feel that changes can be made in the near future and could it possibly effect on Synchronized Skating in a positive way? Yes of course, one positive change is to become reality soon "The Athletes committee". The athletes will have their vote within the ISU. Representing Synchronized Skating in this committee will be the

Swedish Nathalie Lindqvist. I think it's very important for the athletes to have their say. Alone you can do nothing, together you can accomplish almost anything. I'm a strong believer in working together to make the necessary changes.

What are your biggest challenges in your new Job? Didn't you read the Manifest? There are 3 major subjects that we will concentrate upon, they are:

- 1: Development
- 2: Marketing and Promotion
- 3: Good Governance

It's very important that skating will develop in all categories, it has to be more exciting, more surprising for the audience. Full and sold out Ice arenas mean financial income that can be invested in development, growth and quality again. Coaches should also be subject to development, coaches should be coached, to grow and to help skaters grow. What should be done precisely is up to the skating disciplines and their Technical commissions. They should come with input and ideas; we are open to suggestions. In Synchronized Skating, you have Chris Buchanan, he's a very competent man and he knows. Furthermore, it is important to bring disciplines together in Multi-Disciplinary approaches. The initial goal is to open at least one center (providing facilities for all disciplines) on each continent.

Secondly, we will take on Marketing and promotion very seriously, we must find large commercial partners, sponsors, that will lift the sport to a new level. But to realize all this, Skating ... in general, must become more attractive. We will be working in this with 2 large sports marketing agencies "Infront" and "IMG". We have to use our Athletes as examples... sign-boards for the



beauty of skating.

And finally, we within the ISU must do our jobs properly. Good Governance that is what you may expect from us but should demand as well. So, we must develop a strategic and ethics-focused corporate governance plan. Our work and office should be open and very transparent. We have to include our athletes and give them a vote in the new athlete's committee. Therefore I.S.U. is also hosting conferences at the World Championships Short Track in Rotterdam as well as at the World Championships Figure Skating in Helsinki, in which we exchange thoughts and opinions with our members on matters like Marketing & Promotion, but also on Development. But always constantly keeping in mind to invest within reason to maintain a financially stable position.

Is there anything you would like to say to the Synchronized Skating community? Synchronized Skating is recognized as a full member of the ISU and we feel strongly for this discipline, but necessary or desired changes must come from within. Use your voice through the I.S.U. Member Federations, the technical committees and the new athlete's committee.

Thank you Mr. Jan Dijkema for your time and it's good to hear that SynchroNice is always welcome for further interviews or additional questions. All the best in the next two years, we hope you will achieve your goals. ■



SynchroPhoto and SynchroNice were invited to the Frolundaborg Ice Stadium in Gothenburg, to take part in the festivities around the 10th anniversary of the Dr. Leon Lurje Trophy.

Of course there was this beautiful competition in which the Rockettes from Finland won the Gold at Senior level and Les Supremes from Canada won the Junior competition, but there were also many Debutant teams and many Novice teams. Now if there's one important motivation that Dr. Leon Lurje aimed when he started this competition before his way to early passing, at the age of 48, it was to enthuse the youth, the Novices and thereby provide the base for the continuation of this beautiful sport, Synchronized Skating. A man with vision, clearly.

The Russian Novices, team Sunrise2, won the gold at Novice level by performing a stunning program and with this program they showed the world that Synchronized Skating is very much alive and appreciated amongst the

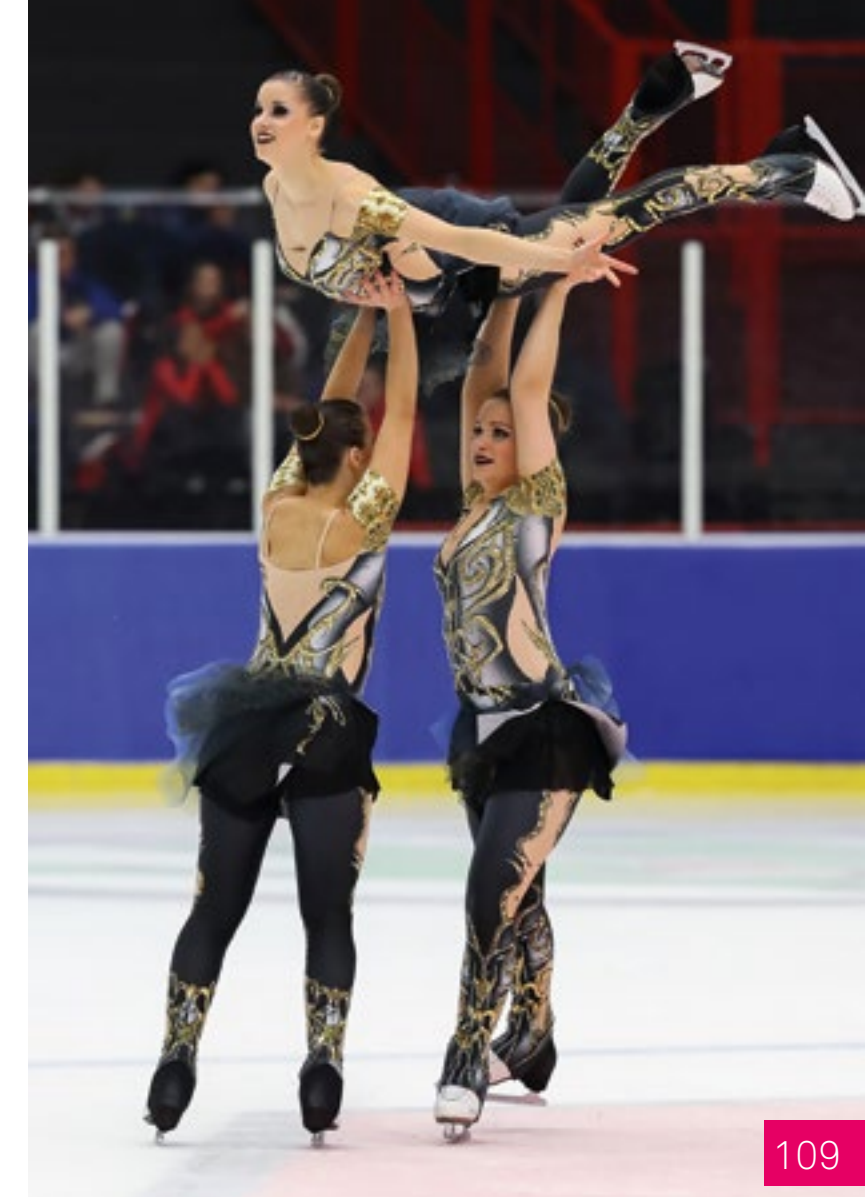
younger skaters. Did they enjoy being on the ice?

A tenth anniversary, so the OC had to bring something special this year... and they did... WOW. A special 10th anniversary show in which the audience and we were treated to a part of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" a famous and beautiful Ballet. This time a Ballet on the Ice, with the most beautiful, outrageous and extravagant costumes and ice skating skills and a spectacular, fiery and lightning finale. Very impressive indeed, we really enjoyed it and we hope you had a chance to see it too on the livestream.

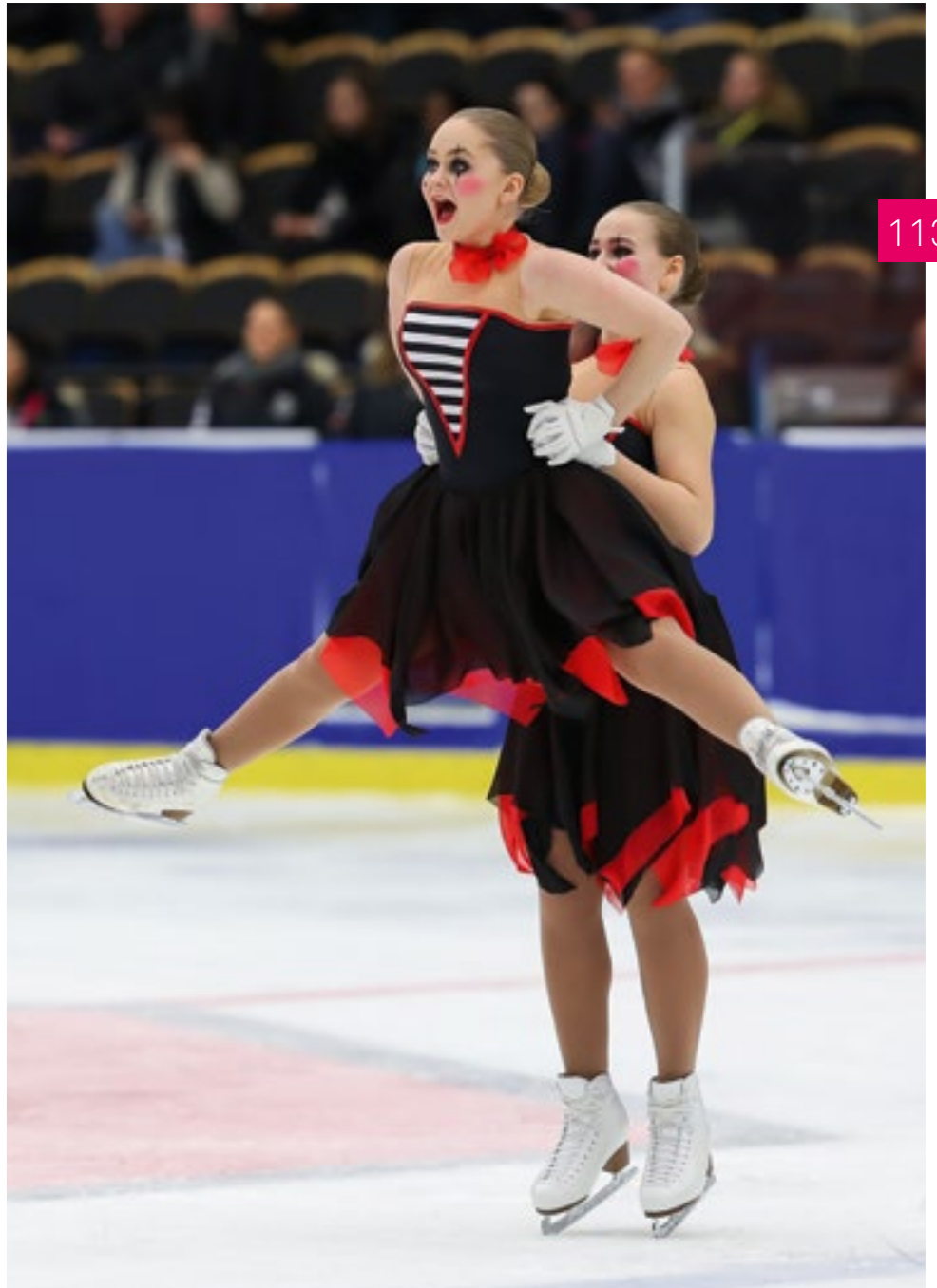
Thank you Organizing Committee and a big thank you to the many volunteers we saw working, for a job

well done and a big compliment to the men outside the Frolundaborg Stadium, working in the cold at "Leon Lurje's 10th Anniversary Grill" to provide us with the extra juicy hamburgers you served us, a spectacular job :-). See you all next year?

LEON LURJE TROPHY 2017









#WhyNotSynchro2022

TO CAPTURE
THEIR JOY
AND THEIR
LAUGHTER

*synchro*nice



MOZART CUP 2017




In January of 2017, not less than 76 Teams from 16 nations in the categories ISU Senior, Junior, Advanced and Basic Novice and in the interclub categories Juvenile, Adult and Mixed age competed in Salzburg. This makes the Mozart Cup one of the biggest international synchronized skating competitions, but also because of the number of athletes – 1400 – one of the biggest skating events in the world!

(a story by: Theresa Katzlinger)



results

Elite:

1. Marigold Ice Unity (FIN)
2. Miami University (USA)
3. Skyliners (USA)
10. Sweet Mozart (AUT)

Junioren:

- Lexettes (USA)
Nexxice (CAN)
Musketeers (FIN)

Advanced Novice:

1. Valley Bay Synchronics (FIN)
2. Diamond Edges (FIN)
3. Blue Arrows (FIN)

Basic Novice:

- Saxony Icepearls (GER)
Minifl'ice (GER)
Kometa (CZE)

Juvenile:

1. Sport Magic (HUN)
2. Mini Starlets (GER)
3. Le Soleil (POL)

Mixed Age:

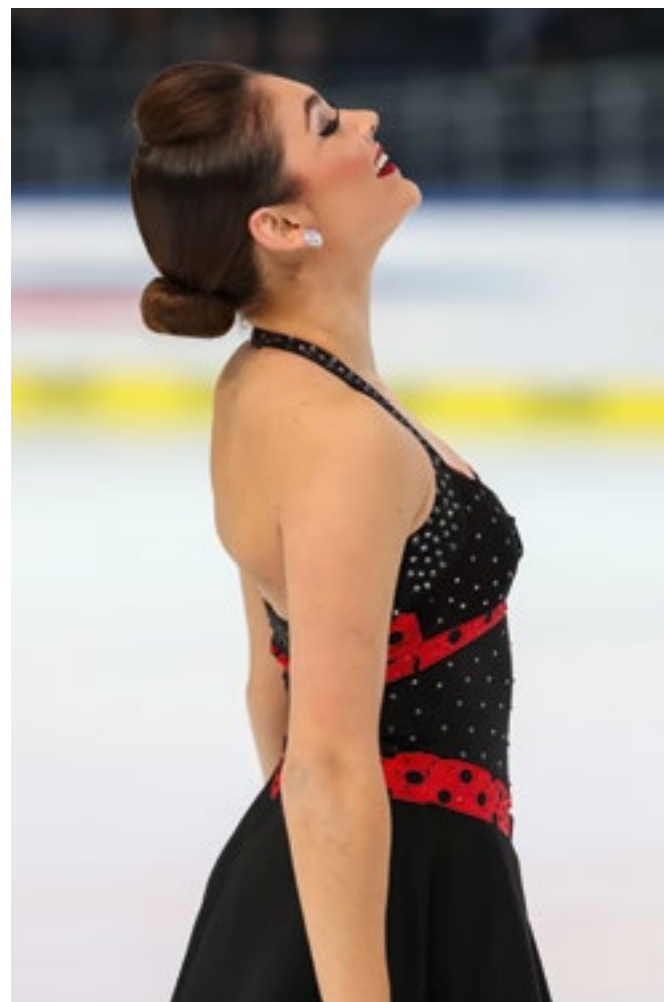
- Ice Diamonds (FIN)
Snowflakes (SUI)
United Angels (GER)

Adult:

1. Ice Chicas Czech us (CZE)
2. Starlight Diamonds (SUI)
3. All Stars (CZE)

The biggest highlights of the competition were the ISU categories. In Seniors Marigold Ice Unity was prepared to win the Mozart Cup. The four times world champions from Finland started out strong with their Short Program “El Matador” and came in first, ahead of Miami University and Revolutions. On Saturday Marigold Ice Unity showed with their program “Finland 100” to the music of Jean Sibelius what they are really capable of, a breath-taking performance! “This Free Program today, skated in front of the supporting audience here, brings us into the right direction for Finnish nationals!” Miami University earned the silver medal and Skyliners from New York also made it to the podium!

Sweet Mozart, the Team from Salzburg, showed strong performances in their Short as well as in their Free, but there is still a lot of work to be done. Since May 2016 Sweet Mozart has a new Head-coach and choreographer, Noora Karjalainen, a former Rockettes skater from Finland. “We are very happy”, says manager Carmen Kiefer: Noora is living in Vienna with her husband and





contacted us, if we might need an experienced Finnish synchro skater to help us out. Our girls are highly motivated and Noora brought new spirit into our practices and our programs. A competition like the Mozart Cup on our home ice-rink is very important to us and we're always very happy with any feedback!"

In the junior category Lexettes won their first international Gold with two very strong performances. But also the new Canadian junior champions; Nexxice Junior, showed their improvement and won the free skating, which brought them into the second place overall. Musketeers had some very unlucky falls in both programs, but still made it to the podium easily.

In Advanced Novice some very strong teams competed, four Teams from Finland fought for gold, in the end, Valley Bay Synchro won this category performing a very beautiful choreography to "Skater's Waltz".

23 Teams made the Mixed Age category a little Mixed Age World Championships – with Teams from Australia, Austria, Italy, Finland, Switzerland, Hungary, Sweden and Germany. Ice Diamonds from Finland won the strong competition ahead of Snowflakes from Switzerland and United Angels from Germany. ■



Maybe it's only me but every time I'm watching a team skate their program... there are always one or just a few faces that stand out more than others. Maybe because of their skating skills or their facial expression while they skate. You somehow get the feeling it's no trouble for them and they make skating look so easy by their constant smile or theatrical faces. One of these skaters in my opinion is the Czech Synchronized Skater Lenka Hajzlerová from team Olympia. Reason enough for SynchronNice to introduce her to you all.

Where are you from Lenka and if we may ask... how old are you? I'm already 25 years old and I was born in Prague in the Czech Republic.

How come you started skating and at what age did you first step on to the ice? Well that's quite a funny story, cause my mother took me to skating when I was only 6 years old, fun part though is the reason why... she took me so I could let off some steam, because she was totally overwhelmed by my energy. After that... I just never left, day in day out I was to be found on the ice.

So, did you start at a Synchronized team immediately?

No of course not, first 10 years I was a single skater, like so many, but then I traded my singles career for Synchronized Skating. This opened a completely new world to me. It was so much fun and sociable, but also full of traveling, team work and of course, not to be forgotten, laughter. We always have so much fun together.

Never tried any other sports?

I have been skating year after year except for one... 2008-2009 In that period I was an exchange student and was living with a hosting

LENKA HAJZLEROVA

team Olympia





family in Connecticut, United States. I missed skating so much at first, but I filled up my spare time with volleyball, running and basketball. In fact, I'm just a fan of all sports. I did try many of them but I must be honest... nothing and when I say nothing, I mean nothing... compares to skating. I just love to jump, spin and glide over the ice, I totally enjoy when my edges just cut the ice making that typical sound.

What do you do besides skating, or are you just always on the ice?

No, hahaha of course not. If I'm not skating, I'm a Medical student at our University. I'm a Senior student and finishing my final year, therefore I am nearly ready to start working.

To be honest, it has always been a little compromising how to split up my time, but so far everything worked out just fine. Skating gives me a perfect opportunity to gain energy.

The sad part at the same time however is that this season is most likely my last one, since I am going to be employed next year. Though I would love to stay related to skating and I love to coach kids from time to time or come and support my team at competitions.

What makes Synchronized Skating so special for you?

What I like most about synchro are the competitions. I absolutely love to watch the top teams, to feel and experience the atmosphere they create when on the ice. On the other hand, I'm also a huge fan of the ballet, this is why teams like Paradise always leave such deep impressions on me. Ballet is beautiful on ice

and it is just incredible when 16 synchro skaters are ballet dancers at the same time. But I'm also very excited that the Czech Republic is hosting the European Championships in figure skating in Ostrava this year... and we do have several Athletes to represent the Czech Republic that I certainly will be cheering for.

What's the most positive thing that skating brings you?

Skating brought many good people into my life. I have spent so much time on ice that I had enough time to build up some very tight relationships... all because of skating.

Thank you Lenka for your time, we think you are a lovely person.

Well I'm at least a very sociable person. So, for instance, I hate spending the evenings on my own at home. I'm always happier if something is going on, like a nice party. I would rather trade reading a book in a second for a chance to hang out with some friends or maybe something else like, making a road trip during summer vacation. My next plan by the way... is visiting Japan.

It was very nice talking to you Lenka, Thank you,

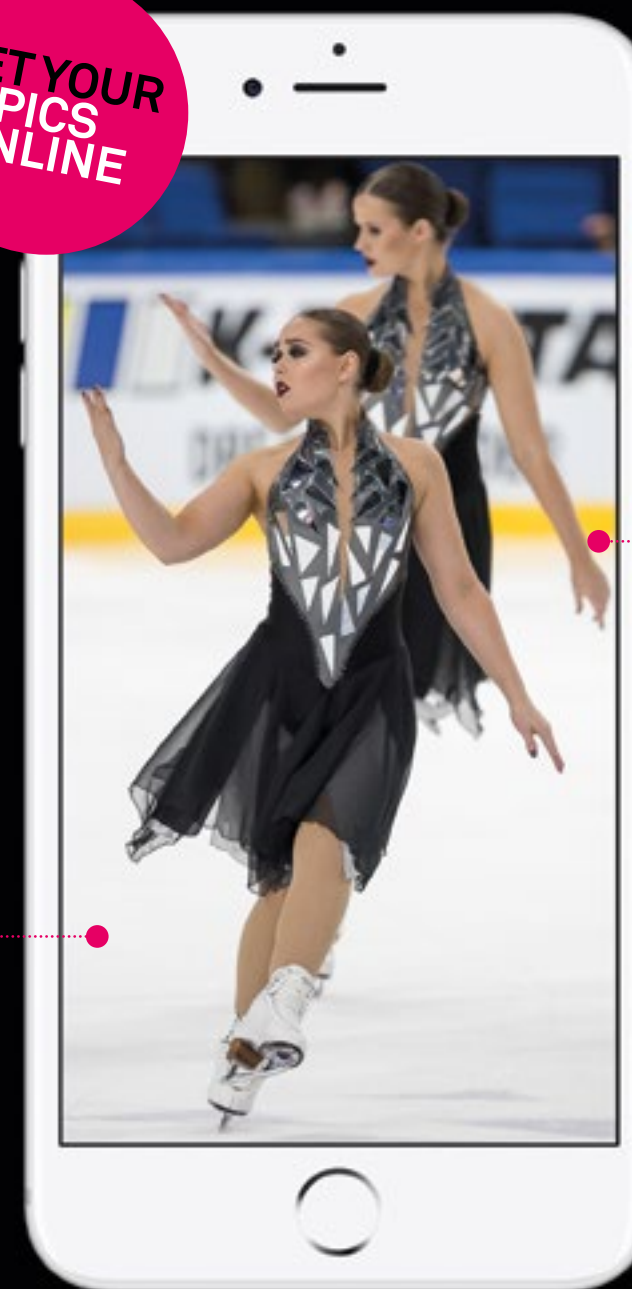
I would like to thank you and Patricia for taking such beautiful and professional pictures. You provide a beautiful and emotional souvenir to remind us, why we all actually Skate Synchronized, you capture the joy in our skating, the power and the emotions. Thank you!

A face you will remember. ■



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A face we will probably see more and more in the international Synchronized Skating competition scene, maybe even at Worlds, is the less familiar face of Danielle Spijkers, Coach of the fast progressing Dutch team, “Ice United”.

DANIELLE SPIJKERS

How long have you been doing this coaching Danielle? I've been coaching the Senior team for 6 years now and it took me a while but, I got the synchro virus planted into my boyfriend as well, hahaha. He's the team manager since a few years now and is of course traveling with us everywhere we go.

What can you tell us about yourself? Well we live in the south of the Netherlands, close to the Belgian border and not too far from the Ice rink. I'm working a full-time job in International Sales beside the coaching and in the little spare time that's left my boyfriend and I love to travel or spend time with friends, having a nice dinner together or something like that. **But what type of person are you?** Oh okay, I'm a creative, highly motivated and focused type of person and this is also what I try to teach my Skaters. They must be involved and stay focused.



How did you end up at team Ice United? This all started in 1999 (me as a skater of course) when we entered, as a first Senior team ever, the Dutch Championships “Precision Skating”, that’s what Synchronized Skating was called in those days, followed by our first performance at an ISU competition, The World Challenge Cup in Göteborg Sweden, who remembers it? Then in 2000 we had the privilege to skate at the first World Championship organized by the ISU ever in Minneapolis, USA. The years after that, we skated at several international ISU competitions and World Championships. Unfortunately, this came to an end in 2009, the team fell apart due to the work and study responsibilities of the Skaters, such a pity.

I was already coaching a Novice team at the time in the Netherlands, but also a Mixed age team at an Ice rink in Belgium, so I didn’t stop Synchronized Skating.

But now you do have a Senior team? Correct, in 2011 I decided to investigate if a new Senior team could be formed, and I succeeded. In the whole of the Netherlands, there were like only 6 teams in several categories, but none of them were Senior.

So, you gave it a name and started skating? Not really, the name Team Ice United, was chosen by our skaters. Right now, we have some 22 highly motivated skaters from the Netherlands, Belgium and even Finland. After my second participation tour at ISU’s Development Seminar in Vierumaki, Finland for coaches and another coaches’ seminar in the Netherlands, organized by Mr. Christopher Buchanan, we started our training sessions and internships, last summer. We are happy at this moment with the guidance and assistance of Gert Hofmann, team Berlin1’s coach in making our team grow and become more professional.

You’re taking it seriously; do you train often? At this moment, we have the possibility to build

in 3 training sessions, that’s on ice as well as off ice and on top of that we take ballet classes, condition workouts and some mental coaching.

And how about your team, do they get a say in which competitions to enter? They do, at every beginning of a season we decide as a team what competitions we would like to be in. We however, always keep in mind that we want to be able to measure our performance on previous performances. This year for instance our national Championship is open again for foreign teams, that’s a good thing for our sport in small countries like the Netherlands where the KNSB (Dutch Skating Federation) still isn’t going with the positive flow and grow Synchronized Skating is in right now.

Seems everything is working out just fine, you must be a happy coach? Sure, it is very satisfactory to see such a fast growth of your team during competitions and of course... I do appreciate all positive comments and feedback after competitions given by judges, officials and other coaches, even the ones from better teams very much. Another thing I love to see is the fast development of new coaches for other teams within our team, because that’s how I started at one time.

Unfortunately, like I said earlier, there’s not much appreciation from the Dutch Skating federation for our sport. They’re missing huge opportunities to setup new and good structures to facilitate the new and younger teams. This is a pity for the future and makes it hard or maybe impossible for us to ever compete at the highest level. We’re always so proud of our International performing athletes, why not for our Synchro teams? Unfortunately, the bill will be solely for our skaters.



dreams

So, does this mean you have dreams? Yes... I do, I really hope that one fine day our Skating federation will embrace our sport and the ISU will try their best to convince the International Olympic Committee the sport is worth being at the Olympic games in 2022 and bring it more often to the attention of a larger audience, so sponsors will see the benefit and will start to invest in their own and our future and maybe in the long term we will compete at the Olympics and show to IOC, how wrong they were, and show to world what a beautiful sport synchronized skating is.

So says a smiling and very proud Coach of the Dutch team Ice United. Remember her: Danielle Spijkers. ■

GERT HOFMANN

coach of the teams: Berlin1, Berlin Juniors, Berlin Novice and Team Berlin Minis

A man with focus and who, we think, probably even sleeps wearing his cap. Always around his team but you don't really notice him. He's the type of coach that likes to stay somewhat more in the background. He is however making great progress with his team and therefore it's about time to put him where he belongs... In the SynchroNice Spotlights.

So, coach please tell us, who are you, how old are you and where are you from? Hi there, I'm Gert Hofmann and I'm the very proud coach of the teams: Berlin1, Berlin Juniors, Berlin Novice and Team Berlin Minis. I was born on 23.09.1982 in the former German Democratic Republic. To be more precise, in the city Karl- Marx- Stadt. Since the German reunification however that city is called Chemnitz, but nowadays I live in Berlin, close to the famous Alexander Platz

What type of coach are you in your own words?

That's difficult to say but I'm most certainly very Determined and let's say Realistic but first of all, I'm a coach who loves to work with SYS Teams.

Do you have any history in Synchronized Skating?

Yes I do, but when I first started skating at the age of 3 and a half in Karl- Marx- Stadt I started in Singles and did this for the first 6 years. Then I switched to ice dancing and did that also for another 7 years. But then I came in contact with Synchronized Skating and I joined team the Skating Mystery (seniors) in Chemnitz and stayed here for 3 seasons.

I was studying at the time but when I finished school in 2003, I moved to Berlin to skate on Team Berlin 1. This I did also for another 3 years, but in the meantime, I took my coaching education and started coaching Team Berlin Juniors and Team Berlin Novice. This is my 9th season coaching Team Berlin 1. So, I think it's fair to say that I have some skating or better Synchronized skating history.

What's positive about your team?

I like my team, especially because we also have a male in the group. This provides a nice atmosphere within the group. Most of our skaters have very good basic skills and had a good skating education. Furthermore, we do have relatively good Synchronized skating

conditions in Berlin. We have Skaters from different nations and most of them are studying in high school or university. This mix makes it a strong team and above all that, they like to work hard and with discipline.

Sounds great, but does it also mean that there are no problems or challenges? No certainly not, we have our problems. For instance, I really don't like the problems we encounter to combine sport and school schedules. Regretfully is a combination of (Non-Olympic) sports and the education system here in Germany not the easiest one. A majority of our skaters have to attend university until 7.00pm, 5 or even 6 days a week. That doesn't leave much spare-time for family, friends and other hobbies beside. It's always first the team and although everybody does their utmost, it's definitely not the fastest way to top level in professional ice skating.

Do you train and work out often with the team? We do five to six days' practice per week. In fact, we train 3 hours per day with an extra hour on weekend days. During winter time, we always have extra ice time together with some ballet, physicals and conditional practise.

Does your team have any influence in choosing which competition you will go to?

No, they don't. In our gymnastics and skating club ("Berliner Turn- und Sportclub e.V."), we have a special department "Synchronized skating". Members of this department are the team managers and other volunteers. Within this department the choices are made which competitions to attend for the season.

Do you have a favorite competition? My favourite competition is the Berlin Cup of course. We have a great ice rink with enough space for spectators and teams. 2nd is Shanghai Trophy. I'm still so proud, that we could skate last year in Shanghai. Perfect organisation. 3rd was the Leon Lurjé Trophy for novice teams many years ago. It was end of march and a great highlight for all competitive novice teams at the time.

Did you hear there's a new (soon to be) ISU competition in the Netherlands? No. But it'll be nice to have more possibilities to choose from ISU competitions and to see and visit other cities and ice rinks in the world.

Do you coach only one team or do you help other teams/countries as well? Yes, I support several other teams in different countries with their choreography. Plus, we have a strong roller skating team in Germany. The Dream Team. We've also been working together for six years

now.

What are your nearby targets and goals? Our target for team Berlin1, is to get back into the top 10 teams in the world, of course qualification for the WCSS 2017 and our spot in the world ranking list. We also want to win our second ISU Competition in Zagreb, next February. But with Team Berlin Juniors, we would love to win the 10th place at Junior Worlds in Canada.

What's your favorite music to skate to, so far and why is that? A few seasons ago, we did a Short program on ACDC's Thunderstruck with Team Berlin 1, that was just great but, this year we used the music of Angels and Devils (Symphonie sur glace). That's one of my all-time favourites in music.

Is there anything that you haven't done with or on skates, but want to do before you ever retire from skating? I would love to compete with Team Berlin 1 in Japan and Australia.

Are there any other teams or coaches that you admire? Yes, I get very inspired by the coaches of Marigold Ice Unity, Rockettes and Team Surprise. These coaches helped to develop our sport a lot but they also give other coaches new ideas and focus. We can learn from them how to coach Synchro Teams

but also what possibilities we have and what can be accomplished on ice with 16 different skaters.

Why coaching in Synchro and not Ice dance, pair skating or solo? I did 'm all for a long time but, in order to get better results, it was necessary to choose just one discipline. Since I like to work with bigger groups... the choice was

easy.... It's more fun, more motivation, more challenges.

How about the future of Synchronized Skating, do you believe it to be Olympic someday?

Hard to say, but I don't believe in it. And if we do get the possibility to compete there, one fine day, it still won't be the ticket to a real membership of the Olympic games. I

first hope that we can develop Synchro Skating in more countries and build up more pro-teams in different cities.

What, in your opinion must be done to make it to the Olympics? Many more teams and much more professional skating. But I don't think that you'll find the right conditions for teams to practice like Olympic athletes in Syn-



chro Skating in many countries. Olympic and professional athlete preparations mean, 6 practice days per week training for at least 4 hours or more.

There's always the same 3-5 countries that will split up the medals, do you believe there are some other countries making serious progress and will it be enough to catch up with the top teams. No, I don't think so.

How do you feel about the ISU and their rules and regulations, can it be done better? Are

changes required? I like the rules and regulations, but also the changes. BUT, if the ISU feels that we should be better prepared for a season and make growth in our quality as an ISU discipline.. we need the rules or required elements far more early than now. But still, Rules need to be changed... to get better and provide more interesting programs to see.

The best changes by the way for this season were, to leave out one element to create more time to do choreography and to show some interesting things

in between the elements. It's my wish that, coaches should be able to choose more between elements. For example instead of a second lift another element with maybe lower points. But most important... that we don't forget our Synchro roots. Our basic elements like block, wheel, circle, line and intersection.

Well Gert, you gave us a lot to think about, thanks for your time and story. ■



2017

French Cup

FRENCH CUP 2017 A THRILLER

Short before the start of the French Cup 2017, ISU announced that the Shanghai Grand Prix was going to be cancelled. Very Convenient for the French Cup of course because some of the teams registered for Shanghai had to find other competitions, like Team Paradise from Russia, they chose La Douce France instead. The result... a very strong field of competitors in Rouen.



And although Team Paradise registered very late, they were immediately favorite for the beautiful Trophy at the French Cup. However after an unlucky fall in the short, it was all open again, knowing the strong Free programs of the Finnish Team Rockettes and Team Unique. So, on Saturday a fully packed arena "Ile Lacroix" was treated to a real thriller of a competition, anyone could win now, theoretically. The Russians finally did win the Trophy (199,16 points) but, only by a few points ahead of the very strong performing Rockettes (196,98 points). Team Unique came in third, only a few point after the second place (193,76 points). A very exciting afternoon we all had and the atmosphere in Rouen was as always great, many supporters from many countries were, as always, dancing, singing and cheering for their favorite teams. The lights however were terrible this year, not worthy for such a high ranked competition, unfortunately very bad for photography. Let's hope the organizing committee will fix this for the 2018 version of this beautiful competition.



French Cup





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