

**Evgenia Kanaeva: and mom, no matter what, would not love me less ...(7th March 2013)**

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Gymnast Kanaeva, winner of 'the most success athletes in 2012' ranking organized by the agency "R-Sport", refused to define the best one. She wished the impossible – grant every competitor the first place. In an interview with "R-Sport"'s Anatoly Samokhvalova and Andrei Symonenko, **the double Olympic champion talked about the fan from Taiwan** (Note by Zoe: means me hahaha 😊❤️), a sincere smile and eating chocolate behind the coach's back.

**A beautiful view and subjectivity**

R-Sport: **Evgenia, do you want to place all the male athletes in the leading positions, but to have the footballers (like almost all other survey participants) excluded in the end?**

EK: I have never thought nor said anything bad about footballers. They work hard, break legs ... Of course, there are some ...

**R-Sport: Yes, they even have similar gait ...**

EK: Oh, come on, you do not like football at all!

**R-Sport: And you?**

EK: The only one time I watched football in my life was the game between Russia and Holland in 2008. We won 3-1.

**R-Sport: But since then they have not played like that anymore.**

EK: Probably, because since then I have not watched football again (laughs).

**R-Sport: You don't watch ... maybe because you don't want to be disappointed by them.**

EK: Come on! All athletes are trying hard.

**R-Sport: Everybody is trying, but you do work really hard.**

EK: I cannot say if there is any easy sport, in which you do nothing and get paid. I have not attended the footballers' training, I have not seen them and thus I cannot have my judgment on them.

**R-Sport: Many athletes feel offended that they have one salary, while the footballers are treated very differently.**

EK: I am not offended. I am happy with my life, and do not work simply for a salary. Football is a national sport. Similar to hockey, and even tennis. What is there to discuss ... One can't do without money of course, but a real athlete does not think about his income. He thinks of the purpose.

**R-Sport: Whose opinion is important to you? Are you happy that you have chosen the best profession among a range of various sports?**

EK: Of course, I am pleased. Generally, inside, I always thought nobody knew me. Training, gymnasium, refreshment and then gymnasium again. Now, as I am not moving away from sport but taking a break to recover from an injury in the post-Olympics time, I can divert my attention and see a different view of myself. Only now I have come to understand how many people support and care for me. Even ordinary people would come up and say nice words, which remind me of their concerns for me during the Olympic Games. I am enormously grateful, and it is worth to train and compete.

**R-Sport: When Alexei Smertin (ed: former captain of Russian National Football team) just retired from the national team, he also received compliments, especially on the part of his beautiful and purposeful display, which he, however, almost never scored. What are you are grateful for?**

EK: Smertin, I think, I met once at the Olympic committee. He is a very wise man. First of all, RG is an admirable sport. For us, it is very beautiful. We work on our elements along with the music, which capture people's attention and they watch with delight. This means, while the audience are captivated, the difficulties we experienced in training for ten hours are acknowledged. They see the smiles on our faces – without any sign of stress during the process of composition.

**R-Sport: You have a very subjective sport.**

EK: We can say almost every kind of sport is subjective. Even in football or hockey there are favorites. It happens that a coach likes a gymnast, and one – who does not possess some special qualities – can compensate them with great zeal and desire ... But first of all there is a visual assessment. All look at a person's appearance at the beginning. It is even more so in RG. And in this case, from the prospective of a trainer, it is very difficult to make a decision with an insight. There were very talented girls training next to me. They were much more capable than me. They were of higher level, with better figures, and expressive faces. In short, they were gymnasts of delicacy. But in terms of potential, and what will happen in the end, no one knows.

**R-Sport: Are you talking about the work of a trainer?**

EK: Not really. Of course, the coach plays an important role. I have been very fortunate in life. When I was still in Omsk I came to Vera Efremovna Shtelbaums, who worked with Ira Tchachina. She (Shtelbaums) is a trainer from God. Even more fortunate is that I was taken early enough to Novogorsk (the base of the Russian team). I was taken there, of course, because of my results, but the fact that Vera Efremovna and Ira Tchachina had already worked there also played its role. Irina Aleksandrovna (Viner, head coach of the national team and the president of the federation) did me a favour regarding accommodation. For one and a half year prior to it, I had trained in the Olympic village managed by Elena Yurievna Nefedova with Natasha Kukushkin and Amina Zaripova. It was a great team that had given me a lot. And then, I moved to Novogorsk.

It is important to get to “your own” trainer, but this is not the important point. Because if the person is destined to be an athlete, if he puts in his heart and soul, somehow he will get noticed and be invited to the national team. In Russia there are always about ten best gymnasts who make the national team. But then there is national championship and the coaches begin to choose the girls who take the 45th – 50th positions. Who is a junior in fact? It is a first-grader who today is capable of one thing, tomorrow of another, but the potential is always visible.

**R-Sport: A trainer from God – does this craftsman develop strengths and minimize weaknesses, or serve as a psychological motivator?**

EK: The coach must be a psychologist. He should adapt to the gymnast: how to chat with her, with what tone, at which point shouting is needed, where it is not necessary. If a trainer can understand the character of the athlete, he will start to be with him as one unit.

### **If there is strength left ...**

**R-Sport: Some people believe that in gymnastics the trainer is a dictator. Have you come across with them?**

EK: I do not even know ... (laughs). We have some work. Yes, we spend a lot of time at the base, but it is not fenced. Whoever wants, can go to "Mega". Whoever, of course, still has the strength ... Because everyday there are routines to follow. In our settings, our responsibilities are dictated by concrete training. This and that need to be done today. When the gymnast becomes more mature, she is entitled to put forward her own schedules. For example, I can now have a rest after an hour of choreography and choose not to go onto the carpet at noon, but at one o'clock. We have a normal relationship with the trainers, and they can have something to ask or say.

**R-Sport: Is it allowed to go in with an ice-cream?**

EK: No. With ice cream, of course not. But not so much because it is dangerous but we consider it as disrespectful to the trainer. Eating snack in front of the trainer is not allowed.

**R-Sport: Is it possible to eat secretly?**

EK: All eating is done quietly. And it is no secret. The main thing is to eat what is appropriate.

**R-Sport: And did you do that too?**

EK: And even me. I ate chocolate. But not quietly ... just not in front of the trainer. And sometimes the trainer herself gave me the candy when my strength disappeared. Every athlete needs to understand what he wants to achieve and what he intends to do for it. Moreover, how he is to cope with his own external appearance.

**R-Sport: Yes, but in other sports there is some objectivity, such as the number of goals, the measure of speed. But in gymnastics there is solid subjectivity. Yours probably have judging criteria, but there**

**are few people who understand them.**

EK: The criteria exist. If a gymnast follows accordingly then there is nothing to question about ... For example, there is a turn. She claims one turn, but makes two in fact. So no one can say she has underdone. And it's all the time. You make a split leap but don't show a split. Make an 'oversplit'. Much depends on the expressiveness of the soul, which has recently become a strong emphasis. Sport can be artistic. But, in my opinion, the important thing is – not to cross the boundary, and this can only be achieved by maintaining the sincerity. In this world, by the way, there is not enough sincerity. There is also not enough kindness. In sports, it is likewise.

**R-Sport: How to work out a sincere smile?**

EK: Not like this. You cannot work it out. To Live correctly, love the people, treasure them, do not be judgmental and do not be envious. And I am not talking about we need to pretend to be someone who show up with the thoughts "I am so nice and everything is super." Athletic effect depends on how a person treats life. If you are a positive person, with healthy thoughts, if you do not swear, do not cause conflict – with the exception of certain situations – even in sport there can be harmony. However, we have enough people who love to sting.

**R-Sport: It is impossible to be in such state all the time!**

EK: All the time is impossible, but we must try to motivate ourselves to turn to the good side. I also do not always have the positive emotions. There are stress, tears, and just negative thoughts. But all actions in life and sport are from the head.

**R-Sport: Sorry for the compliment, but when you step onto the carpet, the impression you give is that you are happy. But, I suppose, is this pretended?**

EK: You know, in gymnastics we were taught from childhood to show emotion when we step up. And when you take part in the world tournament, you cannot but appreciate. And you are so happy ...

**Enjoying the trainings**

**R-Sport: How do you cope with the nervousness?**

EK: It happens ... happened. Frequently. The main thing is to go to the carpet,

take a deep breath and ... in these moments I always comfort myself with this traditional phrase: “All will be well.” But it is not really very good if there is no emotional disturbance. A drop of it must present. When I did the first routine in the Olympic Games in London – I did it so badly, as in Beijing. I was shocked and wondered: why don't I get nervous? I pounded myself so that my head started to have this thought emerged: ‘yes, well, I need to worry! What are you doing, Zhenya, this is the Olympics,’ as I tried to persuade myself. And there I went making a mistake in hoop because of an incorrect attitude. It was not helpful just to get comforted. But, very importantly, after this little failure, we talked with the trainer about the good. “On the performance, all went well”, she said to me, and we both remembered how we trained. Mentally we had reached the state that no error should happen because we were truly ready, I really enjoyed the last training camp. I felt great satisfaction and I didn't want to leave the gym. I knew that I wouldn't leave the gym till I do the routine perfectly and I enjoyed it. Don't think that I am a masochist. I simply enjoyed working in those wonderful conditions we had. So we chatted, and a big break came froth between the rotations – about an hour, then I went to do the ball routine, and ... I again completely didn't feel nervous. The routines were performed like the flow of a river, with no burst of fear.

**R-Sport: Skaters love to remember something very good out of their life in those moments.**

EK: I have my own method. I will start to think that my mom, no matter what, would not love me less.

**Figure and masculine sport**

**R-Sport: When you were offered the post as vice-president of the All-Russian Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation, what did you experience – pride or horror?**

EK: It is something new, and I have never relied on praise. Today it is there, but tomorrow it will be gone, so I was very pleased that the head trainer offered my candidacy.

**R-Sport: Don't you get distracted?**

EK: No, we have in fact many vice-presidents.

**R-Sport: Have you ever had a desire to go into another sport? I mean golf, which your colleague Vera Shimanskaya takes part in?**

EK: I like sport in general. But only the type that does not harm the figure, something not masculine. Something, perhaps, I will do, just for leisure. I like to play tennis, if there is someone for me to play with. I don't like watching, though. I respect tennis players, because it is a demanding sport. But to watch, not really.

**R-Sport: Do you watch RG?**

EK: Yes, recently I traveled to Kazan for the Russian Championships.

**R-Sport: What do you watch for as a professional?**

EK: I pay attention on the natural potential arising in them. It is because they are children, and we don't want to lose track of them. I am talking about what follows: they come with such joy to be on the carpet, they have such bright happy eyes, they are already trembling with joy at the sight of Irina Aleksandrovna (Viner), which is love. Sincerity and purity should stay in the people then and after, as they grow into adulthood.

**R-Sport: Have you revised your own speech?**

EK: Revised. I don't give speeches often, but it happens.

**R-Sport: For what?**

EK: It just happens. There are occasions. It is not for the sake of being remembered, no, I just want to. And sometimes I specifically look for self-improvement, in order to fix anything.

**R-Sport: In RG, are there fans who can be called devotees?**

EK: There are a lot in Spain. Just like sea! They are crazy about RG. The fire in their souls is incredible. In Italy and France RG is also well supported ...

**R-Sport: ... everywhere except in Russia?**

EK: In Russia, too, the children are passionate. But we have so many other popular sports. When the World Championships took place at the Olympiysky, there were so many people getting together for the all-around event that we could not even hear the starting signal. I remember when I came out with the ribbon, they shouted my name ... It was all unexplainable, but I felt like flying. **There is a unique supporter from Taiwan. She intentionally**

came to support me in Montpellier, and she made a huge collage of several thousand of small photos of me. When I performed, she would hold it up. **She is such a sweetheart!** (Note by Zoe: hahaha ♥) **She made friends with my mom and she was in London to support me too.**

**R-Sport: How many men actually come to cheer for gymnasts?**

EK: There are also men fans. But I did not count how many of them.

**R-Sport: What are you thinking now for the near future?**

EK: Now, it is difficult to say. I am taking care of my health and for me this is the most important thing. Sport is great, but I want to become a mother. In my opinion, for a woman in our world this is the most-most ultimate.

**R-Sport: How much time is needed to make the right decision? RG is not biathlon, there is no come-back from retirement, I suppose?**

EK: It does happen. There is this one girl, from Bulgaria. She competed, gave birth and then again bore out on the carpet. She is very thin!

**R-Sport: But how much effort does it require?**

EK: When you have a team, a lot is possible. She and I are very fortunate. At the beginning I had some great coaches to whom I am thankful all the time. Then, there were a personal trainer, the head trainer, and friends and family who are always nearby, plus my beloved person. In life, uneasy matters often happen, but with a team all are avoidable, and I give thanks for this!