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So says the current best woman swimmer in the Czech Republic and a 1st year student of the Charles University Faculty of Physical Education and Sport. Simona Baumrtová will not encounter any sea creatures in the chlorinated water of competition swimming pools, but given the speed in which she zooms through the masses of water, she might easily outswim them. In any case, she is one of the very best women swimmers in her category, both in Europe and in the world.

Looking at your training plan, it seems that the less you have time, the more you manage to do. Do you have any advice for those who have a lot of time, but still have troubles getting things done?

I don't have any kind of advice, everybody should organize their time to suit their needs. I don't like to plan, but lately, I haven't had a choice. On a usual day, I go swimming in the morning, then I go to school, then I swim in the afternoon and in the evening I try to study, but I usually don't get much done, because I'm not the kind of person who is able to study into late hours.



You started your sports career in gymnastics. Why did you end up settling for swimming and why did you choose backstroke specifically? What is easy or difficult about different styles?

I quit gymnastics mostly because I suffered from spondylolisthesis (back condition) and also because I was in the age when one should decide for one discipline – the one he or she has best results at – so I decided for swimming. Backstroke wasn't a difficult choice, I've been good at it since I was a kid. That might have been the reason why I stuck with it and why I still enjoy it. Backstroke might be easier for me as I have asthma and backstroke allows you to breathe more and more often than other styles. But I'm not prejudiced against other disciplines – throughout the year, I try to compete in all styles and distances in various competitions.

What attracts young people to swimming in the age of the Internet and general physical comfort, especially when there are sports that provide more funding and income, such as tennis?

My dad used to play tennis when he was younger, but I've been attracted to water since I was a small child. I'm interested in swimming from the point of view of various methods of "improvements", too – aerodynamics, technical shortcomings...

You're right to say that one won't earn much by swimming, but I'm not in it for money. I swim because I enjoy it. And why not prefer browsing the Internet? I'm an athlete in body and spirit. The most terrible thing for me to happen is to be sick – then I'm going insane, because being at home bores me. I love sport in general, not only swimming, and so I try spend all my leisure time doing sports.

What kind of swimsuit do you wear? Are there any regulations at top international competitions on swimsuit material? Can a certain kind of material slow down the swimmer or make her faster? Is it possible to wear full-body swimsuit?

Since January 2010, both material and shape of the swimsuit have been prescribed. Everybody has to swim in knee-length textile swimsuit. My favorite swimsuit is by Speedo, but I swim in an Arena swimsuit at bigger competitions, such as European and world championships, because of a sponsorship deal with the Czech Swimming Federation. In 2009, polyurethane swimsuit made of a material similar to neoprene was introduced. It would buoy you up in the water, you would swim faster under water – it was simply better. But it was cancelled after a year, because of the number of records broken. There were about 150 world records broken in 2009.

How big a portion of your training plan is taken up by relaxation? How to improve the performance of a top athlete? By training more, or by more efficient relaxation?

I have to admit I don't do that much relaxation. I don't have much time for it and I just don't find it fun :-). Sometimes I get a massage, but that's about it. It depends on personal preferences. On the one hand, there are athletes who don't need to relax much, on the other hand, there are many others who have to rest completely for two weeks before an important race. As for what improves the performances, that's different for everybody, too. My dad and I are now trying to do aerobic training and improve arm strength, because I still have some shortcomings there.

Did competitive swimming change your attitude to water? Is it just the arena in which you try to beat your opponents or can you just enjoy it? When you go swimming in the summer, do you immediately start training?

In the summer, I go swimming to focus on the aerobic part. Competitions are great, I enjoy them immensely. My best memories are from the 2009 World Championship in Rome and the 2010 European Championship in Eindhoven, at which all of us on the Czech team created an awesome atmosphere, we supported each other. It was amazing, and on top of that, I won a medal there. Lately, my opponents from other countries have started to recognize me and sometimes they say hello. I'm very flattered :-)

Your primary track is 50 m. Do you sometimes think about swimming long distance or even crossing the English Channel?

In fact, my main discipline is 200 m backstroke, sometimes 50 m backstroke, unfortunately, I'm still not as good on the 100 m track. I wouldn't go for crossing the Channel, mainly because I am afraid of swimming in the sea. Even on an air mattress, I'm afraid of swimming towards the buoys – I have to swim along the shore.

This a rather personal question – does your back tend to hurt after swimming? Is swimming such a great treatment for back pains, like some doctors say?

I tend to suffer from some back pain sometimes due to my chronic back condition. But the popular idea that too much sport can ruin your body holds for swimming as well. Many swimmers have shoulder and knee joint problems. Again, it's different for each swimmer, but a reasonable amount of swimming is undoubtedly good for one's health.

What results at the World Championship in Shanghai and the European Championship in Szczecin, at which you're going to compete, would you consider a real success?

It would be a great success to get into the finals at the World Championship. And it would be amazing to win another medal at the European Championship. But in the summer, my priority will be to finish my first year in school and then we'll see. But I surely don't want to miss out on swimming.



(Marie Kohoutová)
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