



The Bogdanovich brothers won silver Olympic medal

‘Silver’ given not just for fun

An addition has been made to our medal box: a silver to join two gold, two silver and four bronze awards. The Bogdanovich brothers — Alexander and Andrey — won their medal in a dramatic canoe race. We congratulate them and say, ‘Bravo!’

It is hard to imagine how much water they ground with their oars to claim victory. The brothers needed only a little more speed in order to repeat their Beijing success and take Olympic ‘gold’, which would look well on their broad chests. However, silver required much effort, so is extremely valuable.

Nikolay Banko, who is responsible for training the national canoe team, has called the brothers ‘the pride of nation’ — absolutely correctly! For many years, they have been steadfastly in perfect shape, and have been the leading favourites at two Olympics; we can say with confidence, they deserved their bread.

Mr. Banko shared his joy with reporters, saying, “If we had had one more training micro-cycle, then the brothers would have been even more prepared. We couldn’t start training heavily any earlier due to illness but I believed in the brothers. Sending them

to the race, I said, ‘Show your character; show what you’re made of!’” They certainly did! The men represent Belarusian rowing.

Sasha is the elder, being 30, while Andrey is 25. They look alike but their characters are quite different. Meanwhile, Sasha likes hunting and Andrey enjoys fishing. Sasha is more thoughtful and serious while his younger brother shows his emotions more readily. However this doesn’t prevent them from working as a single explosive mechanism in the canoe.

It’s been a long, hard journey to their second Olympic medal. At last year’s World Championship, which counted towards selection for this year’s Olympic Games, they finished a modest fifth, which made many discount their chances. In honesty, the brothers have usually done well at international events: the Bogdanovichs without a medal is rather like winter without snow or New Year without a

Christmas tree. Sasha admits, “There were many reasons for failure, such as the wind blowing up. Just imagine: nine tracks and a strong crosswind reflecting from the billboards turning it into a tail wind for the first four teams. It’s help from God! Plus it was very hot. These factors are subjective but, more importantly, we were not in the best shape. We peaked a week earlier, which led us to relax too much. What can we say? You live and learn! We corrected past mistakes for the Olympics.”

The main team coach, Vladimir Shantarovich, thinks the brothers missed out on gold simply because of their age, since the victorious Germans were younger. This factor helped the brothers beat another, older German team in Beijing, despite their experience. The new Olympic champions are really young: Peter Kretschmer is only 20, while Kurt Kuschela is 24. These healthy bucks performed well

over the distance; if it had been a dozen metres longer, they might have conceded to the Belarusian team.

Mr. Shantarovich loves and respects the brothers, noting, “They are talented and hardworking sportsmen. However, the bar should be raised even higher. If you are Olympic Champion, you need to live up to that, always and in everything. Your potential should continue to improve, through constant training to raise efficiency. Then, success will come. You need to be passionate!”

Of course, athletes’ psychological state is as important as their physical fitness and pressure on the brothers has been huge, with everyone awaiting top results. Few manage to cope with such public pressure. Sasha notes openly, “To tell the truth, it’s hard to hear ‘you must’ all the time; it’s a psychological load that only adds to your nervousness. It’s not good, always wondering what people will say or

think. Our coach is right that being Olympic Champion brings a lot of responsibility. We don’t have the right to make mistakes now...”

The answer is to train hard, which they did it. Andrey spoke first to journalists after the medal ceremony (as Sasha was detained by volunteers asking him some standard questions). He explained, “We tried to go the distance evenly from beginning to end, to avoid failure. In the semifinal, we similarly held our pace at 60 strokes per minute. However, the pace turned out to be 57, which distressed us a little. We sped up towards the finish but couldn’t catch those leading. In the final, the strongest took part, with the Germans clearly being our main rivals. They showed their strength at the end but we were also competing against the Russians, Azerbaijanis and Romanians, who have won World Championships several times. They were worthy opponents.”

Kayak-paddling brings bronze medals

By Sergey Kanashits

Four wonderful girls — Marina Poltoran, Olga Khudenko, Nadezhda Popok and Irina Pomelova — come third in women’s K4 500m on Eton Rowing Canal

Touchingly, Olga Khudenko sent her love to her coaches and parents on being interviewed after her bronze victory. Crying from happiness, her emotions welled up. The women’s team performed brilliantly, and were so sincere and modest that I even wanted to cry with them. This is their first victory yet such an important and significant one; they held their long-awaited medals in their hands, as if they were a small piece of happiness...

Our beauties rowed heroically, especially taking into account that their kayak team was formed only recently and all are very young; a

major future must lie ahead. Their captain, Marina Poltoran, answered questions from Eurosport TV Channel, while Olga Khudenko took the reins in the mixed zone, crying unashamedly in happiness. She admitted, “We’ve come a long way. We did our best and fought until the very end but never expected to win a medal. We perhaps achieved the impossible, which has delighted us. We’re grateful to our former and current coaches and to all those who assisted us in achieving this success. Thank you to everyone who supported us.”

Ms. Poltoran then flew over, as if on wings, softly floating above the earth, smiling and showing her medal: her first and therefore most important. She told us, “Everything depended on us; we made no concessions to the weather or wind as expert rowers had advised us that the weather can change in



Belarusian crew of the kayak-quad won bronze medal

moments. We rowed our hardest. It has been our first Olympiad, so was very difficult psychologically, as we’re so young. We’re grateful to our psychologist, Yulia Kugaeva, who prepared us perfectly for victory. Thank you to everyone! This is

our first major award but we’ll continue to earn smaller medals while proving to the whole world that Belarus is number one!”

The women row as a single entity, which is clearly part of their success. They are four individuals but

put aside all disputes while training. They come from across the country, with only Pomelova hailing from Minsk; the others live in villages. This good ‘selection’ has obviously worked well. The popular belief that Belarus could never have a women’s kayak and canoe team has proven ridiculous, as coach Gennady Galitsky completely agrees. He asserts, “Besides anything else, the coaches have done a good job in keeping the girls rowing. In honesty, few women view this as a female sport, since you need physical strength, training with bar-bells, and spend a lot of time in the cold and damp. I’ve spent a long time trying to find a path to success, experimenting with various methods. Finally, I’ve found the answer. I used to work solely with men and, I must say, it was easier. Women require a different approach but we’ve managed to achieve success.”