

WATER POLO MEN



Peter BIROS (HUN)
19.60%



Aleksandar SAPIĆ (SRB)
15.70%



Igor HINIC (CRO)
5.90%

The best of the decade:
Tamas KASAS (HUN)
43.10%

Also voted for:
Tony Azevedo (USA)
Tibor Benedek (HUN)
Alessandro Calcaterra (ITA)
Revaz Tchomakidze (RUS)
Alexander Tchigir (GER)

RESULTS, MEDALS

Three-time Olympic Champion, World Champion, twice winner of the World Cup and the World League, European Champion. At club level, in European Cup competitions, he won all three trophies (Champions League – later Euroleague –, Cupwinners' Cup, LEN Trophy). And what makes the whole story unique is that he also has all gold medals from age-group events: he was junior World Champion, junior European Champion and youth European Champion. It has taken a few lines to list his honours – and those were just the gold medals.



Winning everything

Genetically determined – Tamas Kasas did not have too many options when it came to which sport he should choose as a kid. His father, Zoltan was a member of the Olympic silver medallist (1972) and World Champion (1973) Hungarian national teams and it was obvious that he should take his young son to the pool.

What was not obvious was that Tamas – interestingly enough, a right hander, while his dad shot with his left – would become one of the greatest player of all time, the very first one in the history of the sport to collect each and every major title on offer in the international scene.

However, sometimes he likes to play with thoughts of what he could have achieved in tennis as he amazed even a professional coach when he took up practicing the game recently. The coach told him that Tamas must be a liar since he stated that he had never been taught to play tennis, but in fact he had shots and serving motions in his hand that it takes others years to learn.

Which takes us back to genes. What makes Kasas a cut above the rest is his unique skill – for every kind of ball game. We saw him burying three pointers in a row when the team played basketball at a training camp. And also made his mark during a beach volleyball match with the mates.

The playing skills, the gentle touch is paired with great physical abilities: his body – 201 cm tall – is shaped for moving in the water – a couple of years before he would have reached the final of the nationals with ease in 50 and 100m free. And his mental strength is also legendary: he is never afraid of taking responsibility – and the shot. His pulse is low enough not to lose his head in the heat of the moment; and that comes with

Photo: REUTERS – LASZLO BALOGH

a great assist ability, as setting up a goal means the same value for him as scoring. As of now, he might make the journey to London 2012: that would be his fifth appearance at the Olympic Games. To reach this goal he opted to skip the summer of 2009 and will also rest from July to September this year. He has some good reasons to do so: for almost

one and a half decades, every opponent has made it a priority of their defensive tactics to prevent Kasas from scoring. By any means. And since water polo is not table tennis, the weapons are various: Kasas sometimes felt he was simply being torn apart. He needs more and more time to rebuild himself, to have his muscles ready for play. Still, he wants to

games of Kasas' Italian club), Fabrizio Faella, called him the Del Piero of water polo. Kasas asked him to change this to "the Zidane of water polo". As he explained later: "It is not only scoring that matters – it's about playing." ■

By Gergely CSURKA
Press Officer of the Hungarian
Swimming Association

Stop him by any means... Kasas won everything on the international scene, but it has never been easy



play. Or to be more precise; to PLAY. Not an easy task in today's game. And he wants to take to the water only when he feels he is able to perform at peak.

Once, the commentator of RAI (the Italian television, usually broadcasting the