

World-class swimming coaches share experience at 1st FINA Gold Medal clinic

Sarah Chiarello, FINA Communications Department

October 29, 2012 MOSCOW - The 1st FINA Gold Medal Swimming Coaches Clinic opened in Moscow, Russia with 200 swimming coaches representing more than a hundred National Federations. For two days, each top-level coach to present at the clinic will speak about his own experience and the specific coaching of an Olympic champion from the 2012 London Olympic Games. Today, following FINA President Dr. Julio C. Maglione's official opening and welcome message, six coaches took up the stage to share their personal vision of coaching, training philosophy but also how to build a trustworthy relationship between a coach and a swimmer, the ups and downs of coaching and more practically, the training cycles, daily and weekly schedules, and types of swimming sessions: Romain Barnier from France, Graham Hill from South Africa, Matthew Brown from Australia, Todd Schmitz from the USA and Chinese coaches Haitao Liu and Guoyi Xu.

Some have coached a swimmer for more than ten years. All admit it takes a lot of hard work and dedication but they also emphasised how much trust and faith a coach must have in his athlete in order to succeed.

Romain Barnier, who coaches Florent Manaudou, Olympic gold medallist in the men's 50m freestyle, talked about how in two years, he worked with the 21-year-old on strength and speed to reach Olympic glory.

On this new FINA event designed for swimming coaches, Barnier commented: "I think it's an excellent idea, it is something that was missing to FINA. First, it offers coaches who would like to improve an extraordinary opportunity to learn from coaches, who had the good luck to have athletes who won, and to share their experience. Secondly, I think it is an extraordinary opportunity for me as well to spend two days with these coaches and exchange experience. For a 'première', it is very good and well organised. It was a pleasure today to listen to the other speakers and very rewarding to have such renowned coaches."

Graham Hill, coach of Chad Le Clos, told a story of faith and destiny when recalling the performances of the Olympic champion in the men's 200m butterfly; about his swimmer's ultimate goal to beat legendary Michael Phelps, a feat the young South African achieved in London on the eve of the great American's retirement.

Asked whether such event is useful, even for top-level coaches like him, Hill said: "Absolutely, I think this is great; as a coach, you always learn something from somebody." And on this opportunity for coaches to meet outside competition, he added: "It's a different atmosphere, you don't have to worry about athletes, and a good opportunity to communicate between coaches."



American Todd Schmitz on coaching Missy Franklin

Todd Schmitz, who coached 17-year-old Missy Franklin to an incredible four gold medals and a bronze at the 2012 London Olympics, started his talk with the following declaration: “I truly believe I have the best job in the world!” He gave an inspirational speech to the hundreds of coaches enthusiastically listening while sharing his passion for coaching and own experience.

Schmitz also praised FINA’s endeavour to improve knowledge sharing between coaches from all countries: “I think it’s awesome; it’s not just for me but it’s also good for them to hear that there is not just one way to do it, and you always have to evolve. So without a doubt I think this is a great thing that FINA is doing.”

He then concluded: “The best thing about this is; I try to have messages that no matter what level you are coaching, but if you are in this room, you’ll be able to take something out of here and implement it in tomorrow’s practice.”

The FINA Gold Medal Swimming Coaches Clinic goes on tomorrow while the 2nd FINA World Aquatics Convention, which features presentations, workshops, partners' exhibition and social events, will take place for the next three days.
