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Day in the Life: David Verraszto

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Most athletes do four things to succeed at a world-class level: sleep, eat, train, and repeat.

As recently as 13 months ago, however, two-time Olympian David Verraszto had no fixed schedule.

The Hungarian swimmer had just captured his second consecutive silver medal in 400 IM at the World Championships in Budapest. His younger sister, Evelyn, a four-time Olympian, competed there, too. Their father, Zoltan, had been a 1975 World champion and a two-time Olympic medallist. Their aunt Gabriella was a World champion and Olympian as well.

David had been swimming all his life but he knew, even after his 2012 Olympic debut, that something had to change.

"I have to relax so I don't think 24 hours about swimming, swimming, swimming every day," he said. "After Rio, I was even more sure I had to change something."

Yet he waited until 2017 to liberate himself from the pool.

When he did, he gained 12 kilograms in two months and didn't return to water until October 2017.

"Every night, I visited the clubs," he said. "I arrived home at 5:00 [a.m.]. I was sleeping until 2:00. And after that, I started again: go to the city with my friends and do something. One week, we'd go out four or five times. The nightlife in Hungary is very good.

"It's like freedom here in Budapest! Really, you can feel it," he said.

Back then, an "early" day entailed waking up at 8:00 and driving 30 km west to the vineyards of Etyek to join a 20+ member team to compete in a goulash-cooking contest.

"My job was to search for Palinka [fruit brandy] and cut vegetables," he recalled.

His team didn't win any goulash awards but he stayed for the all-day picnic, then made a bee-line to Otkert, his favourite night club, from 11:00 p.m. until 4 a.m.

On other days, he stayed busy wakeboarding, go-karting, and opening a coffee shop called Kaffeine in the heart of the city which became a popular university hangout.



Verraszto in his coffee shop - Kaffeine - with his sister and a friend

"I like that life," he said, "but it was too much after two months."

So he re-entered World Cup competition.

The transition, he said, "*wasn't that bad. I was fresh.*"

He still had a year to prepare for the 2018 European Championships in Glasgow and pare down his frame from 83kg to 75kg.

"A lot of people didn't expect much in Glasgow, but I knew I was in good shape," he said.

So on August 9th, two weeks before his 30th birthday, Verraszto won his third consecutive European title in the 400 IM.

"*I was quite happy,*" he recalled at Duna Arena on Wednesday, where he will compete in this week's FINA Swimming

World Cup.

Now, as he vies for more World Cup points and looks ahead to the 2019 World Championship and 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Verraszto still sees friends and works at his coffee shop - making tulips and rosettes to top off customers' 2-Euro cappuccinos - but he has also re-incorporated the structure of his old routine.

That means he's up at 5:30 a.m., drives to the pool in Ferenc City where he trains with three men, four women, and their Hungarian coach Akos Molnar, a 2012 Olympic breaststroker. The dryland gym session lasts from 6:00 to 7:30 four days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday), followed by six or seven kilometres of swimming.

At 10:00, Verraszto shifts into business mode and arrives at his coffee shop, Kaffeine in Kalvin Square, on the Pest side of Budapest.

By then, barristas have already opened the shop (which displays no evidence of his swimming life).

"Depending on how much energy I have, I stay sometimes until 2:00," he said. Then he returns home to make a simple

meal - although when Verraszto was 21, he attended culinary school.

After a 90-minute nap, he's back at the pool from 5:00 to 7:00 for a harder, swimming-only session which is closer to race pace.

Some days, after that, he returns to Kaffeine to close the shop. If not, then he's at the movies, theatre, or seeing friends, and is home by 10:00. Back in the day, that would be bedtime, but now he turns of the lights at 11:00 - fulfilled, satisfied, and rejuvenated.
