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YOG BA 2018: Inspiring and safeguarding Aquatics' talents

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Two major swimming stars were happy to share their experiences at the IF Focus Day, organised in the Athletes' Village at the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires (ARG). Thiago Pereira, from Brazil, and Mireia Belmonte, from Spain, were invited to join the initiative, devoted, this Friday, to Aquatics. Three presentations were made to the athletes, coaches and officials present in the assistance: "Safeguarding in Social Media", "Improvement of your Sport performance", and "FINA Activities and Development Programme".

On the first theme, Susan Greinig, IOC Medical Programs Senior Manager and Kirsty Burrows, IOC Advisor, talked about the challenges of using social media. To the audience, they spoke about the dangers of these online platforms, namely in terms of cyber harassment and abuse. They left five valuable advices to the attendees: "Think twice before you post; Deleted content still has a footprint; Consider what information you want to be public; Don't engage; Change your password, frequently".

In a debate moderated by FINA Vice-President Dale Neuburger, the two star athletes were asked to provide their impressions on this matter. "It is important to publish something of your daily life, but with caution. There is always people in favour or against what you do, but that's life and we have to cope with that", stated Belmonte. "The evolution in this matter has been amazing and you should be really aware of what you are publishing. I try to be reserved on my private life", added Thiago Pereira.



FINA Bureau Member Dr Margo Mountjoy then presented another important topic related with the performances' improvement of Aquatics' athletes. She focused her lecture on three main topics: nutrition, injury prevention and clean sport. "All these three aspects are very important. Without a positive energy intake, your performance will necessarily be affected. Fuelling your body correctly, will, on the other hand, bring positive results. This is also valid in terms of preparation and injury prevention. Finally, be aware of the WADA code and of the list of prohibited substances", recalled Dr Mountjoy.

Thiago Pereira and Mireia Belmonte also gave their personal view on these topics. "If you think on your body like a good car, you have to give it a good fuel. You definitely need to eat well. On injuries, we know that our shoulders are very solicited. So, be careful. As for doping, please never forget that the ultimate responsibility for what is found in our body is ours. In my days, I was not taking nothing without consulting my doctor", confessed Pereira, now retired from the sport, after a career that included one Olympic silver, seven podium presences at the FINA World Championships (long and short course) and a record of 23 medals at the Pan-American Games.

"Before the 2015 Worlds in Kazan, I also had a shoulders' problem and I had to skip the competition. I perhaps overlooked the problem, which was a mistake. Another very important thing is to sleep well. Some weeks before you compete, you should sleep really well. You will then use these additional sleeping hours in your favour", Belmonte admitted.

Asked about the specific strategies before their races, both Pereira and Belmonte shared their secrets. "Don't forget to always dream. You know, for a long time, I was an eternal 'fourth'. Many journalists asked me if I didn't regret to have born in a wrong time, with so many giants of the pool swimming at the same time. My answer was always the same: this was a great opportunity. Take Michael Phelps, Ryan Lochte and I. We competed together in four consecutive finals (the 200m IM) at the Olympics, which is quite amazing. I was very lucky to compete with these guys! So, even if you don't get the medal at your first try, continue to persevere. I only got mine at the third time (silver in the 400m IM at the London Olympics)", the Brazilian star considered.

Mireia Belmonte, the first Spanish swimmer to earn an Olympic gold in swimming (200m fly in Rio 2016, plus three other medals and 16 podium presences at World Championships), underlined the importance of the Youth Olympic Games. "It's a good training to see how you can manage the elite Olympic Games. You have plenty of distractions here, so don't get distracted. On my routine before the competition, I like to be calm in the morning, to arrive a couple of hours before. Then, I do intense dryland training, 2400m in the pool, I then put on the swimsuit (it takes me a lot of time to wear it!) and then I put on some music to be relaxed". Next to her, Pereira smiled: "Yes, music is good. Remember: if you have too much stress, it will consume a lot of energy. We all have our 'point', our 'on' and 'off'. Use it at your advantage".

The IF Focus Day devoted to Aquatics then concluded with a short presentation from Mr Neuburger on the FINA Development Programme. "It will bring you a lot of opportunities. The Scholarship project is working very well, and two medallists at these Games (Tatiana Salcutan, from Moldova, and Denis Petrashov, from Kyrgyzstan), were issued from this

Scholarship programme”.

A video with several swimmers involved in the programme, talking about how this initiative improved their performances, was the perfect way to conclude and inspire the athletes that are competing at the Youth Olympic Games.
