

Andre Gueisbuhler: "Azerbaijan is helping the world gymnastics"

□ May 4 - 11:59 pm □ By Vestnik Kavkaza

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Yesterday President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, President of the Azerbaijan Gymnastics Federation Mehriban Aliyeva, President of the International Federation of Gymnastics (FIG) Morinari Watanabe and Secretary General of FIG André Gueisbuhler have discussed the results of the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Cup in Baku. On the eve of meeting of the FIG Executive Committee, Andre Gueisbuhler discussed the future of gymnastics in an interview with Vestnik Kavkaza.

- How do you assess the development of gymnastics in Azerbaijan?

- I have been in Baku for the very first time in 2003. This is when Azerbaijan hosted its very first World Cup. In the year 2000 we have signed World Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics to Baku. At the time we said: you must organize three World Cups and then you can do World Championships. I was lucky to be in your country in 2003, 2004 and 2005. I must say, what I see, the development in your country is unbelievable. No other country

could make such a big progress in such a short time. I would to compliment this country, the President Ilham Aliyev, the fist lady Mehriban Aliyeva, and of course to the people who work in the Azerbaijib Gymnastics Federation. This is why we are very, very happy to be here this year.

- What problems will be discussed during the Executive Committee council?

- Of course, the council is not as attractive as European Games or competitions that we are organizing in Baku. Because we are organizing three World Cup competitions, very important competitions in rhythmic gymnastics, artistic gymnastics and trampoline. But for us this council is very important. The council is a meeting we have every year, and its like a small general assembly. The council consists of members of the Executive Committee and 40 others persons from all countries. In total about 60 persons. The main taks of this council is to approve the changes from the past year and to approve the budget for the current year. The council also decides on every question, which has to do with technical regulations. The council also assigns events. So it assigns the next council, it assigns World Championships. Any major events are assigned by the council. Finances, technical regulations, assignments of major events and elections of the members of the disciplinary commission. Those are the four main points of our work. Well be here for a week.

- How much is the FIG interested in modernization of gymnastics?

- Remember, we have new president. He began 1 of January this year, Morinari Watanabe. Its clear that this new president brought new Executive Committe, new team members. They all have a vision for the FIG, they all have a strategy, they want to change things, they want to modernize things, which is good and which is important. They are full of ideas of what they want to change. But its not easy to change everything. We have rules, most of them are valid for one Olympic cycle, others can be changes every year. So here in Baku the Executive Committee is planning on a long term basis. It plans technical changes, which we will do in the council next year, or structure changes, which we will do at the council of 2018, which will give the FIG a new structure till 2021. So we have many interesting long term discussion and decisions, which are going to be developed over this year.

One of the things president Watanabe wants to do is to have simpler code of points, simpler rules. In football a goal is a goal, people understan the rules, its easy. Gymnastics is a beautiful sport, people love to see it, but very often they dont understand it. So what we need is better sport presentation, which the people and the media would understand. Our president is also working very strongly on absolutely new electronic judgment system. We have been in Tokyo, we have seen Fujitsu company, which has developed a system, which films competitors and then the program automatically gives the difficulty score. We can never replace the judges, but many scores will be given by a computer program, which makes 3D pictures, recognizes the difficulty of elements and gives a score. If these technologies, which are progressing so fast, can recognize the elements, then it can obviously recognize if

this element is done well or not. So this is another innovation president Watanabe is really pushing.

- What is Azerbaijans contribution to the world gymnastics?

- In the beginning we came and helped Azerbaijan, we taught them how to organize the competitions, helped with coaches. Today its like the investments, youre getting money back. Azerbaijan helps the world scenery. They organize all these beautiful events at very professional level. People love to come to Baku because it has excellent competition hall, conditions are great here and I dont have to tell you about hospitality. Everybody love to come to Azerbaijan. FIG is very happy when Azerbaijan makes a bid to organize World Cup. We are very grateful for that, because today we have many countries that would like to organize competitions, but they dont have the possibility. Either technically, financially or they just dont have the knowledge. Azerbaijan has all of it. AGF uses its experience to help the international community.

- At the end of this year there will be elections to the European Union of Gymnastics (UEG) and Farid Gaibov will be a candidate for this post. How do you assess his chances?

- As secretary general of the FIG I should not give and I wont give any comments. I have to be neutral. International federation cant interfere in the elections to the continental union. Mister Gaibov is a very good friend of my, I think he is very competent. Should he be elected, I think he will be a very good president. Other than that, I cannot tell you anything.

- There are talks about turning parkour into another gymnastic discipline. What does the FIG think about it?

- President Watanabe wants to broaden the base of gymnastics, especially to the youth. Parkour is definitely very interesting. If you study the history of parkour and obstacle races, then you will see that it wasnt invented five or ten years ago. It has a long history in gymnastics. When gymnastics began its history at the very first Olympic Games and until 1932, you will still find apparatus being used as obstacles. Gymnastics was physical education at the base. You will find in the history, that gymnastics was used also for the instruction of the soldiers. They learned how to climb walls, how deal with obstacles. So this is parkour is at the roots of gymnastics. Today it became very popular. You can see it on television, as an urban competition. What we are looking at in gymnastics are mainly two competition formats: just an obstacle course and again, an obstacle course, which we will call free style, they will do all kind of difficult elements. But you wont see something like you see today on TV or when kids are doing it on the streets. At the Executive Committee meeting in February we have decided, that we want to develop this activity as a discipline of the FIG. Of course, we will not reinvent the wheel. We are working very closely very closely with the founders of parkour. There are many groups around the world who do parkour, so we will invite all of them, we will tell them what we want to do, and we will invite them to cooperate with the FIG in order to develop this discipline into a sport. At the moment they are not organized. Their basic spirit is to be free, not to be organized. Yet they want to have competitions. But if they want to do competitions, obviously they need minimum rules and environment to make attractive competitions. Im sure the FIG is the international federation most qualified to further develop parkour.

- How can gymnastics develop successfully?

- It depends on how gymnastics is built in the society of a country. I give you an example of Germany or Switzerland. In Switzerland were talking about a population of 7 million people. Members of the Swiss Gymnastics Federation is more that half a million. You have a gymnastics club in every single village. People do gymnastics as little children, then they grow, some leave for other sports, some stay in gymnastics, and that continues till the old age. So for them gymnastics is in the traditions. But you have other countries like China, Russia and Azerbaijan, probably, where in the former system of the Soviet Union you had either cities or big farms, which had a club. But its not that you had clubs everywhere. And when the Soviet Union split and the financing of sport reduced, they had big problems to maintain gymnastics. And the same thing happened to Azerbaijan. If you see what its doing today to attract young people to the clubs, or the investments its government makes, or wise policy of its president or the first lady, you see that kids want to go to the clubs, and not only gymnastics. But think back to 1991-1993, when Azerbaijan just became independent. You can see what the situation was in the country at that time and how it is today. In todays society young kids have so many opportunities, theyre so much into the gaming rather than doing sport. I think its a problem of the whole society. When you have a good government policy and when you have a strong national federation that manages to motivate the kids to do sport they are growing. And those that do not manage to do that, they either stay the same or they reduce, because kids do other things today.

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Morinari Watanabe

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Leyla Aliyeva visits school for children with disabilities

□ May 5 - 9:40 am

Vice-President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation Leyla Aliyeva visited the special school for children with disabilities. Leyla Aliyeva met with children and viewed conditions at the school. She was told ...



Azerbaijan announces non-working days for June

□ May 5 - 9:20 am

Azerbaijan will mark two holidays in June – the Day of Armed forces and religious holiday of Ramadan. The Azerbaijani Cabinet of Ministers said that the Day of Armed Forces will be celebrated on June 26 and Ramadan Holiday ...



Nellie Kim: "Azerbaijan did unique things for gymnastics"

□ May 4 - 11:30 pm

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Azerbaijan Central Bank at least halves investment in US Treasuries



□ May 4 - 10:30 pm

The Central Bank of Azerbaijan has at least halved its investments in US Treasuries, and taking into account the devaluation of the Azerbaijani currency, the reduction of such investments was even larger, abc.az reports. According to ...



High-ranking military officials observe Azerbaijani-Turkish joint exercises

□ May 4 - 10:00 pm

Azerbaijani, Turkish, Georgian high-ranking military officials have observed Azerbaijani-Turkish joint exercises, News.az reports citing APA. According to the agreement reached during the meetings of the Ministers of Defense of ...



Yani Tanskanen: Azerbaijani gymnastic shows incredible results

□ May 4 - 8:01 pm

Azerbaijan gymnastics managed to achieve incredible results over the past ten years, said Yani Tanskanen, a member of the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Gymnastics (FIG), in an interview with Vestnik ...



EBRD pushes on with Azerbaijan gas loan after transparency rift

□ May 4 - 7:30 pm

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is pushing ahead with plans to lend \$500 million to Azerbaijan's Southern Gas Corridor project after the nation was suspended from an international oil-wealth transparency ...



Armenians fired Red Cross staff and workers in Agdam

□ May 4 - 6:30 pm

Residents of Agdam region were subjected to fire by Armenians during repair works at artesian wells, Report News Agency writes. According to the agency, incident happened in Ahmadagali village at front line near contact line of ...

Mehriban Aliyeva attends opening of newly renovated educational block of



ASUCA

□ May 4 - 5:00 pm

The newly renovated educational block of Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Arts (ASUCA) was held today. The opening was attended by the First Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mehriban Aliyeva. ...

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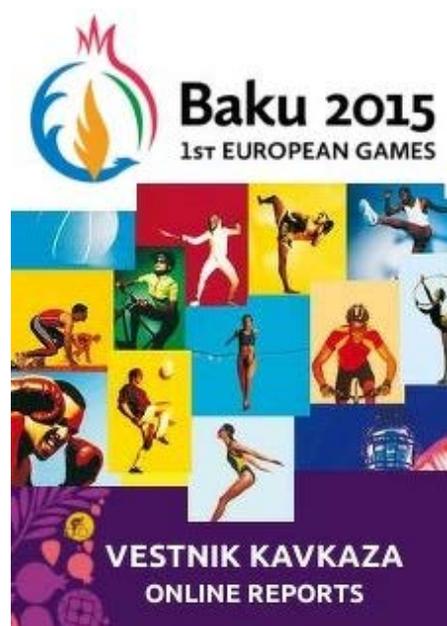
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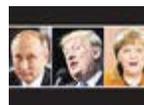
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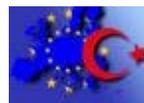
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