

Olympic Gold Medallists



YURI TITOV

Yuri Titov discovered gymnastics in Kiev at the age of eight. A member of the former USSR gymnastics team from 1956 to 1966, he took part in the Games of the Olympiad in Melbourne in 1956, in Rome in 1960 and in Tokyo in 1964 and participated in all the world championships from 1958 through 1966, winning a total of 21 individual medals and 11 golds, one of which was in the all-round team competition at the Games of

the XVI Olympiad in Melbourne. In 1976, he was the first Russian to become President of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG). A member of the Commission for the Olympic Movement since 1986, he also belongs to the IOC's recently created working group on women in sport. He was elected a member of the IOC as President of the FIG at the IOC Session in Budapest in June 1995.

OR : What is your earliest image of the Olympic Games?

The deepest impression I have from my participation in the Olympic Games is an admiration of the great variety of types of people living on our planet.

It is a great pleasure to meet people who speak different languages, to see the spectrum of skin colours, ways of walking and dancing, habits and hobbies, etc. And now I know that only through total respect for the variety in the world will there be harmony, peace and unity between its peoples. In variety lies stability.

OR : What is your best memory or favourite anecdote from the Olympic Games?

It is from Melbourne in 1956: it was early November, on the morning of my birthday. Unexpectedly, British gymnasts Nick Stuart and Frank Turner, and their coach Frank Edmonds,

came to offer me congratulations on my birthday. We became friends. Since that time, 40 years (!) have gone by, but we still maintain our friendship. Isn't that great?! Since then, we have collaborated on many international gymnastics projects. But what I most enjoyed was listening to Frank Edmonds singing arias from classical operas by Russian composers, or listening to him explain how certain

Yuri Titov on the pommel horse.

aspects of Shakespeare's poems are very modern. I have almost forgotten the emotion of fighting for the medals, but Olympic friendship will stay with me forever.

OR : In your opinion, what is the significance of the Centenary of the Olympic Games?

[It reflects] the wisdom of IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, who



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has skilfully led the ship of Olympism between the reefs of very complicated political and economical trends in modern society, to the triumph of absolute world-wide respect and recognition.

OR : What role do you feel sport and Olympism play in modern society?

Olympism is a great philosophy and form of teaching which can show people how to succeed in any field of human endeavour by respecting the "Rules of Game". Olympism is unique. It is a model and example for mankind of how to avoid antagonism between people who are fighting to gain

the best position. Olympism creates conditions for friendly negotiations on the basis of a common respect for all of the participants in the contest and for their common desire for personal achievement and social progress.

OR : What message would you like to give to today's youth?

Any social movement needs a constant source of energy in order to continue. If not, it could weaken or even disappear. Therefore, I appeal to every boy and girl to support the Olympic Movement with their personal participation, either morally or physically. When you become adults, never leave the Movement, but main-

tain Olympic ideals and support the Olympic Games as a sponsor, fan, or Sport for All activist.

