

Vaulting past the age barrier

VETERAN GYMNAST CHUSOVITINA SETS HER SIGHTS ON COMPETING IN SIXTH OLYMPIC GAMES

By LEI LEI
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — At the age of 35, most international gymnasts have moved on to far less strenuous things, but that is not the case for Oksana Chusovitina.

The veteran Uzbekistan gymnast is looking forward to the 2012 London Olympic Games.



GYMNASTICS China Daily on the sidelines of the 16th Guangzhou Asian Games, where she serves as a coach on her country's women's gymnastics team.

"I plan to represent Germany at the London Games in 2012," she said.

Chusovitina, who picked up the sport at the age of seven, competed for the Soviet Union up until 1993 and then Uzbekistan until 2006.

She won the gold medal in floor exercise at the 1991 World Championships and placed second on the vault. In 1992, Chusovitina, who competed at the Olympics with the Unified Team, shared the team gold medal and was seventh in the floor final.

During her time representing Uzbekistan, she was the best gymnast on the team, earning more than 70 medals in international competitions and qualifying for the Olympics three times.

However, in 2002 her son, Alisher, was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia and she had to move to Germany due to the greater financial support and facilities there.

She is not afraid to say she was competing to make money for her son's treatment.

Her efforts have been rewarded.

"My son is in good condition now. He doesn't need special medical care and only goes for regular physical check-ups," Chusovitina said. "He is a good boy and is now in grade four. He likes to play soccer."

Uzbekistan invited Chusovitina back into the fold as a coach for the Asian Games and she is proud of the women's team winning two bronze medals.

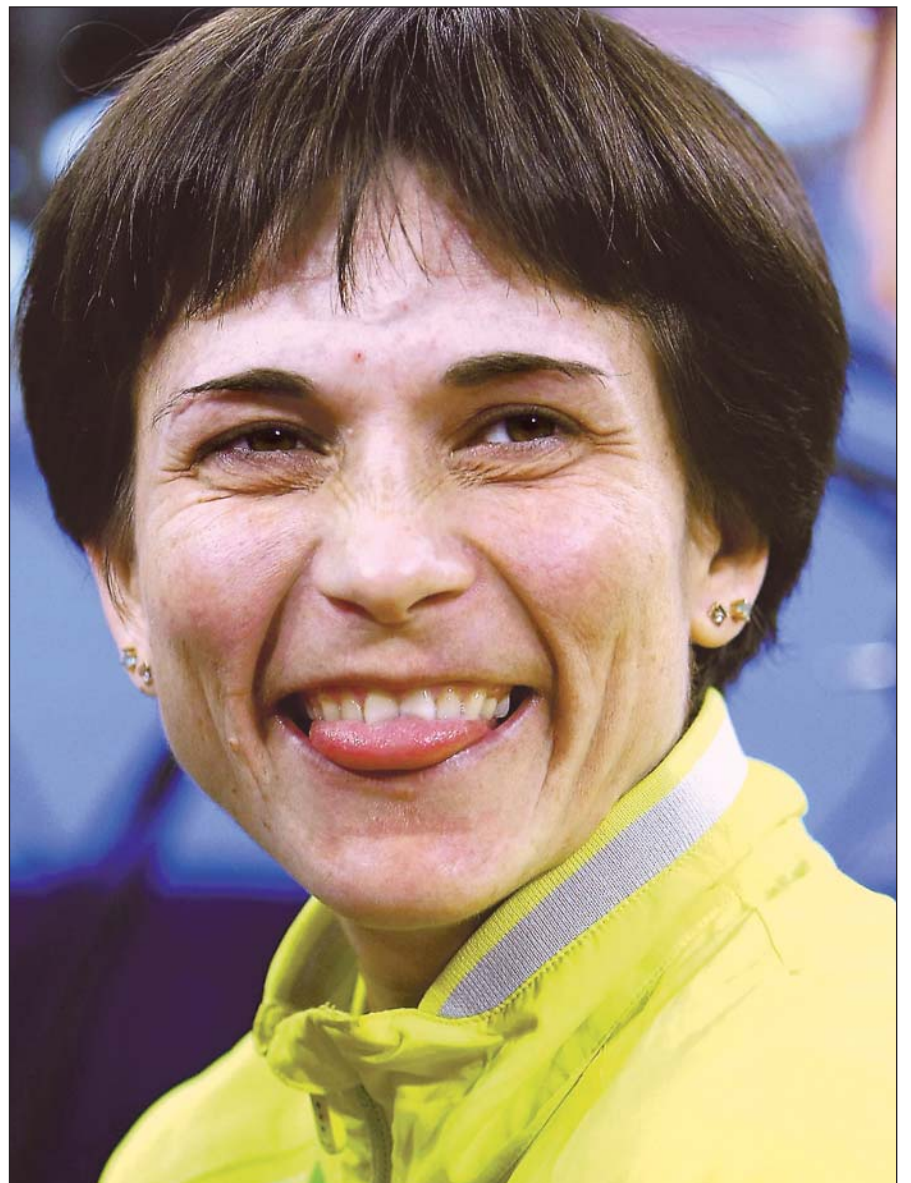
"It is very difficult and tiring to be a coach, but I think I've done a good job," she said. "I would like to thank the athletes. They had very good performances."

To maintain her form, Chusovitina trained by herself after the Uzbekistan gymnasts went through their paces. She still holds many records in the gymnastics world.

She is the only female gymnast to compete at five Olympic Games, and is one of only two to compete at the Olympics with three different national teams: the Unified Team in 1992, Uzbekistan in 1996, 2000 and 2004 and Germany in 2008.

She also holds the record for the most individual World Championships medals in a single event, with eight on the vault.

"I like this sport very much and I can't stop doing it," Chusovitina said.



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World and Olympic gymnastics champion Oksana Chusovitina, now working as a coach of Uzbekistan's national women's team at the Guangzhou Asian Games, says she is planning to represent Germany and compete at her sixth Olympic Games in 2012 London. Left: Oksana Chusovitina performs her routine on the balance beam at the 42nd Artistic Gymnastics World Championships last month.

David Bowie meets Disney at dressage

GUANGZHOU — It's where rock legend David Bowie meets Disney while Irving Berlin's rousing show tunes compete with traditional Irish jigs.

Suddenly it's all happening in dressage, the mystifying equestrian discipline where traditionally nothing much seems to happen at all.

Hong Kong's Jacqueline Siu opted for Bowie's 1980s hit China Girl as the background for her performance on her horse Rocco at the Asian Games Conghua venue on Wednesday.

"Rocco has listened to this song many times in Hong Kong and here. He wasn't

surprised when he heard it. The song makes him very excited," she claimed.

The Republic of Korea's Hwang Youngshik, on Laura, chose Irish folk music for his performance despite basing himself in Germany for most of the year, where he works alongside double Olympic gold medalist Martin Schaudt.

"It fits Laura quite well," said the 20-year-old. "The music is joyful and I like this music a lot."

It certainly paid off as Hwang took the individual gold title.

Fellow Korean Choi Jun-sang, on Ricco, decided to go through his routine to the

theme from Disney's smash-hit cartoon Kung Fu Panda.

However Choi, the 2006 gold medalist, is still to be convinced of its merits.

"As I am competing in China, I chose music that might be familiar. I don't like the music very much, but I like the composer."

Malaysia's Quzandria Fathil, whose brother Mohammed won a silver medal in the event, rode her horse Handsome to Sweet Symphony, a piece composed especially for her by Dutch musician Joost Peters.

"The horse has trained with the song four times. The music doesn't bother him," said the Malaysian, before explaining: "I don't

think he understands it. He just gets used to it."

Hong Kong's Gregory Haratune approached English composer Thomas Farnon to write his piece for Exhilaro specifically for the Asian Games.

"The songwriter saw the horse, asked me about my favorite music style and them composed. I love the song, it has power."

Japan's Mayumi Ino arranged the theme from the Japanese film Good Luck for his outing on Niels. "Niels dances well to the music. Whenever I listen to it, I feel like blue sky appears in front of my eyes," said Ino.

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