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EXTRAORDINARY FLASH EDITION

Silke Pan



I think I no longer need to introduce my dear friend, Silke Pan, so enjoy the news she gives us and read carefully. I will repeat it endlessly the inner strength of Silke is unique, follow and support her and we all humbly learn what it means to face the real difficulties of existence. And to the dancers I recommend reading the interview she gave me one year ago. She danced, she flew with her trapeze, she bent her body with her contortionist numbers, she used her arms doing the balancer. Today, her whole being is stretched out to overcome the impossible by demonstrating, being herself the example, that if we really want to reach our dreams or goals, we can, it depends only on us. Thank you Silke.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Silke, we met a year ago, on December 1st, 2018, on the occasion of "La Boîte à Culture" in my School of Dance in Lausanne. You were the guest of honor. You had several projects for this year 2019. Tell me which ones have been realised, I know there is a lot of interesting news. Tell me, my friend!*

Silke Pan: This year 2019 was for me the first year in which I was able to compete for the Swiss federation in handbike competitions as I obtained my naturalization in 2018. As in previous years, I raced as an athlete of the Active Sport Brescia (Italy) team because, in order to be able to enter the Swiss national framework, I had to prove myself first and achieve a number of good results in qualifying races.

The start of my sports season this year was moderately satisfying as I had three accidents in three consecutive races. In addition, I was suffering from a foot injury whose infection had spread and weakened my general condition. Nevertheless, I managed to make several podiums on the majority of the races, and it is especially in the second part of the sporting season that I was really successful by obtaining 6 consecutive victories.

The UCI regulations did not yet allow me to take part in the world championship this year because of my change of nationality. However, I was able to take part in a World Cup and it was my silver medal in this event that largely contributed to my nomination in the national framework, a news I received a few days ago. I confess that I was deeply moved when I opened the letter that said I was qualified, because I still did not dare to believe it. This was my great goal, the first and indispensable step to continue on my way towards qualification for the Tokyo Paralympic Games in 2020.

Among the large number of races I have to take part in next year, there will be 10 that will count as selection races. I will have to prove myself and stay strong during all these coming months, knowing that there are only two women's places for the whole of Swiss para-cycling. It's going to be a tough fight!

In parallel to the races, I've fulfilled a dream, that of covering Switzerland in paratriathlon mode, that means in handbike, racing wheelchair, swimming and Bellyak (a kind of recumbent kayak).

I got into paratriathlon 2 years ago by participating in popular triathlons for able-bodied people.

The thing that required the most investment and work for me was swimming, because when you have spastic paraplegia, as I have, your legs contract when you go into the water and they sink.

I had the chance to meet the former coach who took care of the athletes of the Swiss national swimming team for many years and who brought many swimmers to the Olympic Games, Anthony Ulrich, who, during 20 years of activity, was present at 3 Olympic Games. After seeing me on television, he called me and offered to help me improve my swimming technique. He taught me the best technique and allowed me to be up to speed on the day of the start of my challenge: 30 lake crossings, 75 km in the water and 1000 km on land in handbike and racing wheelchair.

We were a team of 5 persons with my husband who accompanied me on his recumbent bike, a driver with the van that transported all our equipment, a physiotherapist and an Italian filmmaker who had asked to follow us on our next challenge. Vincenzo Puccia has just released the film, that means "Dompter l'Impossible", which premiered at the Aigle cinema two weeks ago. The Italian version was presented in Brescia and Lugano when I met the Swiss team Insuperabili.

For this "Tour des Lacs", as I called it, we set off from Geneva, passed through the Jura, the Waldensian plateau, Swiss German, the Alps and finally Ticino, arriving in Lugano after 16 days of physical effort.

Through this challenge, I wanted to leave a message of encouragement to the associations Handi-Capable and Handicap International, of which I am godmother and member. I would like to demonstrate, through this kind of experience, that disability is not an end in itself, that we can continue to dream big and that the limits are more in our heads than in our bodies.

When we find ourselves in moments of doubt or discouragement, we simply have to take a first step, or a first turn of the wheel. That's how the movement is launched. Each day, a new small step, however small, will allow us to climb the ladder towards what yesterday we thought was still impossible!

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