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ALEXANDRE DESPATIE AND THE LONDON OLYMPIC GAMES – HIS LAST PERFORMANCE

The London Olympic Games, taking place from July 27 to August 12, will represent an important milestone in the life of Alexandre Despatie. This exceptional athlete, twice Olympic medalist and several times World Champion, has dominated his sport for more than a decade and he is determined to conclude his career at 27 years of age with an excellent performance at the 3-metre springboard event during his fourth Olympic Games.

After a painful 2011 season, that kept him out of competition because of tendonitis on his knee that needed time to heal as surgery was too risky, Alexandre came back strongly in 2012. First, he won the bronze medal on the 3-metre springboard at the FINA Diving World Cup in London on February 22. Next, Alexandre won two silver medals on the 3-metre springboard at the 2012 FINA Canada Cup Tin Bo Travel Grand Prix in May in Montreal: one individual and one in synchronized with Reuben Ross.

Unfortunately, on June 13, Alexandre suffered an injury during training before the Diving Grand Prix in Madrid, Spain, which left him out of competition for a few weeks. However, the Olympic Games are still on. Alexandre clearly said: “The Olympic dream is very much alive!”

Alexandre and the entire Canadian diving team have only one single priority: the Olympic Games.

Whatever his results at the London Olympic Games, Alexandre Despatie will have left a strong imprint on his sport. From the age of 13 and for almost 15 years, he has been a constant source of pride and inspiration for millions of young Canadians and their parents.

AN IMPRESSIVE TRACK RECORD

Asked to recall the key moments of his remarkable career, Alexandre says: “My career is full of big moments. But if I have to draw up a short list, three things come to mind:

my first participation at Games where I won my first Olympic medal Games in 2004 (the athlete’s career!) and Championships in 2005 in Montreal where I won two gold medals: 1-metre springboard and 3-metre springboard. For 24 hours, I was the undisputed champion at all three levels”.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGES AN ATHLETE MUST OVERCOME IN ORDER TO SUCCEED IN DIVING AND DO THEY DIFFER BECAUSE OF THE HEIGHT?

“The 10-metre platform offers challenges that differ from those associated with the two springboards because the platform is a rigid surface that is suited for young divers. Technically speaking, it’s easier but it’s also higher. We must first overcome our fear: the fear of hitting the platform while diving or the fear of making a bad entry into the water. And we must also learn to go up again after a poor dive. The springboard, however, presents significant technical difficulties that one needs to master in order to make successful dives. We must manage the stress of walking on a moving surface, which can play dirty tricks on us during competition”.

HOW CAN YOU PREPARE YOURSELF BOTH PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY DURING A COMPETITION?

“During each competition, we must focus on our own performance. We dive individually but we can’t ignore our competitors. Again, we need to manage stress and be confident that we can pull off a great performance”.

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO FOCUS ON THE 3-METRE SPRINGBOARD?

“For many years, I dove at all three levels. However, our sport has become so specialized that today’s divers are focusing on a single level at a very young age. In addition, if we split our time between the three levels, this leaves us with less time to spend on a specific level compared to our more specialized competitors. During competition, diving at all three levels can be a risky business, both in terms of results and injuries. After the 2005 World Cup, I decided to focus on the 3-metre springboard to remain among the best”.

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HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE LONDON OLYMPIC GAMES AT THIS STAGE OF YOUR CAREER?

“These will be my last Olympic Games. I’m going there to give the best performance of my career and also to enjoy myself. In synchronized diving, Reuben and I wish to perform very well on the 3-metre springboard”.

WHAT DRIVES YOU AFTER ALL THESE YEARS OF SUCCESS?

“First and foremost, a desire to exceed all expectations, to always do better and to overcome the incredible pressure that goes along with competition. Each result becomes a challenge in itself; during competition, we dive alone but we must take into account our own results and those of our competitors. The number one diver at each stage always dives last. He cannot ignore the pressure from the competitors who precede him”.

IN SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL SPORT, WHERE DOES THE TEAM FIT IN?

“The team is of paramount importance. We spend a lot of time together during training. The more success we have, the more confidence we have in our Canadian diving team. The success of each team member has a positive impact on all the others”.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN QUALITIES TO SUCCEED IN YOUR SPORT?

“Other than acrobatic abilities, an athlete has to work very hard for many years and learn to overcome obstacles, including fear, stress, injury and performance failure. One must learn courage and perseverance to reach the top”.

BEFORE THE LONDON GAMES, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS?

“Participate in the World Championships in February and take part in four or five competitions so as to be fully prepared for the Olympic Games”.

IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, YOU HAVE MET WITH LAVERY LAWYERS SEVERAL TIMES. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THESE CONTACTS AND DO YOU SEE COMMON ELEMENTS BETWEEN THEM AND YOUR CAREER AS AN ATHLETE?

“I had the opportunity of meeting many lawyers from Lavery and to take part in some events with them. During our conversations, I was always struck by their desire to excel daily and by their dedication in offering clients their very best performance.

What has also struck me is their passion for their work, which applies to both young and more experienced lawyers. In addition, I discovered the importance of teamwork where each individual lawyer develops a specific expertise or “chooses his own springboard”, so to speak, to become an expert in his practice area”.

At 27, as the London Olympic Games are growing near, Alexandre Despatie remains, more than ever, driven by a strong passion: going further, competing with the very best and exceeding all expectations.

For over three years, the Lavery law firm has been supporting Alexandre Despatie on his road to the London Olympic Games.



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IN SYNCH WITH
ALEXANDRE DESPATIE
SINCE 2009