

taít. A lány értette a viccet és együtt nevetett az egész géppel. Belevaló, szimpatikus stuvi volt, az biztos!

– Ennyi repülés mellett akár pilóta is lehetett volna, mégis, miért pont ezt az eléggé „kemény” sportot, a vízilabdát választottad?

– Kisgyermekként fociztam, kosaraztam, úsztam, de hamar eluntam ezeket. Ekkor a szüleim azt mondták, maradjunk a víznél, mert az egészséges, nézzük meg a vízilabdát, így kerültem a BVSC-hez, ahol aztán ott is ragadtam. Hat-hét

évesen egy szakember már meg tudja mondani, hogy áll a gyerek kezében a labda, hogyan dobja el, hogyan mozog a vízben. Ha van tehetséged, de nincs akaratod, nem biztos, hogy jó játékos leszel. Viszont akaratod és iszonyatos szorgalommal, kis tehetséggel is lehet belőled jó sportoló. Aki egy fázasztó edzés után még képes órákat gyakorolni és fejleszteni magát, egy idő után utolérheti a tehetségest is. Azt hiszem, szorgalom, tehetség és szerencse, ebben a sorrendben, kellett ahhoz, hogy én is elérhessek oda, ahol ma tartok. Mint mindenki másnak, természetesen nekem is voltak jó és kevésbé eredményes időszakaim. A 2008-as olimpia előtt a klubcsapatomban például nem úgy ment a játék, ahogy kellett volna, nem tudtam magamból kihozni a maximumot. Kemény Dénes, a válogatott edzője képes volt erre is.

– Kinek javasolná, hogy bátran kezdje el a vízilabdát? És mit gondol, hány éves koráig képes a jelenlegi szinten üzni ezt a játékot?

– Akár vidéken, akár a fővárosban játszol, van esély arra, hogy bekerülj a legjobbak közé. A jelenlegi vízilabdában fontos a magasság, de mivel a víz mindenkinek ugyanaddig ér, szinte bárki elkezdheti a sportot. Jó állóképesség kell hozzá, de fizikumtól és mentalitástól függ, hogy meddig bírod csinálni. Benedek Tibi, ha jól tudom, 14 évesen kezdett el pólozni, most a világ egyik legjobb játékosa, és szerintem még 10 év múlva is a legjobbak között lesz. Remélem, hogy legalább még két olimpia bennem van, miközben már nem én vagyok a legfiatalabb a válogatottban, hanem szinte a legidősebb!

– Van élet a sport után?

– Bizom abban, hogy igen. Bár a sport az életem, és remélem, lesz még olimpiai aranyérem a nyakamban, ha majd egyszer „kiöregszem”, szeretnék egy saját vállalkozást. Talán egy hangulatos kis bárt, a többi még titok. Szabadidőmben sokat olvasok, még nincs felsőfokú végzettségem, a sportpszichológia komolyan érdekel. Ha lenne egy kifejezetten erre a területre specializálódott szak, már biztosan elkezdtem volna. Aztán meg a maradék időmben utaznék, hogy megnézzem a világot eddig még nem látott felől!

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compared to other passengers. If we are hungry some extra sandwiches always come our way. Though you should know I am a 'fall asleep' type of passenger and I don't like being woken up because it's difficult for me to go back to sleep. Incidentally, a funny thing happened on board during our most recent flight with Malév. The national water polo team were flying by a small plane to Podgorica and when the flight attendant was demonstrating the usual safety procedures she suddenly burst out with tearful laughter in mid-sentence – a passenger was imitating her movements. The girl understood the joke and laughed together with all the passengers. She was ace, a nice air hostess, for sure.

*With so much flying you might have become a pilot, but why did you choose this rather 'hard' sport, water polo?*

As a child I played football and basketball, and went swimming – but I soon got fed up. My parents said I should stick with water because it's healthy and should see some water polo, so I joined the BVSC club and I stayed. An expert can tell when a child is six or seven how he handles the ball, throws it and moves in the water. If you are talented but have no will power you may not become a good player. But if you are not so talented yet have will power and work incredibly hard you can become a good sportsman. If you are still able to practise and develop yourself after an exhausting training session you can catch up with the talented ones after some time. I think hard work, talent and luck in that order were needed for me to get where I am today. Of course, like everyone else, I've had my ups and downs. For example, before the 2008 Olympics, I didn't play as well in my club as I should have done. I was unable to do my best. However, the coach of the national team, Dénes Kemény, could make me do that.

*Who would you recommend to start water polo? How long do you think you can play at the present level?*

Whether you play in the provinces or the capital you have a chance to get among the best. At present height is important in water polo, but because the water level is the same for everyone almost anyone can get into the sport. You need endurance, but it depends on your fitness and mentality how long you can do it. Tibi Benedek, if I'm right, began playing at the age of 14 and now he's the best in the world. I reckon he'll be among the best even in ten years. I hope I'll be still able to play in two Olympics, when I'll no longer be the youngest in the team but almost the oldest.

*Is there life after sport?*

I'm confident there is. Although sport is my life and I hope I'll still win some Olympic golds, when I get too old for it I'd like to have my own business. Perhaps a little bar full of atmosphere, but the rest is still a secret. I read a lot in my free time, but I haven't got a degree yet – sport psychology really interests me. If there was a course specialising in this field I would have definitely started it. And then in the rest of my time I'd travel to experience the other half of the world I haven't seen yet.

ZITA IMRE

# DISCOVER CAPE KALIAKRA!

## Golf and natural beauty at Black Sea

A rather special project is underway on Bulgaria's North-East coast and is set to compete with Europe's finest golf destinations. The 'Signature Golf Coast' already has some fabulous courses to boast about.

Forty kilometres to the north of the Bulgarian city Varna is Cape Kaliakra, the area chosen for golf development and it could not have been more stunning setting. Cape Kaliakra is a land rich in history, beauty and culture. The cape stretches two kilometres deep into the sea and consists of sixty to seventy meter high limestone rocks, the inaccessibility of which has been the main reason for the construction of an ancient fortress named Tirisia there. The fortress was successively used by the Thracians, Romans, Byzantines and Bulgarians. The beauty of Cape Kaliakra is said to be the main reason why Queen Marie of Romania constructed a royal residence and world famous botanical gardens at Balchik in 1926. It has an area of 65,000 square meters and over 2000 plant species. The large cactus collection is said to be one of the largest in Europe. A few kilometres to the north is the dramatic landscape for Bulgaria's 'Signature Golf Coast' development. Cape Kaliakra – Signature Golf Coast comprises three five star golf resorts and three signature golf courses situated side by side on the Black Sea coast. With a marina, private airfield and five star hotels it's quickly building a strong international reputation as the new European Golf Destination. "This is probably Europe's last undeveloped coast line and when you add to that three of Europe's finest golf courses, an area steeped in history and outstanding natural beauty, you have a product that is going to challenge the traditional destinations," comments Seth Underwood, Chairman of the Bulgarian Golf Association.

The stunning and award winning BlackSeaRama Golf & Villas Resort was the first project to open here in May 2008. The golf course was also the first of two projects here designed by the legendary golfer and designer Gary Player.

The Lighthouse Golf Resort & Spa was opened in September 2008. The golf course was designed by legendary golfer and golf course designer Ian Woosnam. Nestled on top of a radical cliff dominating the clear water of the Black Sea, golf does not get anymore breathtaking than at the Lighthouse Golf Course.

Thracian Cliffs is the latest and most spectacular project ever to be undertaken in Bulgaria. Gary Player has once again weaved his magic to create what many people are describing as the 'Pebble Beach' of Europe.

This area has a huge potential to be a significant player in Europe's golf tourism. The charm of Bulgaria, its rich ancient history and value for money means it certainly will attract golf tourists.



For MALEV passengers only:  
"BBest Value" pack 5 games of golf



**Package Includes:**

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**3 games of golf at Lighthouse golf course**  
**2 games of golf at BlackSeaRama golf course**

**Free one hour group golf clinic**  
**Free buggy for all games**  
**Free hourly transfers to the beach**  
**Free transfer Varna airport – Lighthouse and back**  
**Free use of the driving range and the pitching, chipping and putting areas**

**Prices starting from 265 Euros.**

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**Bulgarian Golf Tours tel.: + 359 2 955 0 559,**  
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