

AALTO

SPRING 2019



WOMEN

ISSUE

ARKISTO

EDITOR'S LETTER NINE HUNDRED NINETY-NINE

Looking at my surroundings and my daily life over the last years, I see a big trend that has made such an impact on all of us. In 2001 I surely wouldn't think of jumping straight out of bed to put my Hokas on and do an 8km run before slicing an avocado and rushing to work. Neither did anybody I knew, living in Paris and working their way up in the fashion industry. Especially after a blurry late night... Today is different.

Megatrends transform our lives and define each era. 2018 may be remembered for its wellbeing-centred individualism and for the transitional moment where fashion becomes sport and sport becomes fashion. Gym is the new catwalk. Sport is a means of self-expression but it is also an escape.

For some, it is a way to overcome themselves, and for others it is a way to change their life by achieving the unattainable. In a deeper sense, it is also about knowing and embracing your own self, and doing what you want without clinging to the old norms. If you race, you will only win if you accept to fail and learn.

At the same time, what really inspires me are the women themselves, the women that I admire, strong and feminine in their own way. This mix of power and beauty is the ultimate quality a woman, it's what makes her original. I am so happy to see the emancipation continue in a new form. Today it's no longer just about the quotas, but actually about being who each individual feels to be. That is an inspiring and impactful theme and it fits today. This is also what I want AALTO to express—the modern womanhood, as I like to call it.

999 became the title of the season because it symbolizes being positive and complete with a competitive

edge. It's the mindset of transforming yourself into a better you. It is also the opposite of the haunting 666 and I think of it as the ultimate race number for the ultimate woman. The winner wears 999.

In this fanzine, sport is the leading theme but we approach it from different angles. We portray two athletes—weightlifter Gaëlle Nayo Ketchanke and horse rider Iman Perez—who both embody the spirit of 999. On the other hand, we look at how sport becomes fashion in the editorials showcasing the season's biggest novelties: swimwear and eyewear.

The Spring 2019 collection speaks about the womanhood in this yoga-minded and jogging-obsessed environment without losing the timeless elegance of the feminine power. I also like the fashion in it; it's a fusion between the sport world and old school classicism with a '90s twist and contrasts.

This season AALTO has collaborated with Swedish artist Joakim Ojanen whose childish but disturbing creatures show pop culture inspirations. His work doesn't follow any clearly stated narrative but it does perfectly fit the emotion of the AALTO collection—it is fresh but with a great deal of weirdness, which we always seek.

Whatever my creative inspiration might be, everything I want to convey has to be real and rooted in today. It is a way for me to avoid intellectualizing, stay "no filter", for the sake of being true and directly connected. That is the essence of my Finnish DNA and origins, and I believe it comes through in this collection.

TUOMAS MERIKOSKI

CREDITS AALTO SPRING 2019



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MIMI XU

SHOW DIRECTION

LUCA DOLCI Outfit Milano

ART DIRECTION

PIC

SUPPORTED BY Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana

AALTO WISHES TO THANK GAELLE NAYO KETCHANKE AND IMAN PEREZ FOR THEIR TIME AND ENTHUSIASM DEVOTED TO THE MAKING OF THIS ZINE.

SPECIAL THANKS TO MAURIZIO DAMILANO, THE PRESIDENT OF THE RACE WALKING COMMITTEE IAAF AND RACE WALKING OLYMPIC CHAMPION, AND PIETRO PASTORINI, RACE WALKING COACH.



Athletics Weekly, October 4th 1980.
Irene Bateman and Carol Tyson in the
UK 5000 metres walk championship.
PHOTO BY BOB SLY



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BARBELL QUEEN GAËLLE NAYO KETCHANKE

Female weightlifters may be latecomers to the Olympics –the women’s competition was only added to the program in 2000– but they’ve been working their way up with determination and force. At the forefront of the sport is Gaëlle Nayo Ketchanke, a Cameroon-born athlete now representing France, who started her training when she was 7 years old. Her records are certainly impressive– 111 kg in snatch, 137 kg in clean and jerk– but as is the glow she exudes when met in person.

With her eyes set on a medal at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, she pursues her goal with a quiet focus, pushed forward not only by the will to win but also by the athlete’s purest motivation–sheer passion for the sport. Passion is indeed something Gaëlle resonates, and it makes being around her an unforgettable, uplifting and inspiring experience. Armed with her unstoppable attitude and backed by a family of athletes and a team betting on her, she’s bound to achieve whatever she sets out to do.

W HAT’S THAT SCAR YOU HAVE ON YOUR ELBOW?

It happened during a competition in 2012, if I’m not mistaken, during my second attempt at 95kg snatch. I lifted the bar and my elbow broke. The bone cut the ligaments and tendons. I was operated and couldn’t practice sports for 7 months. Then little by little my coach and I started the rehabilitation and finally today this arm is actually stronger than it was before. Of course, the process of getting back in shape was very difficult because of the pain but it’s at exactly that moment that you cannot give up. If you do, it’s over. My coach and my family had my back and kept pushing me all the time, so I finally managed to reach the level I was on before the injury.

W ASN’T IT YOUR FAMILY WHO INSPIRED YOU TO START TRAINING IN THE FIRST PLACE?

I started to train in my father’s weightlifting club in Cameroon when I was 7 years old. He trained weightlifters who later joined Cameroon’s national team. At the beginning, I was just following my big sister, but at one point weightlifting really got me hooked. I devoted myself totally to it et voila, here I am, 23 years later.

D O YOU REMEMBER THE MOMENT WHEN YOU DECIDED TO BE A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE?

I was 15 and it was my first competition in Cameroon. The emotions I felt when I won my first championship were so intense that I thought, I have to do sport to be able to feel it again. Another thing is that I love to travel. I knew that athletes travel a lot and it was this opportunity really that motivated me at the beginning.

W HAT IS YOUR TYPICAL DAY LIKE?

On the days when I work, I wake up at 5:30am and leave home at 6am. For a year and half now I’ve been working at the Clerment-l’Heraut hospital, taking care of elderly people. I finish at 2pm, eat lunch, take a nap and at 4pm I leave for the training which usually lasts till 7:30 pm or 8pm. On the days when I don’t work, I also have a morning training from 9:30am till noon.

Y OU’VE BEEN TRAINING EVERY DAY FOR 23 YEARS NOW. DO YOU EVER FEEL YOU’VE HAD ENOUGH OF THE CONSTANT EFFORT?

Of course, sometimes I have enough of it, but very quickly I come to my senses and focus on all the good things ahead: the competitions, the medals, the money as well. That’s how I motivate myself. But to start with, I do weightlifting because I enjoy it, it’s as simple as that. The day when I won’t feel like training will probably be the last day of my career. You really have to have the passion to wake up every day and face

the bar. Of course, the body suffers, but at the end of the day you’re just happy with what you do. And then when you get the medal, that makes up for all your efforts.

H OW DID YOU MOVE FROM CAMEROON TO FRANCE?

I came to France as a training partner for my brother who qualified for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing with the Cameroon national team. After the Games, he came back to Cameroon and I stayed in France with my sister, even though I didn’t have the papers. After a couple years I found *Clermont Sports*, the club I’m with now, and they helped me legalise my stay. Eventually, the French weightlifting federation offered me to be a part of the French team for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, and that’s how I got my French nationality.

IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOW ATHLETES TRAIN IN CAMEROON AND IN FRANCE?

When I was training in Cameroon and watched the other athletes, I saw that there was something to them that I couldn’t find here. In France, I often get the impression that for some athletes sport is a calculation–they do it because they expect to get something in return. The weightlifters I knew in Cameroon had this determination in their eyes that I haven’t seen here. There, they tell themselves that they have to practice and succeed at all cost, so they push themselves twice as hard. If they win a competition, it will open a whole new world of possibilities to them and they know they have to work extremely hard to deserve it. For them it’s really all or nothing. They are obliged to surpass themselves. It’s a whole different motivation.

A RE GIRLS IN CAMEROON INTERESTED IN SPORTS?

Yes, lots of girls do many different sports, and it’s true that this is not always the case in other African countries. Many African women cannot do the same things as men, but I think in Cameroon we are quite free. We’re free to express ourselves, do what we want and we compete with men in practically every domain.

W HEN YOU WERE GROWING UP, HAVE YOU HEARD COMMENTS ABOUT THE SPORT YOU CHOSE?

I heard a lot of comments when I was a teenager. Boys used to call me a tomboy, they said that I was too muscular, that weightlifting was not good for me.

Now I don’t get these comments anymore, in fact I think nowadays a lot of men like this body type. But of course, when you’re young you’re much more sensitive to judgement. I was hurt by these comments but I didn’t let them get to me. I would just reply that they can say whatever they want, and I will keep training anyway. I always had a lot of support from my family though, my brothers and sisters practiced weightlifting too so I was well protected. At the end of the day these comments went in one ear and out the other.

H AVE YOU EVER FELT THAT WOMEN WERE DISCRIMINATED IN WEIGHTLIFTING IN ANY WAY, BE IT IN TERMS OF MEDIA COVERAGE OR FINANCIAL REMUNERATION?

I don’t know about other sports, but in weightlifting in France there is equality. It’s only your achievement that determines how much you’re paid, not your gender. If a male weightlifter has the same global ranking and medals as me, we’ll be rewarded with the same amount.

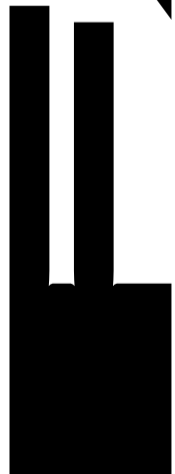
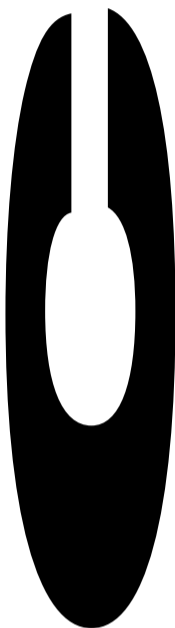
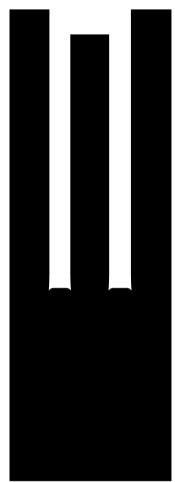
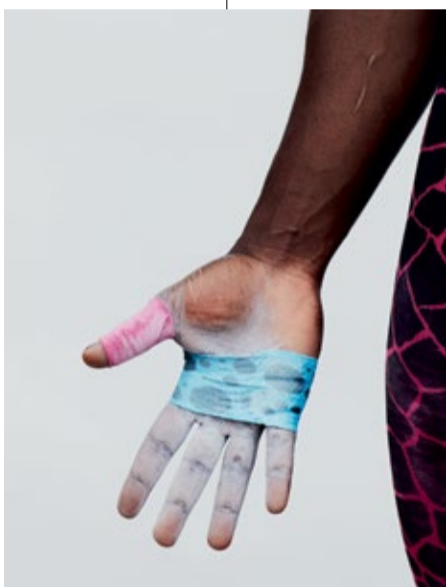
W HAT’S YOUR PLAN FOR THE COMING YEARS?

Prepare for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. It’s a four-year training cycle that started after the last games in Rio in 2016. Actually, after coming back from Rio, I stopped training for 7 months. For 7 months I didn’t touch the bar. Sometimes you have to take a break to be able to start with new energy, let go of the stress, the pressure and the constant obligation to train. You cut all of this off and do anything you feel like. And then, you just want to start again and continue training for the next four years.

W HAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IN THE MOMENT YOU’RE FACING THE BAR DURING A COMPETITION?

I just tell myself I have to succeed. It all happens in my head between me and the bar. It’s an object that you just have to hold over your head, and I tell myself that I’m going to dominate it. At a competition, the point is to lift more than you were able to lift in the gym so the physical and mental force really go hand in hand. You have to be able to manage the stress and the pressure. I always try to think positively. I don’t tell myself: I’ll try, and maybe I’ll fail. You can’t focus on that. Eventually it may in fact happen that you fail, but at least you know that it wasn’t without a battle.

INTERVIEWED BY IRMA KUBISTY



THE



BARBER

IMAGES ASSISTANT CASTING

JOHAN SANDBERG
OLOF ÖSTERLIND
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UNDER

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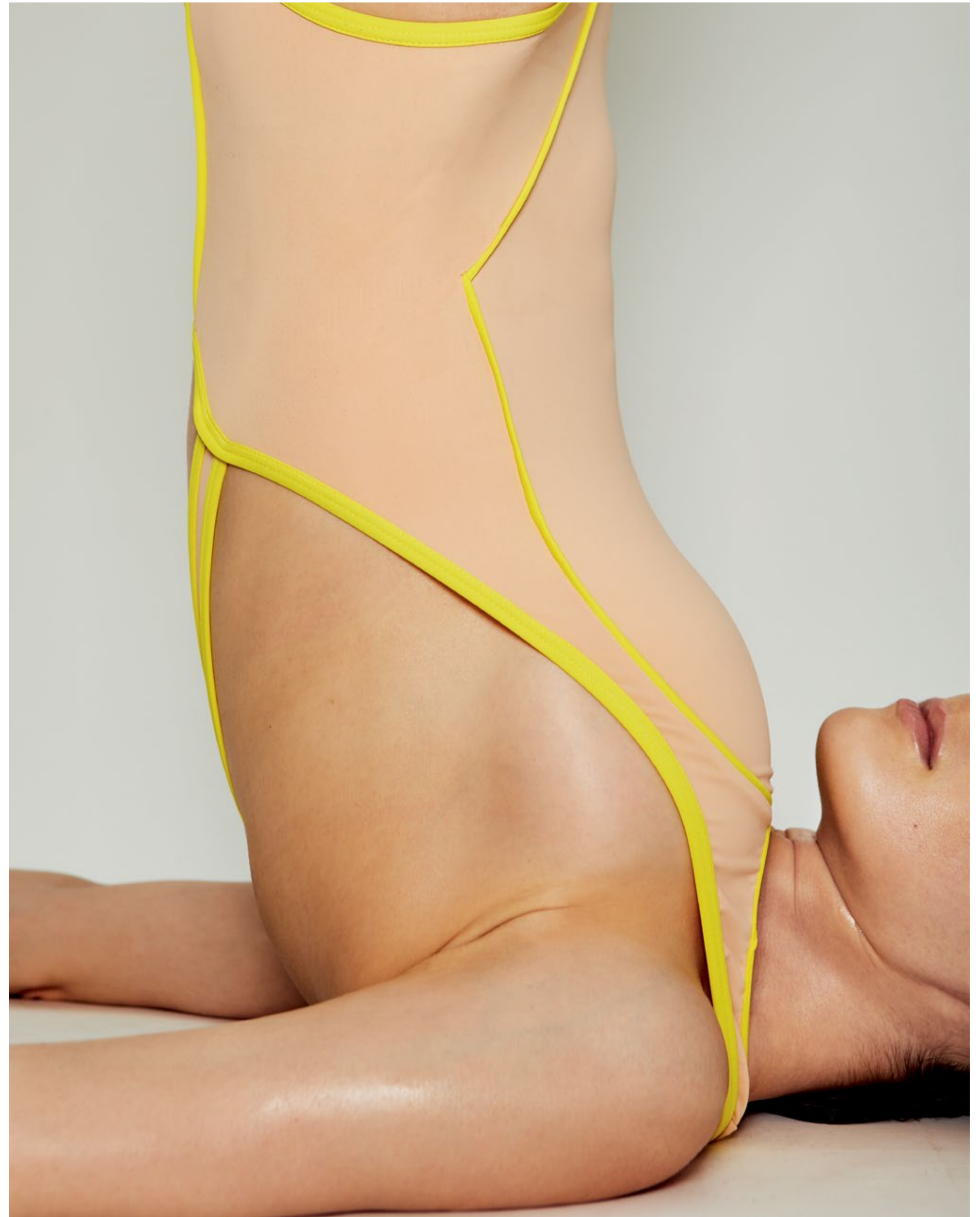


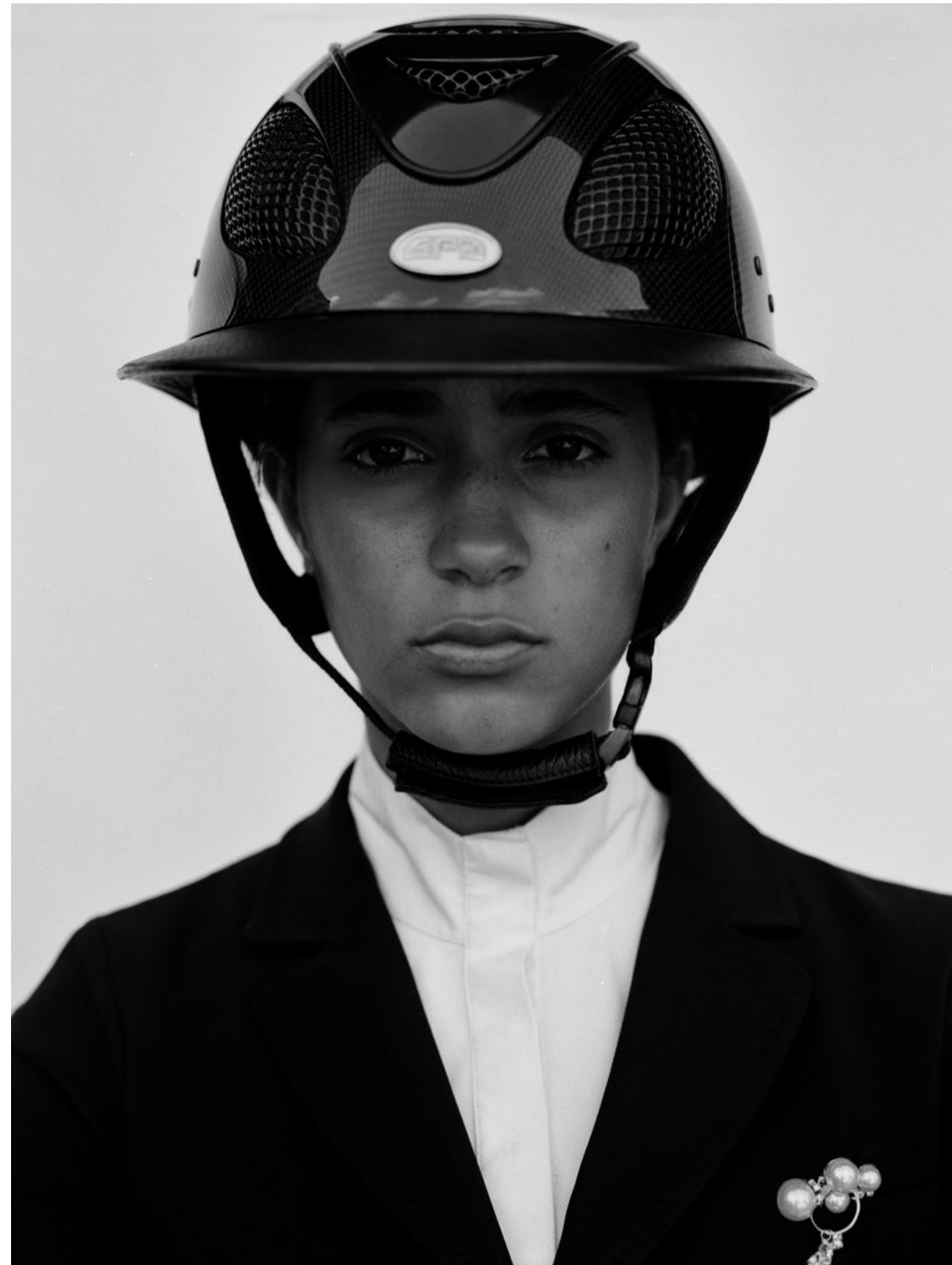
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HORSE / RIDER C O M B I N A T I O N

From the outside, horse jumping seems to be the sport for the graceful and the elegant, one of the most prestigious disciplines to practice. From the inside, it's a complex navigation between tactics, horse breeding, hours in the saddle and shows every weekend of the year, that requires an all or nothing attitude. Iman Perez has entered this world as a child and over the course of years became one of the youngest riders in the 5 star shows, competing against Olympic-level athletes twice and thrice her age. But that's the beauty of horse riding, which is in essence a truly egalitarian sport—athletes and horses of all ages and genders compete against each other. Let the best one win.

A RE THERE ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU GET ASKED ALL THE TIME?

"How does it feel to be in a sport with mixed men and women?", "Are there more men or women in this sport?", "Is there an advantage for men or for women?" I say that it's an equal chance for both girls and boys and no one is really at a disadvantage. A girl can be riding like a man and a boy can ride like a girl, so it's just a question of how light you are on the horse and if you can adapt your ride to the horse.

D O THESE QUESTIONS MAKE YOU FEEL THAT YOU'RE BEING APPROACHED AS GIRL RIDER AS OPPOSED TO JUST A RIDER?

No, it's not at all that. I think the reason why we get asked these questions a lot is because horse riding is the only Olympic sport where girls and boys are mixed. I don't think that anyone approaches girls as a minority.

I T'S ALSO A SPORT WHERE MALE AND FEMALE HORSES COMPETE AGAINST EACH OTHER. RUMOUR HAS IT YOU PREFER MALES. IS THAT SO?

I do, I don't like the female horses because they have a very special character. They have a lot of mood swings, one day they can be very nice and the other day they can be really mean. I don't like their way of being in the ring. A lot of people prefer riding mares because they feel they have more personality, but I don't like them.

H ORSE RIDING IS ONE OF THE FEW SPORTS WHERE AGE DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. BEING 19, YOU CAN COMPETE AGAINST A RIDER WHO IS 65. WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCE?

The advantage of the older riders is that they know how to react in a situation whereas as a younger rider you might not know how to handle it. When we bring a new, younger horse on an important show, they sometimes make mistakes because of the lack of experience, and we can do the same as younger riders. Older riders have made all the mistakes already so they know how to judge what they have to do.

W HEN YOU'RE THERE IN THE RING, TO WHAT EXTENT IS IT UP TO YOU AND TO WHAT EXTENT UP TO YOUR HORSE?

It's actually hilarious because we do all these preparations for just 60 seconds in the ring. There it's as much up to the rider as the horse. You can have an excellent horse and a terrible rider and they won't work. You need to work together. Not every horse is for every rider, you just have to find the good combination... I would say actually it may be even more up

to the rider than the horse, because sometimes it happens that the horse doesn't do any errors and the rider does all the errors, and therefore they won't score.

Y OU MENTIONED TO ME BEFORE THAT HORSES CAN SENSE HUMAN EMOTIONS. HOW DO YOU KEEP THEM UNDER CONTROL?

As a rider, you learn to ride not as a robot but without emotions, because if you feel happy, or if you feel angry, or sad, or stressed, the horse will feel the energy 10 times stronger. You really have to go on your horse and block yourself from everything and just be in your concentration bubble. It's kind of weird but when you're in the ring you don't really feel, you just act because you thought of it so much that it just becomes reflexes.

W HEN YOU GET ON A HORSE, DO YOU EVER THINK OF THE POSSIBLE INJURIES?

The injuries we're scared of are not for us, they're for the horses. They're very fragile and a horse's career can end if they get injured once. I never think about it when I get on a horse. You can't think of anything because that's just calling for danger.

O N THE WHOLE, WOULD YOU SAY THAT HORSE RIDING IS A PRIVILEGED SPORT?

For sure it's a privileged sport but that's mainly the impression you get from the outside. Once you're inside it's not at all the same. You'll meet a lot of people in the sport who are coming from horse families and don't have all the money in the world but they breed and sell their own horses that's how they make it. 90% of the sport are people who come from horse families and are born into the sport.

D O YOU REMEMBER THE POINT WHEN YOU DECIDED THAT YOU'RE GOING TO DEVOTE YOURSELF TO HORSE RIDING COMPLETELY?

I knew since I was five that it was my biggest passion but I never really had the confidence that I would make it. I've been competing my whole life but it's only been two or three years that I really have been dedicating myself to this sport and putting all my chances on me. Unlike other sports it doesn't depend only on yourself, it depends on a lot of factors that are not always available to you if you don't come from a horse family or if you weren't born in the horse industry. The skill is very important but the most important of all is your tactic, the way you do the program of your horses and how good your team is. It's all about that, it's not only about the skill. It's a very financially demanding sport and my parents didn't necessarily have the chance to completely sponsor me so it depended on a lot of things. It changed when I found my sponsors.

W HEN YOU WERE TRAINING AND COMPETING AS TEEN-AGER, DID YOU FEEL THAT YOU'RE MISSING OUT ON THE TYPICAL TEENAGE LIFESTYLE?

For sure. If you train professionally, you don't go out at all. I lived in Paris and I had a pretty normal childhood, not at all a countryside one, so in a way I had to sacrifice my Parisian life. I couldn't go to parties, I couldn't hang out and go shopping with my friends. It was all about shows, every weekend, in the mud, in the rain, wherever it was.

M OST OF YOUR FRIENDS NOW ARE ALSO RIDERS. IS THERE ANY COMPETITION BETWEEN YOU?

We're rivals in the ring for 60 seconds but at the end they're all my closest friends and they're like family to me. I'm more than happy when one of my friends wins and I'm very happy when I win so we're never going to hold a grudge against each other. What's great with horses, is that it's a sport that keeps you very humble. A show takes three days in a row. One day you can win, the next day you can fall off and the day after you can be second. You never really know because it doesn't depend only on you, it depends also on the animal.

D O YOU HAVE AN ALL-TIME FAVOURITE HORSE RIDER?

My favourite style of riding would be from Darragh Kenny, who's an Irish rider, and Lorenzo De Luca, an Italian rider, who's such a superstar as well. Each of them has a very unique style of riding. Darragh is always in harmony with his horses and Lorenzo is always in the movement, going forward, very free and very light. They're my friends so if they read this, good for them! You're superstars guys! It's just horse-riding where people are friends like that. I've done so many other sports in my life and everywhere there's such competition. I don't know the boys but with girls it's insane normally.



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