

Written by John Crumlish
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Winner of five World or Challenge Cup medals thus far in 2018, veteran Slovenian gymnast **Tjaša Kysselef** told IG that pride and determination keep her vaulting toward new goals at age 25.

"I'm always motivated by representing myself and my country as best as I can," said Kysselef, whose World or Challenge Cup medal tally this year includes one gold (vault in Melbourne), one silver (vault in Osijek) and three bronze (floor exercise in Melbourne, vault in Koper, vault in Baku). "I never underestimate anyone, not even myself. I always say to myself that you have to compete like it's your last chance, your last competition."

Kysselef, who placed second on vault and sixth on floor exercise at last month's Mediterranean Games in Tarragona, Spain, is in the process of upgrading her vaults. She is confident she has the potential to make the vault final at next month's European Championships in Glasgow, Scotland, and this fall's World Championships in Doha, Qatar.

"I planned [to] upgrade my first vault from D-score 4.8 to 5.4 but so far I couldn't manage successfully yet, and for sure I don't want to take any risks of falling," said Kysselef, who trains at GD Zelena Jama in Ljubljana, where she has been coached by **Andrej Mavric** since age 7. "So I might show that in Doha."

One spot shy of qualifying for the vault final at the 2016 Europeans in Bern, Switzerland, Kysselef said she hopes her current standard is enough to finish among the top eight in Glasgow.

"I'm sure that, with D-scores of 5.4 and 5.0, I would have a great chance to make it into the final at Europeans," she said. "But so far I'll have to make it with 4.8 and 5.0, and I'm willing to do

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perfect vaults. I'm also stressed a little because last time, with the same vaults, I ended up in ninth place, and I assure you that I did those pretty much perfectly. I hope I do the same, and with a little luck, you never know. For Worlds I think you need to make both vaults with a D-score of 5.4 to have a chance for the final.”

While Kysselef is not a vault specialist, she credits her innate power for her success on this apparatus. “I would say it's because of my legs,” she said. “They are the strongest part of my body and I can make the most of it. Also, there might be a bit of natural vaulting talent, as well.”

Kysselef, who turned 25 on April 27, said ambition and grit guide her through this mature phase of her career.

“The key is motivation, to dream big and set up your goals,” she said. “Give all your dreams a chance to make it happen. Yes, we have to stay realistic about achieving goals, but for dreams there is no limit. If you're ready to work and give every single part of yourself for it, then you will make it. Maybe not on the first try, and here is when many quit.”

Above all, Kysselef said, tenacity is critical to persevering in tough situations.

“Being persistent is the main thing,” Kysselef told IG. “Don't give up when the day is not perfect, or training, competition or even a season. Injuries are especially the toughest part to go through. Fight for it and keep your head up. That is my key.”

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