

THE MÄLARCUP - 40 YEARS OF GYMNASTICS HISTORY!

The coach in Brommagymnasterna, Laszlo Marton, founded the Mälarcup, and the first competition was held in 1983. Since then the competition has been held every year, except one of the Covid-lockdown-years.

Mr. Marton had come to Sweden as a refugee after the repression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. As a student he had taken down a portrait of Stalin from a wall in his school, and understood that it was safest to flee his country.

During his first years in Sweden he went under the name Laszlo Gagy. Being a talented swim-diver he soon became a PE-teacher in different schools in Stockholm. In that way he came in contact with gymnastics and the Chairman of Brommagymnasterna, Kjell O Johansson, saw his potential and recruited him as a coach. During Laszlo's leadership the gymnastic level among the boys in Brommagymnasterna improved significantly and at the end of the 1970:s, they were the strongest team in Sweden.

Mr. Marton realised that there was a need for an international competition for club-teams, beside the national-team events. Thus, the Mälarcup was born. The name was taken after the big and important lake Mälaren on Stockholms west side.

The first Mälarcup, in 1983, was only for male gymnasts and it was held in 6 different age-groups, from boys up to Seniors. Winner of the premier event was Brommagymnasterna, with the Hungarian team KSI as runner up, and Hammarbygymnasterna, from Stockholm, taking bronze.

The 1983 competition was organised solely by Brommagymnasterna, but it became clear that such a large event was too much to handle for one club. The solution to the problem was to form a coalition of the MAG-federations in Stockholm to organise the competition during the coming years. The clubs that were involved were: Brommagymnasterna, KFUM Stockholm Hammarbygymnasterna, Tyresögymnastiken and SGF-Täbygymnasterna.

During the first years many Hungarian teams and gymnasts visited the Mälarcup. The most famous is perhaps Zoltan Suppola, who had a spectacular dismount in PB; Swinging down from handstand on one bar and dubbel salto backwards under the other bar. From the US we had a team called Casos Dynamo of East Syracuse, led by the enthusiastic coach Ron Caso.

Brommagymnasterna dominated heavily during the first years, with strong gymnasts such as the Jonasson brothers, Johan and Jörgen. Johan Jonasson later became 3

time olympic contender and he is the inventor of the famous Jonasson-element in Still Rings, now performed by almost all male gymnasts.

Some years later Magnus Rosengren became the anchor in the Bromma-team. Magnus was also bronze medalist in vault, in the European Championships in Prague 1994.

2 years later in the EC in Copenhagen he was in the lead after his first vault in the finals and seemed to be on route for the gold. But he missed the landing in the second vault and the medal slipped out of his hands. - What are you doing, Magnus, said Vitaly Scherbo, who was also in the vault final?

Some years later we had very strong gymnasts from Finland. Among them Joni Koivunen, Jari Mönkkönen and Jani Tanskanen. Mönkkönen later became silver medalist in Horizontal Bar in the 1998 European Championships in St Petersburg and Tanskanen became World Champion in the same apparatus in Lausanne, 1997.

As the reigning World Champion Tanskanen returned to the Mälarcup. During the banquet he held a speech in which he underlined the important role the Mälarcup had played for his development as gymnast. The organisers couldn't have been prouder!

After his career as a gymnast Tanskanen was elected the gymnasts representative in the FIG MTC, where he contributed to the development of the Code of Points. One special rule that he managed to change was the demand in PB to have an element in a hanging position with outstretched shoulders. From his own experience he pointed out that this would not be possible for all gymnasts, and eventually the rule was changed.

Other prominent competitors from Scandinavia was Tue Lodahl and Kaspar Fardan from Denmark, the latter with his own HB-dismount-element in the code, and Runar Alexandersson competing for Iceland, one of the worlds absolute best Pommel Horse-gymnasts. Runar originally came from Tallinn and during his first Mälarcup-competitions he represented Estonia under his first name, Ruslan Ovchinnikov.

Another very interesting Mälarcup-contender, with many performances, is the Norwegian, Espen Jansen. Espen is probably the person with the most Norwegian Championship titles, in a large number of different sports. Being the crowd-pleaser that he is, he always contributed to a good atmosphere during competitions, whether it was World Championships, European Championships or indeed Mälarcupen.

During the first 7 years the Mälarcup was only a MAG-competition. But after that, the women decided to come along. The first WAG-Mälarcup was held in Bollmorahallen in the community of Tyresö, but since then, the men and women have always

competed together, and during the last decades there have been more women than men in the start-fields.

One of the first really prominent WAG-gymnast to take part in the Mälarcup was Ljudmilla Prince from Riga, one of the best female gymnasts in the world at that time.

The most merited female gymnast, however, must be Elisabeth Twedle from Great Britain who became bronze medalist at the Olympic Championships in London 2012.

Later we have also seen, Camille Rasmussen from Denmark, Veronica Wagner, competing for Stockholm Top Gymnastics and Jonna Adlerteg, representing Eskilstuna. Both Veronica and Jonna later became olympians. Apart from Adlerteg, Emma Larsson from the same club, Eskilstuna, qualified for the Olympics in Rio 2016, where she finished at 35:th place in the AA.

Eskilstuna, a town situated to the south-west of Mälaren, is probably the most successful female club in the Mälarcup history, together with Stockholm Top Gymnastics and All Star Gymnastics.

Those two clubs have contributed very much to the completion of the Mälarcup, together with SOL-flickorna, Hammarbygymnasterna and Järfällagymnasterna.

During the 90:s, we were often guested by very strong British juniors on the men's side; Among them Dominic Brindle and Kanukai Jackson.

The (soon to be) most merited gymnast, though, came from Riga. In their team they had 2 gymnasts that would be medalists in Olympic games. Jevgenijs Sapronenko took the silver-medal in Vault during the 2004 Olympics in Athens, while Igor Vihrovs was gold medalist in Floor at the millennium games in Sydney. Furthermore this was Latvia's first Olympic gold as an independent nation!

Another very interesting gymnast from that time is Sergej Rumbutis, who had moved to Sweden and eventually became Swedish citizen. Sergejs career is certainly very interesting. He has been a national team gymnast in 3 different countries: The Soviet Union, Lithuania and Sweden. He reached the final in PB during the World Championships in Germany 1993. Furthermore he has named 2 elements in the code. The first was the triple salto forwards as dismount from HB and the second salto backwards to handstand on one bar in PB.

Sergejs son David has competed in World Championships, and this makes them one of very few "father and son" who has achieved that, and the only "father and son-duo" that has competed in the Mälarcup (but not at the same time). David is also an Olympic contender.

And speaking of the Rumbutis family. Their wife/mother, Sara, has been Head Manager of Mälarcupen for many years, so they are really a “Mälarcup-family”!

Interestingly, David's cousin Oskar Kirmes has also reached the Olympics and the other cousin, younger brother Robert, reached the AA-final in WC in Japan last year. The Kirmes brothers compete in the Finnish national team.

Otherwise, the most promising of the Swedish men nowadays, is probably Luis Il Sung Melander, European Junior Champion in SR, and finalist in the World Cup in Mersin, where he ended 5:th, rubbing shoulders with many of the absolute best SR-gymnasts in the World.

There have also been American female competitors from time to time. One interesting detail was when they brought a judge of male gender, something which was “forbidden” in the rules at that time, but an exception was made.

On the women's side, the Swedish team has gradually become stronger and stronger during the last few years. The team has consisted of Alva Eriksson (STG), Tonya Paulsen (GK M/S) and Emelie Westlund, Elina Grawin and Jennifer Williams (all from Eskilstuna). They qualified as a team for the World Championships in Antwerp 2023.

Individually, Elina has been fourth on Balance Beam in the EYOF, while Tonya has been 14:th AA at the European Championships and Jennifer 21:st AA in the WC in Japan 2021.

From the start 1983 the Mälarcup have had competitors from quite many nations. The Scandinavian countries have, of course, contributed with many of their best teams both in MAG and WAG and the same can be said about a vast number of other European nations.

But the Mälarcup have also had visitors from as far as Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand.

Much more could have been mentioned of the Mälarcup history, but if everything should be revealed, we would probably need a solid book.

With so much gymnastics history, the interesting question is: What will the coming 40 years have in store for us?

40
years



MÄLARCUPEN
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