



“I love and hate chlorine”

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When I smell chlorine, I instantly imagine myself standing on the diving board. Just before the jump, my body is full of adrenaline, my knees are shaking, my heart is racing. Then I try to block everything out and focus completely on this dive. I’ve got only a few seconds to demonstrate what I’ve been practicing for weeks. I’ve dived off the ten-meter board thousands of times, but I still feel keyed up. The anxiety never goes away completely.

The smell of chlorine usually conjures up positive associations for me, and yet I have a love-hate relationship with this element. On the one hand, chlorine dries out the skin and can trigger allergies. In some countries, the concentration of chlorine in swimming pools is so high that the skin reacts violently and itches. On the other hand, chlorine is a good disinfectant that we can’t do without.

Ever since I was a kid, I’ve felt at home in the indoor swimming pool of the Dresden Sports Club. This is where my father, Rainer Punzel, competed as a member of the national diving team. I started learning to swim and do gymnastics when I was five years old. We still go to the sports hall often.

There we practice dives, improve our strength, and do acrobatics. I train for at least 30 hours a week, half of them at the sports hall. In addition, I’m studying economics at the Technische Universität Dresden (TUD).

My international breakthrough came in 2013, when I won the European championship at the age of 17. Three years later, a dream came true when I was permitted to participate in the Olympic Games in Rio de

The diver **Tina Punzel** (24) participated in the Olympic Games in Rio. Her next goal is the Olympic Games in Tokyo next year. That’s why she’s training more than four hours per day, half of them at an indoor pool.

Janeiro. The one thing I’ll never forget is the family atmosphere at the Olympic Village. Athletes from all over the world and from every discipline form a gigantic community there. In terms of sports, it was also a success for me: I reached the semifinals in my favorite discipline, the single dive from the three-meter board. And I placed seventh in the synchronized swimming competition. Even though many competitions have been canceled because of the coronavirus crisis, I’m practically certain I will qualify for the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2021. My goal is to reach the finals! —