

Written by John Crumlish

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As the first Norwegian female gymnast to qualify for the Olympic Games since 1992, **Julie Erichsen**

told IG she intends to polish and upgrade her program by the time she competes at next summer's Games in Tokyo.

"The main focus is to clean up my routines," said Erichsen, who earned her berth to Tokyo through her performance at this fall's World Championships in Stuttgart. "I will add a few new skills which were not stable enough for Stuttgart. We also plan new choreography for floor."

Erichsen notched her most impressive 2019 international results on vault, on which she placed fifth at the Challenge Cup of Paris and eighth at the Challenge Cup of Osijek. She plans to become even more competitive on that apparatus in 2020.

"The number-one goal is to increase the difficulty of my second vault," said Erichsen, who was born August 15, 2001, in Bergen. "I'm also working to increase the difficulty of my first vault."

Erichsen will be the first Norwegian female gymnast to compete at the Olympic Games since compatriot **Anita Tomulevski** finished 79th all-around in qualifications at the 1992 Games in Barcelona.

Sofus Heggemsnes has qualified to represent the Norwegian men in Tokyo, following male teammate

Stian Skjerahaug

who competed at the 2016 Games in Rio.

"I wasn't really thinking much of it during the preparations for the World Championships," said Erichsen of her potential to qualify for Tokyo. "I knew there was a chance, but I was more focused on my routines."

Although Erichsen and her coaches believed her performance in Stuttgart was enough to advance her to Tokyo, the official word came once she returned home to Bergen.

“When the qualifications in Stuttgart were finished, the coaches told me that according to their calculations I had a spot for Tokyo,” she said. “I was at the hotel with my teammates, **Julie Soderstrom**

and

Maria Tronrud

. Since it was not yet official we tried not to get too excited. We had to wait for a week before the official list from the FIG (International Gymnastics Federation) was published. When it was finally official, my initial reaction was to tell my mom. We were super happy. To reach the Olympic Games has been my main goal.”

Erichsen said she does not feel burdened by her status as Norway's lone female gymnastics Olympian in Tokyo.

“After the qualification there has been quite a lot of attention from media, which is new for me,” she said. “Right now I don't really feel a huge amount of pressure. When we are getting closer to summer I will try to keep focused on my routines and not think so much about the things that I can't control.”

Erichsen's supporters are helping her manage her nerves and maintain her concentration.

“I get help from people in Olympiatoppen (national sports organization) to cope with the mental part of it,” said Erichsen, who trains under coaches **Anatol Ashurkov** (vault, uneven bars and floor exercise) and **Galyn a Gerasymenko** (balance beam). “My main coach, Anatol, is also important to me by keeping the focus on gymnastics.”

Erichsen recognizes the recent strides her team has made and its potential to move even higher.

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"We have improved tremendously during the last few years, and it looks like we are heading in the right direction," she told IG. "I think we need to continue with what we have been doing lately - work together as a team, clean up our routines, increase the difficulty and have fun. Also important, we need to believe that it is possible for Norwegian gymnasts to perform well internationally."

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