

Written by John Crumlish
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Céline van Gerner at the 2010 World Championships in Rotterdam

Van Gerner, who turns 23 on Friday, competed as an individual at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, where she finished 12th all-around. Four years later, she was part of the Dutch team that made history at the Olympics Games in Rio, finishing seventh in the team final.

A native of Emmeloord, Van Gerner trains at Turnereren Sportstad Heerenveen with coach **Gerb en Wiersma**

. She made her senior debut in 2010, finishing fourth on uneven bars at the European championships in Birmingham and 19th all-around at the world championships in Rotterdam. That year she was named the Royal Dutch Gymnastics Federation's Athlete of the Year. She recovered from a broken right ankle in time for the 2011 Worlds in Tokyo, finishing 17th all-around. The following month, she underwent surgery on her foot after it was diagnosed that her foot was also broken.

Unable to compete at the 2012 Olympic test event, Van Gerner returned to form in time to defend her Dutch national title. She was eventually selected to represent Netherlands at the 2012 Olympics in London, during a controversial selection that involved lawsuits in civil court.

She took some time off after London but returned in 2013, only to break her right ankle again. After a lengthy recovery and a hamstring injury that kept her out of the 2015 World

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Championships, she qualified for the Dutch team to the 2016 Olympic Games, the first time since 1976 that the Netherlands had a full team at the Olympics.

After time away from the sport, Van Gerner has been drawn back to the gym. In this IG Online interview, she talks about the status of her comeback.

IG: What have you been doing with yourself since the 2016 Rio Olympics, in terms of gymnastics and life outside the gym?

CVG: The first half-year after Rio I spent my time by doing shows, clinics and demonstrations, and giving presentations. By the end of January I fully stepped out of the gym. It was time to recover, because, while in Rio, I was and got more injured on my left calf. During that time I went to an acting class on Mondays for eight weeks. I went to Norway, cheering on my younger sister in a speed skating competition. That was really fun because normally I'm the competitor and she is cheering me on, but this time it was vice versa. Overall I got time to do whatever I wanted to do, and I was trying to find out what my future could be like, for example, school-wise. From May till September, I was teaching cardio lessons for 13 hours a week in a local fitness club.



Van Gerner training in Heerenveen in 2015

IG: What motivated you to get back into training, and what is the incentive for you to resume your career?

CVG: By June, I stepped into the gym once – just for fun, and checking out which skills I was able to do. By that one time I was super fit and feeling healthy. My calf didn't give a reaction in training, for the first time it a year and a half, so I was pretty excited about that. But then the hardest part came – the "What if?" game. What if I could still do gymnastics? My body was better healed than I had ever expected, so I just couldn't let go of gymnastics. Twenty years from now, I will be too old to do gymnastics, you know. The time is still now. So I guess that's why I decided to give it one more shot.

IG: How far ahead are you looking?

CVG: Right now I'm building my gymnastics level very slowly. I'm taking it day-by-day, month-by-month. When my body doesn't feel good, I make sure I do a light day, or even take the day off. I need to listen to my body. It's been out of the gym for like a year, so it needs time

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to adjust again. I'm sore for two months already, almost every day, even while taking it slowly!

IG: How much more do you think you can still accomplish? Do you foresee a return to international competition?

CVG: We will find out. Right now I'm trying to figure out the new Code of Points and how it will work for me.

IG: Turning 23 on December 1, what do you think about the number of gymnasts who are still competing in their 20s?

CVG: I love how the sport is changing. I really like the sport's development, that you're not old anymore when you are in your 20s. I think it's good for the younger girls to see, as well, that you still can do gymnastics in your 20s and can ever get better by then. I'm really happy with the age going up.

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"Marked for Success" – Casimir Schmidt profile (July/August 2014)

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