

Written by John Crumlish
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2016 Olympic bronze medalist **Sophie Scheder** of Germany told IG that her third-place all-around finish at the recent German Championships revealed only some of the strength she hopes to display at this month's World Championships in Doha, Qatar.

Injuries have stalled the 21-year-old Scheder's progress since she placed third on uneven bars at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio. She underwent knee surgery in spring 2017 and suffered a finger injury just prior to this summer's European Championships. Still not at full strength, Scheder nonetheless finished third all-around, behind gold medalist **Elisabeth Seitz** and silver medalist

m Bui

, at last month's German Championships in Leipzig.

In this IG Online interview, Scheder comments on her post-Rio setbacks and her hopes for advancing to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, starting with Doha.

IG: With the German Championships coming so soon after your finger injury, how were you able to consolidate all four of your routines so quickly, and produce such a good all-around result in Leipzig?

SS: I was very happy with my performance and excited to compete again. It has been a very tough time. After recovering from my knee injury I already had all my routines prepared for the European Championships in August. The injury on my finger was very unexpected and stopped me from performing my regular training schedule for another eight weeks. The first six weeks I was only able to do cardio and lower-body exercises. After that I slowly started on beam, floor and vault. Finally, eight weeks later I was allowed to train on uneven bars again. The preparation time for the German Championships was therefore very limited. That's why I only performed routines with lower difficulties. The time was simply missing to show my full potential, but I think all the years of experience as well as mental training really helped me to prepare for

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the competition.

IG: What led to your 2017 knee surgery, and what caused your 2018 finger injury?

SS: Basically years of over-strain caused my knee injury. The pain in my knee started years before the Olympics. Afterwards it was simply the best time to have surgery. That's why I went to a specialist in Vail (Colorado) in April 2017. They found out that my patella tendon was 70 percent "worn off," and they fixed it. My plan was to have a great comeback in January 2018, but due to other health restrictions everything got delayed. At the end of May I was able to get back into my regular training, and in mid-June my first competition after the surgery took place. I was super excited to be back and then a week later, at the end of June, I injured my left ring finger during a practice routine on uneven bars. I did a flying element, but couldn't grip the bar right. Instead I stubbed my finger pretty badly on the bar. It broke and a tendon tore. I had surgery on July 5.

IG: Although you have coped with injuries since Rio, your performance in Leipzig shows that you seem to be picking up right where you left off. But, in your view, what areas of your program do you need to improve by Doha?

SS: As I mentioned earlier I did not show my full routines in Leipzig. For Doha I will definitely increase the difficulties and work more on my stability on uneven bars and beam. Vault will stay the same and I won't compete on floor.

IG: What has kept you positive and motivated despite your post-Rio injuries?

SS: The dream of Tokyo 2020 for sure. Knowing how it feels to stand on the medal podium as well as hoping to experience this once again. Gymnastics is my passion. I love competing. That's what motivates me from day to day. The support of my family, friends and fans also helped a lot.

IG: After winning an Olympic medal on bars, you have a chance to win a medal on bars in Doha. But you also have the task of helping your team move forward in the qualification process

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for Tokyo. How are you keeping both of these opportunities in proper focus?

SS: Well, I haven't won a medal at the World Championships yet, but that is definitely my goal. Competing in Doha is a great chance for me to show everyone that I am back. That is what I'm most excited about. Winning a medal would be the icing on the cake. But of course I'll also give my best for my team. We all have the same dream — competing at the Olympics in Tokyo. I am more than confident that we will achieve that together.

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