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TWIN SISTERS IN RHYTHM FOR PAN AM GAMES

By [Alan Hudes](#) - July 3, 2015 > 4623 > 0[Subscribe to the CJN](#)[SUBSCRIBE](#)[RSS Feed](#)[VIEW](#)

When Anjelika Reznik made her debut on the international stage four years ago, someone near and dear to her heart was missing.

"I'd have to come home and explain everything to her," said the rhythmic gymnast, reflecting on the 2011 Pan American Games in Guadalajara, Mexico. "This time I don't have to explain why. She will be right there with me, experiencing everything first hand."

That would be Victoria Reznik – Anjelika's identical twin sister and best friend. Together, they will compete for Canada in rhythmic gymnastics at the Toronto 2015 Pan Am Games, which begin with Friday's opening ceremony. It's the first time the 20-year-old sisters have qualified together for multi-sport games as members of the senior national team.

Anjelika, the more accomplished of the two, helped Canada win three medals in Guadalajara – two silver and one bronze – en route to a historic appearance at the London 2012 Olympic Games, the first for any Canadian rhythmic gymnastics group entry. Inspired by her sister's success, Victoria joined the national team last year, where they've been pushing each other ever since.

"There's for sure some competition going on," said Victoria. "If she's better at something, I have to strive to be able to do it as well."

"[The coaches] always use that excuse – 'She's your twin. If she can do it, you can do it,'" Anjelika added. "It definitely pushes you to try harder. Since we're really close, we're just straight up [with each other]. We know we don't really get offended."

Mimi Masleva, one of the Reznik's coaches, watched Victoria's dedication to catch up in the intervening two years, and loves having both sisters on the team.

"They give sparkle to the routine," said Masleva. "When we do a routine, there is an idea and if you don't express, and you don't give anything from the heart, [everyone] looks very equal. They give the sparkle and they give it meaning – you can see it when they are [performing]."

Born in Kazakhstan to a family of gymnasts – their mother, Yana, once a member of the country's rhythmic national team, while their grandparents took up the artistic discipline – the Reznik twins moved to Israel at the age of two, spending their formative years in the Jewish state.

Growing up in Bat Yam, the girls preferred to spend their free time on the beach, at the playground across from their apartment, or in the streets on Shabbat with all the other Israeli children.

"We grew up with their culture everywhere around us," said Anjelika. "We'd watch only Hebrew television. We'd go to school and there would be all these Hebrew-speaking people...There's so many good memories. I just remember we loved it there."

In particular, learning about the country's history, following Jewish traditions and celebrating the holidays with their father's family – Purim and Sukkot among the favourites – were just some of the special moments during their eight years in the Holy Land.

But following in their mother's gymnastics footsteps was never really the plan.

It wasn't until the Reznik twins immigrated to Toronto at the age of 10, that they showed an interest in the sport as an after-school activity. By that point, their mom preferred them not get serious, knowing the sacrifices they'd have to make.

"She tried to put us into ballet, hoping that we would like it but it was really boring for us," said Anjelika. "[Then] we tried gymnastics one day and we just never left the gym."

"We're [thinking] 'Okay, she put us in this, we've got to get good,'" said Victoria. "All the girls were so good, and we just came to it so late. It was just really stressful...everyone was so good and we didn't know anything."

Yana did everything she could to support the girls, from making their gymnastics outfits, to doing their hair and makeup for competition, and giving them advice on their routines.

From there, Anjelika and Victoria flourished.

At 15, they represented Canada at the inaugural Summer Youth Olympic Games in Singapore, where they won bronze in the all-around group event. After watching Anjelika train for Guadalajara and London, the duo reunited for the 2014 World Championship.

Without those experiences, the twins insist they wouldn't be in the unique position they find themselves this month.

"It was just so different back then," said Victoria, looking back on the Youth Olympics. "We were just little girls. But now we're much more mature and experienced and a lot more knowledgeable with what our coaches expect and what our parents expect. It's a feeling you can't get anywhere else, except by doing your best and then getting rewarded for it,"

The Rezniks hope to return to Israel after the current Olympic cycle and potentially compete in front of friends and family at the Maccabiah Games, after Canada didn't send a rhythmic gymnastics team in 2013.

But for Anjelika and Victoria, the chance to compete side by side in their new home this summer, isn't lost on them.

"We have a special bond, since we were literally together since we were fetuses," said Anjelika. "It's just a nice experience to share with your sister."

"Not many get to."

The Toronto 2015 rhythmic gymnastics competition will take place at the Ricoh Coliseum – renamed Toronto Coliseum for the duration of the Pan Am Games – from July 17-20

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