
DATE: 8 June 2021
LOCATION: Germany
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Syria
LANGUAGE: English

Broadcast quality footage available at the IOC Newsroom: http://iocnewsroom.com

STORY SCRIPT:

Syrian refugee Alaa Maso will swim in the Olympics having been selected for the IOC Refugee Olympic Team for Tokyo 2020.

Alaa started in the pool at a young age in Syria, as his father was a swimming coach. He progressed to train as a competitive swimmer and a triathlete, and knew renowned refugee athlete Yusra Mardini from their younger days.

But in 2015 Alaa had to leave war-torn Syria and his damaged training facilities, to head for the refuge of Europe. Alaa’s long journey took him to Germany, where he was able to resume his swimming training once settled.

“Having a refugee team is an important step the International Olympic Committee has taken, and it shows the world that refugees have goals,” says Alaa, one of 56 refugee athletes supported by the IOC through the Olympic Solidarity Scholarship for Refugee Athletes programme.

Alaa is already looking ahead to the following Olympics in 2024, saying: “My expectations and dreams are to stay in shape and push myself towards not only the Olympic Games in Tokyo, but Paris as well.”

The 29-member IOC Refugee Olympic team (EOR)* initiative at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 is a continuation of the IOC’s commitment to play its part in addressing the global refugee crisis, and another opportunity to continue to convey the message of solidarity and hope to millions of refugees and internally displaced athletes around the world.

*The IOC Refugee Olympic Team will compete in Tokyo under the French acronym EOR which stands for Équipe Olympique des Réfugiés.

SHOTLIST:
00:02 Alaa Maso walking towards camera
00:07 Alaa entering his training facility
00:11 Alaa drops his bag in the changing room
00:14 Alaa talking to his coach poolside
00:21 Close up of Alaa feet ready to dive
00:25 Wide shot of Alaa diving into the pool
00:28 Tracking shot of Alaa swimming

00:34 SOUNDBITE: Alaa Maso, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Tokyo 2020, Swimming (50m freestyle) (English Language).
Q. Why did you leave your home country?
“We didn’t want to take any sides in a war, in the conflict. So my father decided to send us away from the country away from my family. And that was, of course, one of the hardest choices we ever had to take.”

00:46 Alaa swimming towards camera
00:51 Wide shot of the pool, Alaa swimming
00:56 Alaa in the pool taking a drink from a bottle

01:03 SOUNDBITE: Alaa Maso, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Tokyo 2020, Swimming (50m freestyle) (English Language).
Q. How has sport helped you?
“Sport has affected my life, a lot in a very positive way I would have wished for. Just being always in shape, thinking always positive, thinking always further than what I just have because being a Sporter means also to be patient, to have passion and to always love what you do.”

01:30 Wide shot of the pool Alaa pushing off to swim
01:34 Close up shot above Alaa pushing off to swim
01:41 Underwater view of Alaa swimming past

01:46 SOUNDBITE: Alaa Maso, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Tokyo 2020, Swimming (50m freestyle) (English Language).
Q. How important is a refugee Olympic team?
“Having a Refugee Olympic Team is, of course, a very important step that the Olympic Committee takes because showing the world that refugees also can dream and showing the world that refugees have goals. And even though they survived Wars, they still are living their dreams or trying to live their dreams and that’s, of course, a good sign, and a good, a good definition of refugees because at the end, we all are human and we all have dreams and goals we want to achieve.”

02:22 Tracking shot of Alaa swimming to a finish

02:32 SOUNDBITE: Alaa Maso, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Tokyo 2020, Swimming (50m freestyle) (English Language).
Q. When did you become a serious swimmer?
“I would call myself a real professional swimmer at the time I joined my group at the Olympic facility in Hanover because there I had the chance to swim with other swimmers at my age. Competing with them in competition in the training as well, is very important for athletes, no matter what sport they do.”

02:56 Close up of Alaa in the pool and then pushing off the side

03:03 SOUNDBITE: Alaa Maso, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Tokyo 2020, Swimming (50m freestyle) (English Language).
Q. What is your dream?
“On the sports side, my expectations and dreams are to stay in shape to keep training to push myself harder towards not only the Olympic Games in Tokyo, but Paris as well.”

03:16 Slow motion of Alaa swimming underwater

03:25 SOUNDBITE: Alaa Maso, IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR), Tokyo 2020, Swimming (50m freestyle) (English Language).
Q. What is your message to other refugees?
“My message to the refugees is, be proud of yourself. You’re a survivor and don’t let anybody put you down. You can dream big and you can reach your goals.”

03:37 Slow motion of Alaa swimming up to the camera

-- ENDS --

© Copyright International Olympic Committee 2021. This content is the exclusive property of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). IOC-VNRs are for bona fide news reporting purposes only and all rights required for their production have been cleared. Terms and Conditions of the IOC Newsroom and olympics.com apply.

For more information, please contact the IOC Media Relations Team: Tel: +41 21 621 6000, email: pressoffice@olympic.org, or visit our web site at www.olympics.com