



CARLOS S.

Think Quality Over Quantity

Alex Lapidus, 60, springboard and platform masters diving champion

Alex Lapidus learned to dive in college, competed, and then didn't come back until 2004, when he was in his 40s. Since then, he's won 14 Masters World Championships and five World Masters Games gold medals. His competitors say he's executing difficult dives "that at his age, he has no business doing." He's at the pool four days a week, spending about two hours a day doing a combination of dryland and in-water work. Here, in his own words, are what keeps him on top:

"BECAUSE I STARTED diving in college and then took 19 years off before I discovered Masters diving at 40, most of my competitors have much more background and experience in the sport; they're elegant and graceful in a way that I'm not, so I have to learn and compete harder dives to give myself a chance. My best dives are back 2 ½ tuck from 3m springboard and back 1 ½ with 1 ½ twists from 7.5m platform; my craziest and most unique dive is a forward 2 ½ somersaults with 1 twist tuck from 7.5m platform—I'm the only person my age in the world who does that dive.

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Today, I'm a much better diver than I was in college. My boardwork is smoother and more reliable; my takeoff position is in better alignment; I'm learning to move more efficiently with better positions during each dive; and I'm learning to finish each dive more accurately and cleanly. Partly, it's been steady work, training seriously and continuously; partly it's just the joy of diving for me—it's something I always want to go out and do. Partly, it's being intentional.

I definitely think more about quality than quantity. I plan what I want to accomplish each day before I start, and I'm not so worried about the volume of dives I do. In my springboard warmups, I also focus less on preparing for the dives themselves, and more on the feel of the board and the rhythm of my approach, so that I can try to get more from the board more consistently.

Since I hit 50, I've noticed that I don't feel *quick* anymore, which specifically affects how I initiate dives and change position as I'm getting into and out of a dive. I'm trying to get better at relaxing the muscles that don't need to be tense, so I can move more sharply and efficiently as required, but that quickness is hard to retain. The second is that I'm simply playing defense more, doing exercises to protect my back and especially shoulders, and it seems like part of my workout now is always a rehab from something or other.

For me, I think there might be two dimensions to continuing to compete. One is simply to persist, which comes from the love of the sport and the desire to go out and play, knowing that putting the work in continues to buy me that opportunity. The second is the reality that I won't always be able to do the things I'm doing now, and I need to have a deliberate plan for how I back down to easier dives, possibly including some feet-first options as shoulder risks grow. Being of strong mind really helps, along with keeping the body fit and loving what you do. Platform is my favorite, but both springboard and platform, for me, represent the dream of human flight."