

London 2012: Uzbekistan's Sakina Mamedova in Felixstowe

By Andrew WoodgerBBC News, Suffolk



Sakina Mamedova practises for her 50m event with a .22 cartridge rifle

"I'm quite famous in Uzbekistan, but no-one recognises me in Felixstowe," said Olympic shooter Sakina Mamedova as she trained in the Suffolk town.

The 27-year-old from Tashkent is the former Soviet nation's only qualifier in the shooting events at London 2012 and it is her first Olympic Games.

She has been training at Felixstowe Rifle Club's ranges since 7 July with her coach Igor Potopov.

Her two events are the 10m air rifle and the 50m rifle three position - which involves standing, kneeling and lying down with a .22 cartridge rifle.

"I've had fish and chips and it was very nice and I've also tried roast beef and Yorkshire pudding"

Sakina Mamedova

"The facilities are very good and the people have been very friendly," she said.

"The sea is nice, but I haven't been swimming - it looks too cold, but we've walked along the promenade for exercise.

"I'm used to plov [rice dish] and fish in Uzbekistan, but I've had fish and chips and it was very nice and I've also tried roast beef and Yorkshire pudding at Bill's house."

Top tips

Bill Bond is the vice-chairman of Felixstowe Rifle Club, which has 10m, 20m and 50m ranges.



The target in the 50m event is about the size of a saucer

He said: "I got an email from Vladimir Filimonov, a Russian who I knew as a British Paralympic team coach, and we were obviously delighted at the prospect of having an Olympic guest."

"It was only when Vladimir arrived to check the facilities were OK that I realised he was also an Ipswich taxi driver."

The club is usually only open on weekday evenings and Sunday mornings, so they have had to organise a rota of 16 club members to come in to open up at other times for their guest.

Club members have been able to watch Mamedova training.

"You can pick up tips just by watching Sakina on stance, concentration and the dedication required to develop a rhythm and consistency," said Mr Bond.

"Members have realised there's a huge difference between county standard and Olympic standard."

19th Century guns

Although the club was founded in 1900, the Felixstowe range dates back to the Napoleonic era when the town's Landguard Fort was a coastal defence.

Mamedova tried some of the club's replica 19th Century weapons.

"I had a go with a black powder musket and a revolver and it was good fun, but more smoke than I'm used to," she said.

Mamedova is ranked in the International Shooting Sport Federation's top 50 for the 50m three position event and in the 70s for the air rifle event, but she still "hopes to be able to get a gold medal".

She has been staying at The Norfolk Guest House near the seafront and, while they are used to foreign guests from the town's container port, they say Mamedova is their first Uzbek.

Dawn Northcut, owner, said: "We have hosted the rifle club's German guests, so we said we'd love to have an Olympian.

"They're warm and lovely people - she'll come back from a day's shooting and tell us she's home.

"We'll miss them and we'll be following her progress avidly."

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