

Student Wins Russian Beauty Contest After Postponing Wedding to Compete

November 20, 2014



Tatiana Baitova

A 22-year-old student from Kurgan has been named the winner of this year's Beauty of Russia pageant, after putting her wedding plans on hold to avoid falling foul of the contest's rules on marriage.

Tatiana Baitova, a fifth-year student at the Kurgan State University, beat off competition from 49 other women to lift the gold-and-silver crown on Wednesday evening at Moscow's Russkaya Pesnya theater.

Baitova, who says she enjoys basketball, athletics and fitness, wowed the judges after performing a number of dance and musical numbers at the contest, Russian media reported.

The judges included presenter Anna Shatilova and Soviet crooner Joseph Kobzon, with whom the participants performed a song titled "Do Russians Want War?" in honor of the 70th anniversary of Russia's victory over Nazi Germany.

However, Baitova nearly didn't make it to the pageant after getting engaged to her boyfriend ahead of the contest. Competition rules state that participants must not be married or have children, so she decided to put her wedding on hold.

"I think that everything will be fine between us. It seems to me that my boyfriend is now very happy and proud of me," Baitova told the TASS news agency of her plans to postpone the wedding.

Asked what advice she had for other girls who wanted to follow in her footsteps, she added: "Nothing is impossible, you just need to work very hard, improve yourself every day, and strive for harmony."

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the Beauty of Russia contest, which since 2006 has sent its winners to represent the country at the Miss Earth pageant.

Miss Earth and its rivals Miss World and Miss Universe are widely considered to be the three major beauty contests internationally. Last year's Beauty of Russia winner, Anastasia Trusova, is currently in the Philippines preparing for the final of the 2014 Miss Earth contest.

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