



Diving: Women's 1m springboard and 10m platform synchro

Pakhalina: seventh medal, Malaysia: first podium

Since the 1m springboard has been included on the programme of FINA World Championships in 1991, it has been the most "non-Chinese" event of all the diving disciplines: China got victories in this event only in 1991 and 1994 and two years ago in Melbourne. The gold medals of the other four Championships went to Blythe Hartley (CAN) in 2001 and 2005 and Irina Lashko in 1998 and 2003. Lashko's triumphs, moreover, were acquired under unique circumstances: her first gold was captured under the Russian flag, the second – under the Australian.

Both divers have since retired from diving and the reigning champion from Melbourne – He Zi (CHN) – also missed the Championships in Rome. It was therefore a good moment for the veteran of Russian team – Yulia Pakhalina – to finally make her mark on the 1m springboard.

Pakhalina started well in the preliminaries, having left the two time Olympic gold medallist Minxia Wu (CHN) in her wake by 23.10 points. Both girls have a reputation as "3m queens" – both have their olympic gold in synchro events. Both have gained a lot of experience during their long diving lives. So, their fight for the individual title over 1m promised to be cruel.

The 1m imposes a lack of space for dives of a high degree of difficulty, and this was the reason why no diver could manage to gain superiority over the others. The only competitor who could be mentioned in this connection was Rebecca Ballantree (GBR) – she included a 305C dive (2.5 Reverse Somersaults) into the programme (DD=3.0) but the preliminary marks were not sufficient to attain a really high result in the group.

The final started with Pakhalina taking a confident lead. With the second round of dives Wu almost made it a tie for the lead (0.30 points behind), but Pakhalina proceeded to increase her lead to 9.15 after third round, an advantage she kept until after the fourth dives took place. By that time, it looked as though the two leaders were having their own final contest and were unaware to what was going on behind them.

"It was very important for me to keep a high level of concentration until the end of the programme," Yulia said. "The 1m is a very delicate event. You can't even do a slight mistake if want to win." After this gold medal, Pakhalina (32 years old) has now 12 awards in Olympic Games (five medals, including one gold) and World Championships (seven medals, including three titles). Curiously, it was her first presence in the podium on the 1m springboard.

Pakhalina got her first 1m gold with an outstanding result – 325.05. This was 13.15 ahead of Minxia Wu. Tania Cagnotto, who was third in the preliminaries and gave the home audience a good performance in the final (she became the only competitor to receive a 10.0 from the judges) moved to fourth place, behind Wang Han – a newcomer from the Chinese team.

Women's 10m platform synchro

The last final of the day – women's 10m platform synchro – brought a victory to Ruolin Chen and Xin Wang (CHN). China has now won this event at every World Championships since 1991, except for once in 1998 when Olena Zhupina and Svetlana Serbina of Ukraine defeated China in Perth.

The preliminary result of Chen and Wang was high enough to show that there is still just one favourite in the synchro platform competition. The Canadian pair (Meaghan Benfeito and Roseline Filion – bronze medallists from the 2005 Worlds') finished the preliminaries in second, but still 24.72 points behind China. And that event was the type of competition in which the fight for second is more interesting than for first: at least six teams might have been able to take this place on the podium.

The "dark horses" – Leong Mun Yee and Pamg Pandeleda Rinong (MAS) – were extremely surprising in this company. Australia, Canada, Germany and Russia have much more experience climbing the podium in this event. Nevertheless Malaysia delivered the third preliminary result (0.6 behind the Canadian duo

and 3.48 ahead of USA) and both girls demonstrated excellent quality in the optional dives and an impressive range of difficulty in the free programme.

The silver medallists of 2004 Games, Yulia Koltunova and Natalia Goncharova (RUS), were happy to make the final, but advanced without big expectations. The girls had been having some problems at home connected to a change in coaching (Koltunova started working in the same diving group as two-time world champion Gleb Galperin), which would explain her insufficient performances in both the individual platform competition and synchro. After the first (optional) part of the final the leading group was unsurprising. Chen and Wang were leading with 112.8; the silver Olympic medallists Briony Cole and Melissa Wu (AUS) were in second (106.8).

The main surprise came later. It happened in the fourth round when Leong Mun Yee and Pamg Pandeleda Rinong performed their combination, and with 244.1 points moved to the second position; 1.3 points ahead of Meaghan Benfeito and Roseline Filion. Mary Beth Dunnichay and Haley Ishimatsu (USA) were also hovering near the top (240.0) as well as Briony Cole and Melissa Wu (237.9).

Medals Table
after day 2

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	TOTAL
CHN	3	3	3	9
RUS	2	0	0	2
MEX	1	0	0	1
USA	0	2	0	2
ESP	0	1	0	1
AUS	0	0	1	1
CAN	0	0	1	1
MAS	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	6	6	6	18

The phantom of the close silver-medal conclusion must play its role in such a final: Leong Mun Yee and Pamg Pandeleda Rinong made a slight mistake in the last dive and that was enough to make them lose the silver medal. Meanwhile, the twist combination of the US divers was perfect and the girls scored 84.66 on their last dive to give themselves a fighting chance for the podium.

Meaghan Benfeito and Roseline Filion were less successful. They finished fourth with 321.3 points – just a heart-breaking 0.3 points less than Malaysia team.

The result of Leong Mun Yee and Pamg Pandeleda Rinong was thus historical; the first World Championships medal of this country (in any FINA discipline). The difference between the second and fifth places was also remarkable – 4.8 points.

As for the winners, they set a new standard in this discipline by reaching a total score of 369.18. The platform synchro women's result had never been so high - neither at a World Championships nor the Olympics.

SYNCHRO

Russia wins, Japan out of the podium

The first final of synchronised swimming at the 13th FINA World Championships – the Team Technical event – provoked the first surprise of the competition in this discipline: if the victory of Russia was expected (and natural), the fifth place of Japan constitutes a serious hiccup in the history of this country's successful tradition in synchronised swimming: since 1973, Japan has always been on the podium of the team event, including in 2007, when the programme was split between the technical and free finals.

Already away from the medals at the last Olympic Games in 2008 (fifth), Japan was once more surpassed by China, the new emerging power in synchro (first world championships' medal for this country), and again by Canada, which finished fourth (95.833 for the North Americans and 95.167 for the Asian competitors). China got the bronze with 96.667 - presenting almost the same team (six out of eight) than the one that competed at the "Water Cube" in Beijing. In favour of Japan's "collapse", one can say that the team has been completely renewed, with its youngest athletes being born in 1990 and the oldest from 1986.

At the top of the medals, Russia - with an even younger and likewise renewed team - (competitors born between 1987 and 1990) managed to get the gold once more (its seventh consecutive success since 1998 in this event) with a programme almost technically perfect (the same one they presented in Beijing) for which they received marks between 9.8 and 9.9). If the "old" team was normally rather "cold" while receiving its medals, this young generation of athletes could not hide its satisfaction when climbing to the highest level of the podium – something very unusual among Russian teams and a mark that this medal was perhaps more difficult to obtain than in the past.

More experienced, but mixing new elements (and containing four new athletes than the team that won the silver in Beijing), Spain confirmed its status as number 2 in the world by getting marks ranging from 9.7 and 9.9, for a total of 97.833 (against Russia's 98.833).

In the Press Conference after the event, Andrea Fuentes from Spain confirmed that the gap between her country and Russia is perhaps being reduced: "We know that the Russians are very strong technically, but we saw today that we are getting closer. It will be a very interesting duel in the free final," she said. Performing after Russia, Fuentes was asked if the fact that their rivals did not get any perfect "10" from the judges had given Spain hope for a possible gold. Her reply came without hesitation: "We hadn't seen the marks of Russia before, as we only concentrated on our programme! Our main concern is always to be energetic and give a nice routine for the spectators following the competition," considered the Spaniard.

Canada, in fourth, also proved itself as currently the best team in the Americas, defeating by a large margin their archrivals, the United States, which was only seventh behind Japan and Italy (sixth). The US team is also a new one, thus confirming that the 13th FINA World Championships in Rome (ITA) will be marked by a new generation of swimmers in this spectacular discipline. Ukraine (eighth), France (ninth) and DPR Korea (tenth) closed the top-10 of this final.

WATER POLO

Australia and Canada draw on opening day

Most games went to plan in the women's water polo competition at the FINA World Championships at the Foral Italico today.

Canada and Australia battled out a 6-6 draw in Group C and now need big wins against New Zealand and South Africa to decide who progresses as the group winner to the quarter-finals. New Zealand leads the group after eclipsing competition newcomer South Africa 12-5.

Group A saw Hungary head off China 10-7 while Italy hammered Uzbekistan 20-3. China should be one of the favourites here after winning gold at the just-completed World Student Games.

United States of America and Russia looked smart in Group B with Russia defeating Greece 14-9 and FINA World League champion USA recovering from a poor start at three goals down to win 19-6 over Kazakhstan.

Group D gave Olympic champion the Netherlands a scare when non-Olympic team Brazil played without respect to its world ranking. The Dutch came through to win 11-7. Spain also had to work hard for a high-scoring 17-12 margin over Germany.

The men's competition starts tomorrow with the main match-ups being Serbia-Spain at 18:20 and USA-Italy at 21:00.

Game 1, 09:30, women, CHN 7 HUN 10

Referees: G REEMNET (NED), N STAVROPOULOS (GRE)

Quarters: 2-2, 2-5, 1-3, 2-0

Extra man: CHN 2/10 HUN 3/6

A three-goal spurt by Rita Dravucz late in the second quarter took Hungary from 5-4 to 8-4 and the game was won. The fact that Hungary's dominance stretched to 10-5 against a team that had just won the World Student Games gold medal was immense. Hungary stepped off the gas and China tried valiantly but unsuccessfully to get back into the game.

Game 2, 10:50, women, RUS 14 GRE 9

Referees: Felipe GOMEZ (ITA), Ursula WENGENROTH (SUI)

Quarters: 3-1, 4-1, 5-5, 2-2

Extra man: RUS 3/9, GRE 4/11

Greece may have scored the first goal but Russia had four shots denied early. The shots soon came on target and just before halftime Russia was 7-1 ahead. Greece rallied with an excellent third period but Russia was equal to the task. Greece's efforts included drawing

three penalty fouls, which were all converted, but the last came two minutes from time when the game was over as a spectacle. Greek coach George Morfesis said: 'We had a bad beginning, especially in the first period. We thought that our best weapon was our defence but today it didn't work.'

Game 3, 12:10, women, USA 19 KAZ 6

Referees: Daniel FLAIVE (AUS), NI Shi Wei (CHN).

Quarters: 3-4, 6-1, 6-0, 4-1

Extra man: USA 1/9; KAZ 2/10

No one would have bet that Kazakhstan could have made an impression on FINA World League champion USA but the stars of America were shocked to be three down in less than three minutes. USA came back but Kazakhstan led by a goal at the break. Five straight goals by the USA, including doubles to RULON and WENGER, assisted the USA to a bold 9-5 turn. From then on the USA rode a wave of goals to victory.

Game 4, 13:30, women, NZL 12 RSA 5

Referees: Decio PATELLI (BRA), Steven ROTSART (USA)

Quarters: 1-2, 5-0, 3-0, 3-3

Extra man: NZL 2/5; RSA 2/8

It would be fair to say that New Zealand had a poor start and South Africa had a dream debut at this level. It wasn't until the last three minutes of the second quarter that New Zealand struck form with COX netting and then MASON putting away three in a row for 6-2 at halftime. South Africa's drought continued in the third but consecutive goals from KEET and HARRIS gave them some respite. New Zealand looked the far more accomplished team as it swam to victory.

Game 5, 15:00, women, CAN 6 AUS 6

Referees: Sergio BORELLI (ESP), Ifran SADEKOV (RUS).

Quarters: 0-1, 1-3, 3-1, 1-1

Extra man: CAN 1/7; AUS 2/6

Both teams were playing for superiority in the group and provided a fascinating game. Australia blew an excellent opportunity to swim away from Canada when 5-2 up early in the third period but allowed Canada back into the game and to go one goal ahead in the final quarter. The Aussie Stingers struck back through Webster from the top to secure the draw at 4:20 remaining. Canada's excellent defence appeared to send Australia into a panic in the second half.

Game 6, 16:20, women, GER 12 ESP 17

Referees: Guy PINKER (RSA), Erhan TULGA (TUR).

Quarters: 3-4, 3-1, 3-6, 3-6

Extra man: GER 2/4; ESP 7/14 Germany nearly upset Spain's hopes of a top finish in Group D. The Germans held sway at halftime after Spain had the quarter-time edge. With GIL on fire with a tournament-high seven, though, it appeared a waiting game as Spain slowly built momentum. Both teams were like runaway trains, especially in the final two quarters with nine goals each. Spain went to 9-6 and 11-7 to make the break in the third period before winning the game. German captain Dierolf tried single-handedly to keep her team in the match.

Game 7, 17:40, women, BRA 7 NED 11

Referees: Gaetan TURCOTTE (CAN), Radu MATAACHE (ROM).

Quarters: 3-3, 1-3, 2-5, 1-0

Extra man: BRA 2/6; NED 5/8

Brazil defied the odds to put incredible pressure on the Olympic champion Dutch, drawing the first period and winning the last. The all-important third quarter was where the damage was done when the Dutch stepped up a gear and took the halftime margin of 6-4 to 10-4 with VAN BELKUM scoring two of her four in this segment. PEDROSA led the charge for Brazil against a Dutch team with a new coach in former Italian mentor MAUGERI and with a small handful of Olympic gold medallists missing.

Game 8, 19:00, women, UZB 3 ITA 20

Referees: Mihajlo CIRIC (SRB), Ulrich SPIEGEL (GER).

Quarters: 1-2, 0-6, 0-8, 2-4

Extra man: UZB 0/2; ITA 6/6

Italy treated a large and passionate Italian crowd to a goal-fest at the expense of Uzbekistan, who last played at the 2005 Montreal championships and finished 15th. The first quarter was a dour affair with Italy hitting the wood, shooting wide and having shots channelled to the goalkeeper. The steamroller cranked up in the second quarter and rolled roughshod over the Uzbeks with a huge third period. FIORI had the luxury to use his full bench in the encounter.

RESULTS



Diving

WOMEN – 1M SPRINGBOARD

1. PAKHALINA Yulia RUS 325.05
2. WU Minxia CHN 311.90
3. WANG Han CHN 303.95
4. CAGNOTTO Tania ITA 296.60
5. STRATTON Sharleen AUS 284.15
6. MARCONI Maria Elisabetta ITA 268.80
7. GALLANTREE Rebecca GBR 267.55
8. LOUKAS Christina USA 266.35
9. DIECKOW Katja GER 265.40
10. RINALDI Melanie CAN 256.35
11. KRATOCHWIL Veronika AUT 238.30
12. ABEL Jennifer CAN 236.80

WOMEN – 10M PLATFORM SYNCHRO

1. CHEN R./WANG X. CHN 369.18
2. DUNNICHAY M. B./ISHIMATSU H. USA 324.66
3. LEONG M. Y./PAMG P. R. MAS 321.66
4. BENFEITO M./FILION R. CAN 321.39
5. COLE B./WU M. AUS 320.58
6. GLADDING M./SYLVESTER M. GBR 306.90
7. FEBVAY C./LABEAU A. FRA 299.28
8. MÖLLER J./SUBSCHINSKI N. GER 299.22
9. ESPINOSA P./SANCHEZ L. MEX 297.00
10. MAROCCHI V./SPAZIANI B. ITA 293.88
11. GONCHAROVA N./KOLTUNOVA Y. RUS 292.56
12. MENA P. Y. R./RIVERA R. A. CUB 281.34



Synchro

TEAM TECHNICAL

1. RUS Russian Fed. 98.833
2. ESP Spain 97.833
3. CHN P.R. of China 96.667
4. CAN Canada 95.833
5. JPN Japan 95.167
6. ITA Italy 94.666
7. USA United States of America 93.333
8. UKR Ukraine 92.500
9. FRA France 91.167
10. PRK D.P.R. Korea 88.000
11. BRA Brazil 86.833
12. NED Netherlands 86.167