

# SYNCHRO WOMEN



**Virginie DEDIEU (FRA)**  
20.80%



**Olga BRUSNIKINA (RUS)**  
9.40%



**Natalia ISHCHENKO (RUS)**  
9.40%



**Gemma MENGUAL (ESP)**  
9.40%

**The best of the decade:**  
**Anastasia DAVYDOVA (RUS)**  
**37.70%**

Also voted for:  
**Marie-Pier Boudreau-Gagnon (CAN)**  
**Anastasia Ermakova (RUS)**  
**Miho Takeda (JPN)**  
**Jian Wenwen (CHN)**

## Already a legend

Among the very few aquatic athletes of whom it could be said “their success spanned the entire decade”, Anastasia Davydova is a prime candidate. The Russian synchronised swimmer started her domination in the discipline in 2001 and in 2009 she was still at the top of the world. In those eight years, Davydova simply became the most awarded athlete in the history of synchronised swimming.

It all started at the highest level in July 2001, in Fukuoka (JPN). At the FINA World Championships, the 18-year-old revelation – she had dominated the international scene at junior level – paired with her inseparable partner Anastasia

Ermakova and claimed the silver medal in the duet event, which was won by the two “icons” of Japan, Miya Tachibana and Miho Takeda. A very promising debut for Anastasia, but fans of synchronised swimming understood well that this silver medal would be just the beginning of a series of – golden – achievements.

Born on February 2, 1983 in Moscow, Anastasia Davydova combines a unique technique with a rare sense of elegance. In recent years, during which Russian synchronised swimmers have dominated the discipline, there has been much discussion on the pool deck as to whether the country’s achievements are due only to a mastery of technique (in which Russians are clearly superior), or if this perfection in the execution of movements is also accompanied by a refined artistic sense. The debate could last hours and many different arguments could be brought to the table, but the sport being what it is – synchronisation with the music and with the other teammates – the conclusion is obvious: Davydova and other Russian swimmers approach per-

fection in both the way they perform figures and in the way they match their choreographies with the music.

Most of Davydova’s success is associated with another Anastasia – Ermakova. Being “the” duet of Russia for so many years, the harmony of the two athletes was always a reality in the water – but they have much in common, and not only in water: they were born in the same year, in the same city, they have the same body morphology, they train in the same club and they even studied in the same school (Moscow Institute of Economics – Management and Law). In an interview given to the FINA Magazine in December 2007, Ermakova confessed: “We are training and competing together for 10 years now. We never fight and we understand each other just with a look or a facial expression. We are like sisters.”

The duet finally broke up after the 2008 Olympic Games, when Ermakova decided to take an indeterminate break in her career. Davydova thought that 2009 was still a year in which she could pan for more gold and, with Svetlana Romashina, won the duet technical event at the FINA World Championships in Rome (ITA). She also shared gold in the team free event.

It was only after Rome that Davydova decided that the time had come to call a halt to a career blessed with success and longevity. She is now taking some time to re-focus her life, but, given that

Photo: REUTERS – DAVID GRAY

Welcome to the show!...  
Davydova and the Russians transformed  
synchro into a spectacle

## RESULTS, MEDALS

After a silver in 2001, gold was the only colour of the collection of Anastasia Davydova! An uninterrupted run of consecutive victories included 10 World Championships titles and four Olympic triumphs, in a roll of honour never equalled before by any other synchronised swimming athlete.

Photo: REUTERS – YANNIS BEHRAKIS



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Ermakova has expressed her intention to return to competition, it is legitimate to ask: will the world witness once more the magic of the Anastasias at Olympic level, let’s say in two years time, at London 2012? ■

By Pedro ADREGA  
Editor-in-chief of FINA Aquatics World Magazine