

DIVING
& MEN



Tian LIANG (CHN)
27.80%



He CHONG (CHN)
14.80%



Alexandre DESPATIE (CAN)
11.10%

The best of the decade:
Dmitry SAUTIN (RUS)
29.60%

Also voted for:
Dmitry Dobroskok (RUS)
Qin Kai (CHN)
Andreas Wels (GER)
Thomas Daley (GBR)

The diving czar

Dmitry Sautin lived through the political transformation that shook his nation at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, represented “three” countries (Soviet Union, Unified Team, and Russia), competed in six World Championships, five Olympic Games, won a total of 17 medals at those two competitions, had a career at the highest level of diving between 1991 and 2009. It would be more appropriate to say that Sautin is not the Diver of the Decade, but the diver of “the last TWO decades”.

When Dmitry Sautin first competed at the European Championships, in 1991 in Athens (still under the banner of the Soviet Union), some of the present stars of international diving were: five years old (Paola Espinosa, MEX), six years old (Alex Despatie, CAN, and Tania Cagnotto, ITA), 10 years old (Guo Jingjing, CHN), and three years before being born and not yet a twinkle in his father’s eye (Tom Daley, GBR)! In 2009, at the FINA World Championships in Rome, all these athletes competed and were there to witness the last appearance of Sautin, who finished sixth in the 3m springboard synchro.

It was “officially” the end of a long trajectory for the Czar of diving, who was born on March 15, 1974 in Voronezh. At 35, Sautin has apparently brought to an end what some regard as one of the most

Photo: REUTERS – ROBIN VAN LONKHUIJSEN

RESULTS, MEDALS

Sautin is the only diver so far to have medalled in all Olympic events (since the new formula was adopted in 2000) in a single edition of the Games. In 1996, in Atlanta, he got the title in 10m platform, while in Athens 2004 he was third in the 3m springboard and in Beijing 2008 he took the silver in the synchro 3m springboard.

Sautin competed at six World Championships from 1994 onwards, missing only in 2005 due to injury. He amassed nine medals (including five gold). At European Championships, he won 12 titles in his career – for many years a champion of both the 3m springboard and 10m platform (a rare feat), and then, due to the recurrence of injuries, more focused on the lower board.

prolific careers ever seen in diving (American Greg Louganis won four Olympic and five world titles and is generally considered to be the greatest diving career in history). The conditional tense of the sentence relates to previous unofficial announcements of retirement, first after the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, then after Beijing 2008, his fifth Games. The resilient Sautin always returned home



able to celebrate a visit to the podium – at all five Games! It sent a message to his peers: perseverance.

And the story of this man is basically one of courage. Many don’t know, but this immense career might never have happened: in 1991, at the start of his career, Sautin was stabbed in Moscow and almost bled to death (another Russian legend, Alex Popov, quadruple Olympic swimming champion, suffered a similar fate in 1996 after retaining both his sprint crowns in Atlanta). After an amazing recovery, Sautin competed at his first Games, Barcelona in 1992 and won the first of his eight Olympic medals, a bronze in the 3m springboard event. For the record, Sautin entered as representative of EUN (Unified Team), an acronym that represented the transition period through which the former

Soviet Union was living, before the further establishment of independent states.

The highlight of Sautin’s five Olympic Games was Sydney 2000, when he reached the podium in all four events on offer (those Games marked the launch of the synchronised events, in 3m springboard and 10m platform, raising the number of events from two to four, for both men and women): bronze in 3m springboard and 10m platform, gold in synchro 10m platform and silver in synchro 3m springboard. ■

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

The resilient Sautin always returned home able to celebrate a visit to the podium – at all five Games! It sent a message to his peers: perseverance



A balanced career... Sautin is made of some form of everlasting material