

DIVING & WOMEN



**Wu
MINXIA
(CHN)**
11.10%



**Yulia
PAKHALINA
(RUS)**
9.30%



**Tania
CAGNOTTO
(ITA)**
5.60%

The best of the decade:
Jingjing GUO (CHN)
64.80%

Perfection has a name

She is not only the Diver of the Decade, but simply the best diver in history. When mentioning Guo Jingjing, the aquatic community thinks about one of the most emblematic athletes in our sport, with a career that includes six Olympic and 11 World Championships medals. Watching Guo in action is a privilege that includes admiring the perfection of movement, the precision of the acrobatic elements and the cleanness of entry into the water. Guo Jingjing is a talent on the 3m springboard and a reference for all those aspiring to reach excellence in diving.



To all the rumours and great deal of speculation around her, Guo responds with superb performances and apparent easiness when executing her complicated dives



If there is one "weak" point in Guo's career it is that she specialises almost exclusively on the 3m springboard events. Other legendary divers were known for their ability in performing well from both the springboard and the platform (the prime example being Fu Mingxia, diver of the 1990s and an athlete who had half as many events to target in the days before syncho and at a time when world championships were held every four, not two, years) but the Chinese star opted at a very early stage of her career for the flexible board. Curiously, her first Olympic participation (Atlanta 1996) was on the 10m, in which she ranked fifth (behind Fu) – just before her 15th birthday. She then switched to 3m springboard, finished second to Fu off the 3m board in Sydney and then built a reputation for invincibility in every major competition she entered.

Photo: REUTERS - LASZLO BALOGH

Also voted for:
Paola Espinosa (MEX)
Chen Ruolin (CHN)
Ditte Kotzian (GER)
Emilie Heymans (CAN)

Born on October 15, 1981 in Baoding, Guo is presently one of China's ambassadors for sport and became a national hero after her successful campaign at a home Games at the Water Cube in Beijing in 2008. There was then some speculation as to whether Guo should retire after such a positive outcome, but the Chinese champion decided that she was motivated enough to continue for some years yet at the highest level. It is public knowledge that she wants to defend her titles at the 2011 FINA World Championships at home (Shanghai). Not hard to imagine then that she would also aim to compete at London 2012.

Very reserved at competition times – she often gives laconic answers to the media during press conferences – Guo's personal and sporting lives have been scrutinised by the Chinese media. To all the rumours and great deal of speculation surrounding her, Guo responds with superb performances and an apparent ease of execution when it comes to performing complex dives.

The "Princess of Diving", as she is respectfully known in China, started practising at the age of six, when her parents took her to a swimming class. "By mista-

ke", she ended up "jumping" from the boards. In the history of diving, she was preceded by two illustrious compatriots, first Gao Min, and then Fu Mingxia. After her retirement, who will be the new symbol of China's diving? It is still too early to say, but there is perhaps a "new kid on the block", 13-year-old sensation Hu Yadan, who is showing very promising potential on the 10m platform. Is she the new Guo Jingjing? ■

Photo: REUTERS - TONY GENTILE



Winning is a routine for her...
Guo, arguably the best one of all time

RESULTS, MEDALS

At the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, already in her pet event, Guo took two silver medals (in both individual and synchro 3m springboard). From then until the 2009 FINA World Championships, Guo Jingjing won both the individual and the synchro 3m springboard events at the Olympic Games (Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008) and FINA World Championships (Fukuoka 2001, Barcelona 2003, Montreal 2005, Melbourne 2007 and Rome 2009). An outstanding series, never equalled in the past in terms of FINA's major competition, and only matched by two other women at Olympic level: Pat McCormick (USA), who competed long before world championships existed, and Fu Mingxia (CHN), who competed at a time when world titles were up for grabs only every four years.

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

