

Ginger Huber, at 41: “Retirement? Still too early!”

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In the High Diving family, there are two athletes that are a reference. Among men, presentations are not needed for Colombia’s icon Orlando Duque, while in the women’s field US Ginger Huber is an inspiring model. Besides the passion they have for the sport they love (and actively promote), they have one common characteristic: both were born in 1974. Here in Abu Dhabi, they are both participating in the third edition of the FINA High Diving World Cup. Orlando Duque finished the first two rounds of dives among the quartet in the lead, while Huber concluded the women’s final with a bronze medal around the neck. At 41, nothing seems to stop them.

Born on December 6, 1974 and living in Florida, Huber was silver medallist in the first two FINA events in this discipline: the FINA World Championships in Barcelona (2013) and the FINA High Diving World Cup in Kazan (2014). Since then, she was twice sixth in 2015, firstly in the World Cup in Cozumel (MEX) and then at the Kazan Worlds. In Abu Dhabi, she came back to the podium area.



In action in Abu Dhabi... - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepbluemedi

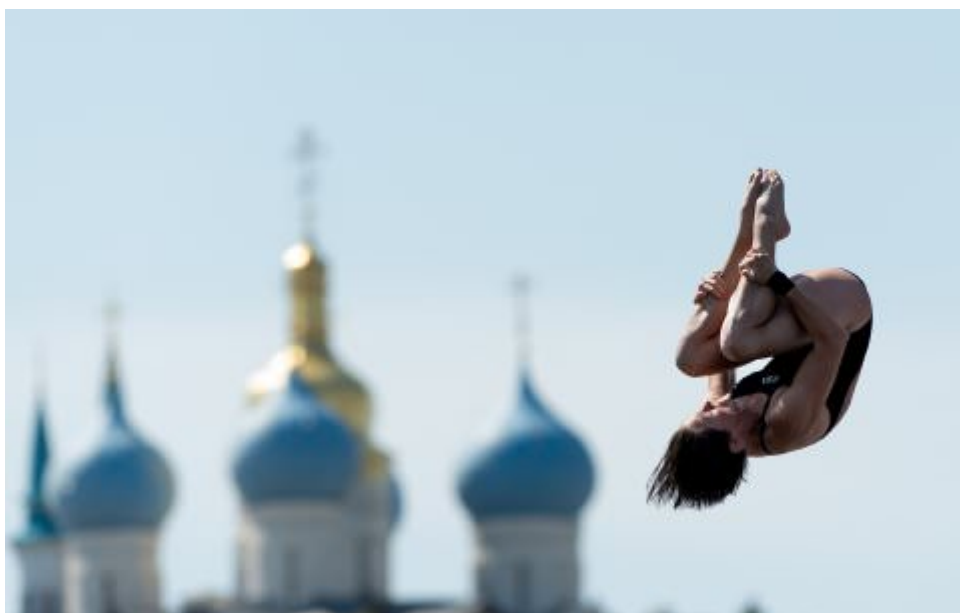
The US star started late in High Diving. As with many of competitors in this sport, Huber performed acrobatic shows in a theme park. The Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series then noticed her and invited her to be present in the first women competition of the circuit in 2013. The experience was successful – she was second in Malcesine (ITA), then completing the series in fourth (2014) and again as a runner-up in 2015.

“I started diving at the age of 14. After I finished college, I was part of an entertainment group

performing in acrobatic shows. At the time, if you could do high dives you were more 'valuable', so I had no difficulty in finding a job. I still do it today to earn my life", she recalls. "In 2013, was my real start in the sport, after I was asked to be part of the Red Bull competition".

Being one of the "veterans" in High Diving – but also in Aquatics sports -, Ginger Huber has a simple explanation on what still drives her to be motivated. "I don't do it exclusively for me. Being active is part of an effort to grow the sport, to make more girls coming into high diving. If I stop now, I will have the sensation that the sport is decreasing... So, I keep going". Asked about the more visible evolution among men – the group of women at FINA competitions remain stable at around 10 -, the US athlete is however optimistic: "We are having some new athletes coming. In the group here in Abu Dhabi, there is a couple of them – the overall number seems reduced, but we know that some other girls just couldn't be present. We definitely need more exposure, but there are new athletes in the sport that decided to come in after they saw the images at the 2013 Worlds in Barcelona".

The inclusion of this discipline in the FINA programme was a great step forward for Ginger. "It was really necessary and it was the direction I wanted for the sport to go! After this very important step, the next one will be the inclusion in the Olympics. That's our ultimate goal!" she confesses. The US great believes that conditions are met for that further milestone: "The sport is very spectacular and attracts the public's attention. Moreover, it doesn't take much to be organised – you just have to build up a tower".



...and in Kazan! - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepbluemedi

Asked about the technical evolution in High Diving, Ginger Huber thinks that we are still far from the limit. "You see that even in pool diving they keep progressing. With technology studying the technique, I believe you will be able to add some somersaults and twists to the combinations that are currently performed. Some athletes are already trying the running approach, which will also increase the room for more technical elements during the flight".

Looking ahead, she has one main goal: "To continue diving on a safe mode and ensuring that this small group continues enjoying the opportunity of competing in a great sport. I want everyone to be happy and motivated, and bring other people to do it. We all respect each other very much – we all know how dangerous the sport is and we don't want to see no one injured".

When asked about her strategy during competition, she is clear: “If I want to have a chance, I have to continuously improve the DD [degree of difficulty] of my dives. I would prefer to do it simpler, but I have to perform some complicated dives... But I still love that pure sensation of the flight and the technique associated to the simple dives”.

Finally, at 41, an elite athlete has to inevitably think in the end of the career. “I look at one competition or a season at the time. I don’t make plans for two/three years. I constantly listen to my body and mind, so that I know if I can continue or not. Then, if the sport has also grown, I would then have achieved my goal!”
