

DWS 2016, Windsor: Canada targets success in Rio

Pedro Adrega, Head of FINA Communications Department

The organisation of the FINA/NVC Diving World Series' leg for the third consecutive year in Windsor (CAN) is also a fair tribute to a country that is used to shine at international level in this discipline. Canadian divers have often been at the top of both the Olympic and world hierarchy, and the upcoming Games in Rio are naturally generating some medal expectations among supporters (and media).

“If we manage to achieve our full potential in Brazil, I believe we have good hopes of getting to the podium in Brazil. We will continue working hard for the months to come, but we remain pretty confident”, declares Jennifer Abel to FINA, one the most successful Canadian divers in the last years.

The North American nation has exactly 50 medals at Olympic Games and World Championships, with the men achieving 14 podium presences and the women the remaining 36. In the men's field, the greatest star of the country was undoubtedly Alexandre Despatie (not competing anymore), with 10 awards, including two silver medals in the 3m springboard at the 2004 and 2008 Olympics in Athens (GRE) and Beijing (CHN) respectively. Moreover, at World Championships' level, he is the only diver in history to have won a gold medal in each of the three individual events – 10m platform in 2003, 1m and 3m springboard in 2005.



Pamela Ware and Jennifer Abel (CAN), with the Kazan 2015 Worlds silver medal in the 3m springboard synchro - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepbluemedi

In the women's field, the best so far is Emilie Heymans (also retired) with seven medals (her best in individual events: 10m platform silver at the 2008 Olympics), but Jennifer Abel appears in second, with six podium appearances. Abel's only Olympic medal was the bronze in the 3m springboard synchro in 2012, while she accumulates three silver and two bronze at the Worlds since 2011.

Based in Montreal, the 24-year-old diver considers that Chinese divers are not invincible. "Their secret? They never get distracted with what may happen! They may have a bad take-off from the board, but in the next fraction of second, they get focused and finish the dive in good conditions. It's a mental thing. Everyone has the training level to dive as good as the Chinese. The difference is that most of us cannot perfectly manage the distractions that may occur during the competition. The Chinese do", she admits.

In order to be as close as possible to the conditions that divers will encounter in Rio, the Canadian team will make a training camp in Cuba after the conclusion of the World Series, to get acquainted with the "warm temperatures and the weather conditions in an outdoor venue". The diving competition in Rio taking place at the Maria Lenk pool (an outdoor environment), Abel concedes that she prefers to compete indoor, but she takes "whatever it comes".

Entered in the 3m individual and synchro events (together with Pamela Ware), the Canadian star is optimistic. "I have good hopes for the two of them. Both from my side, and with Pamela, I believe we are quite solid at the moment and the training is progressing well".

Speaking about her specific training routine, Jennifer Abel explains: "In general, I train from 10 in the morning to 4.30 in the afternoon. We have one hour for lunch, and we normally alternate diving training with dryland sessions. The work on the synchronisation is also a very important one".

At the end of the first final of the Windsor leg, Abel and Ware finished third in the women's 3m synchro springboard. Zi He/Han Wang (CHN, gold) clearly dominated the competition, winning in 339.90, thus preserving their nation's invincibility so far in the 2016 FINA/NVC Diving World Series. The real duel of the final was for the silver medal, with Canada leading operations until the fourth and penultimate dive. But a better fifth attempt from the Italians allowed Tania Cagnotto and Francesca Dallape to finish second in 313.44, quite close to the 312.87 from the Canadians. Shortly after, Philippe Gagne and François Imbeau-Dulac gave another bronze medal to the host of this World Series' leg, this time in the men's 3m springboard synchro.
