

Diving, Men's 10m Final - Brilliant platform win for Chen Aisen leads China to Seventh Heaven

Derek Parr, FINA Media Committee Member from Great Britain

Chen Aisen won the men's 10m platform final in a blaze of perfect 10s to make it seven Olympic titles out of eight for China in a thrilling climax to the diving programme at the Maria Lenk Aquatics Centre on Saturday.

Chen maintained his poise and control where his rivals faltered and claimed his second gold medal of the Games following his win in the 10m synchro with Lin Yue. Mexico's German Sanchez overhauled defending Olympic champion David Boudia in the final round to claim silver, more than 50 points behind Chen, leaving the American with bronze to go with the silver he had garnered in the 10m synchro. Chen's victory restored the Olympic platform crown to China for the first time since Hu Jia won in 2004, Australia's Matthew Mitcham having prevailed in 2008 and Boudia in 2012.



Mexico's German Sanchez ©Andrea Staccioli/Deepbluemedi/Insidefoto

After European champion Tom Daley, Olympic and world bronze medallist on the platform, had crashed out last in the morning's semi-final after leading the way in the preliminary round, it was world champion Qiu Bo who wobbled next, fluffing his second dive of the final.

Qiu's response was magnificent: a full quota of seven 10 scores from the judges for his ensuing reverse 3-1/2 somersaults for 102.00 points. He hauled himself up to third with two more 10s and 102.60 for his back 3-1/2 piked in the fourth round but then blew his next dive and ended up sixth, a vast 97.10 points on aggregate behind triumphant team-mate Chen.

Chen started off with a pair of 10s for his opening reverse 3-1/2 somersaults to take charge, with Qiu just behind. Boudia, silver medallist with Steele Johnson in the 10m synchro, then trumped that with four 10s for an inward 3-1/2 to take over at the top. But Chen leapfrogged back into the lead in the third round, scoring 102.60 for his armstand dive, one of three 100+ dives he achieved in the final. He increased his lead over Boudia to more than 20 points in the penultimate round but then the American wavered on his concluding forward 4-1/2.



David Boudia (USA) ©Andrea Staccioli/Deepbluemia/Insidefoto

Sanchez seized his opportunity and overtook Boudia, silver medallist behind Qiu at the last three FINA World Championships but this time having to settle for bronze. Chen finished in a blaze of glory, earning five 10s and the final's highest score of 108.00 points for his concluding back 2-1/2 somersaults with 2-1/2 twists which brought the evening, which had begun in drizzle, to a brilliant close.

Chen claimed the gold with 585.30 points, his aggregate outscoring the 571.85 Daley amassed in the preliminary round, a total which would have won gold at the 2012 Games. Sanchez took the silver with 532.70 and Boudia, who squeezed into the final as 10th of the 12 qualifiers from the semi-finals, the bronze with 525.25.

Daley, contesting his third Olympics having first appeared at the 2008 Beijing Games at 14, had earned a Rio bronze medal with Daniel Goodfellow in the 10m synchro. But, before his downfall in the semi-final, gold had seemed to be within the 2009 world champion's reach in the individual 10m, the event in which he had burst on to the international scene at 13 when he became Europe's youngest-ever diving champion. Instead of contesting the final, he watched it with his British team-mates at the side of the pool. Boudia also had a nerve-racking morning and nearly failed to make the cut but rallied with his final dive to scrape through.

QUOTES

Chen Aisen (CHN), gold, men's 10m platform

“I feel very honoured. It has always been my aim to have two Olympic gold medals, I am very happy today with my overall performances in Rio.”

“Before my last dive, I wasn't very worried with what was going on – I was just focused on the technique of my next dive.”

German Sanchez (MEX), silver, men's 10m platform

“After the synchro event, they talked a lot about me. Every day I listened comments about me, but what I care of are my results. God never let her sons to be humiliated. My friend David (Boudia) gives me a lot of strength, he just tells me to be myself.”

“We have a strong friendship – this is a competition and everyone is doing its best to get the best result. The fame may be finishing, but this kind of friendship (with David Boudia) stays for life.”

“For my last dive, I just thought in doing it correctly – not on a spectacular way, but get things done on a proper way.”

“It was perhaps an unexpected medal – it proves that nothing is impossible. When you do things with the heart, results are coming out. My teammate Ivan Garcia told me before the competition that no matter who would win from us, he would be happy.”

David Boudia (USA), bronze, men's 10m platform

“Knowing that I can miss a dive and still be on the podium is a very special sensation for me.”

“This medal has a special taste for me. Times have been challenging since London. I got married, I had my first child. But I was very much encouraged by my wife and by my teammates.”
