

## **Rhiannan Iffland (AUS) – High Diving Aussie rookie of success**

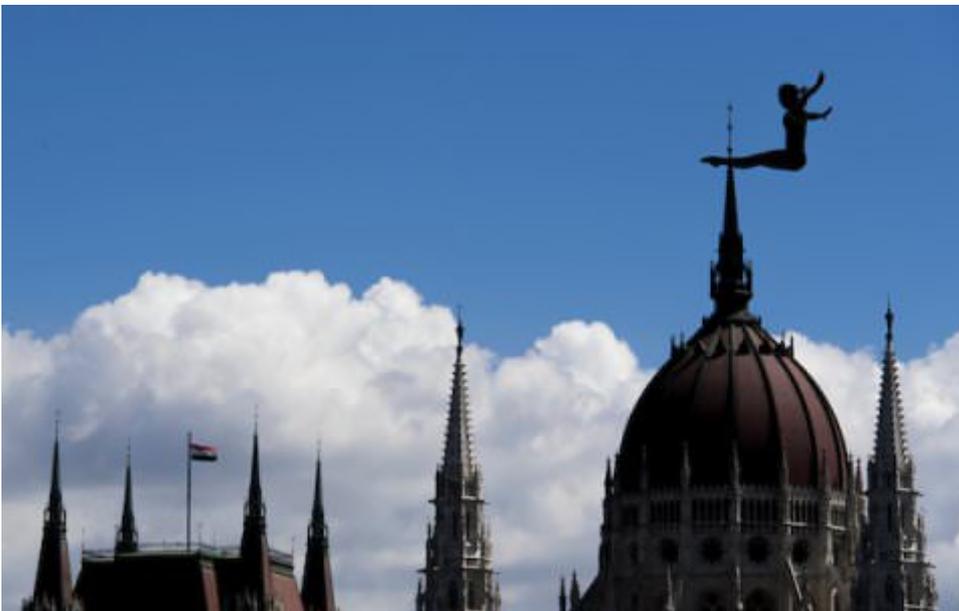
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This is a rare example of (very) quick success.

Invited with a wild-card to take part in the 2016 Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series, Rhiannan Iffland was the first rookie ever to win this annual circuit! In April this year, at the FINA High Diving World Cup in Abu Dhabi (UAE), the 25-year-old Australian was already silver medallist, behind Mexico's Adriana Jimenez.

Now, in Budapest (HUN), the Aussie star won the gold medal in 320.70 points (and left Jimenez with the silver), confirming her meteoric ascension in the discipline. It was the first medal ever for Australia in high diving at the FINA World Championships.

Iffland started strong, with the second provisional position after round 1. Her front 2 somersaults, with 1 ½ twists (DD 2.6) received 66.30 points from the judges, slightly worse than Anna Bader (the German diver ended up in fifth at the end of the competition) who completed this round in 67.60. On Saturday July 29, the Australian continued her winning saga, firstly performing a reverse with ½ somersault and 1 twist, noted between 8.0 and 9.0.



At this stage, Tara Tier (USA) was in the lead of the competition, after her nearly perfect front 2 somersaults with 1 ½ twists. Came round 3, and Iffland finally managed to upgrade her position, after a solid inward 3 somersaults with ½ twist. Her last dive, a back 3 somersaults with 1 twist (96.90 points), was also consistent and ensured the gold medal.

Throughout the four rounds of dives, the Australian ace was never noted under 8.0.

The other Aussie diver of the final, Helena Merten, second at the 2016 World Cup, was not in her best shape and was only seventh in Hungary.

“It was definitely an amazing couple of days! The venue is great, and the view from the top of the platform is outstanding. We have the best view of all aquatic sports! In high diving, we are a very tight community, the same group travels around the world for six months, and we are always together. It’s nice to have someone around in such a dangerous and extreme sport”, Iffland said at the end of her winning performance.



A New South Wales’ native, Rhiannan Iffland (1,67m/60kg) first started in sport, by doing trampoline. Between 2001 and 2006, she was a pool diver, and she even trained with Australia’s pool diving stars Melissa Wu and Matthew Mitcham (2008 Olympic champion in the 10m platform).

As with the majority of the high divers, Iffland then went on performing acrobatic shows in cruise ships, in the Mediterranean and Caribbean Sea. Also an artist in a theme park in Lyon (FRA), she had the opportunity of diving from a 20m-tower there. The transition to the Red Bull circuit was a natural one, with the results we know.

After the title in 2016, she is also in the lead of the ranking this year, after winning the first and third legs of the circuit, in Ireland and Italy respectively.

### **“We are always afraid”**

Reflecting on the challenges associated to High Diving, the Australian ace explains:

“It’s always the same feeling up: we are always afraid. We are never 100% comfortable there; that is why we need a lot of mental strength to overcome that feeling. The only way to work that is by training a lot and say to yourself that you have done those movements and those dives a lot of times before. If you think, 20m is the double of 10m, so as we normally train in 10m, we have to work the dive into parts and then put it together when we are in a high diving competition”.

Pool diving is a relatively popular sport in Australia.

Besides the already mentioned success of Matthew Mitcham in 2008 at Olympic level, Brittany Broben got the silver also in the women's 10m platform at the 2012 London Games, and more recently, last summer in Rio, Maddison Keeney and Anabelle Smith earned bronze in the women's 3m springboard synchro. Keeney was also 2017 world champion in Budapest in the 1m springboard, while Emily Seebohm gave Australia's third overall title in the Magyar capital, by winning the women's 200m backstroke in swimming.

After her success in Budapest, Iffland concedes:

“People in Australia are now more aware for this sport. Media coverage is getting more intense and we hope that additional facilities will be available for diving. All this makes more people to come to the sport and will definitively help in raising our level”.

While her country still discovers their new hero, Rhiannan Iffland has other supporters waiting for her at home:

“The first person I contacted when I finished? Definitively my sister, as my biggest fan is my seven-year-old nephew!”

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