

AS, Past winners: Romashina and Ishchenko, two legends

FINA Communications Department

As with Diving, where China's dominance is a fact, Artistic Swimming has also a clear nation on top of the rankings for almost two decades now: Russia. Its athletes' victories at the Olympic Games and World Championships are naturally accompanied by the designation of Russian stars for the "Best Athletes of the Year" accolade.

Since 2010, two icons of the discipline have been regularly awarded for their outstanding results: Natalia Ishchenko and Svetlana Romashina. The first one received the prize in 2010 and 2012, while Romashina was the best in 2013 and 2015. Together – they have been competing as a duet for many years -, they were honoured in 2011 and 2016.

Since 2005, their roll of honour is impressive. Ishchenko has amassed 26 medals at Olympic Games and FINA World Championships, including 24 victories. She is the most titled ever artistic swimmer in the history of the sport. Her only two silver medals were obtained in 2005 (solo) and 2007 (solo free); otherwise, it was victory all the way through. At Olympic Games, Ishchenko has two golds in Duet and three victories in Team, while at FINA's showcase event, the Russian great collected six gold in Solo, five in Duet and Team, and three additional triumphs in Free Combination!

Romashina's collection is also outstanding. In the last three editions of the Olympic Games – Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio 2016 -, she earned five gold medals out of the six titles on stake in Duet and Team (she only missed the Duet win in China). At five editions of the FINA World Championships (2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015), she listened to the Russian anthem on 18 occasions, distributed by events as follows: three Solo titles, eight in Duet, four in Team, and three in Free Combination.



Huang Xuechen (CHN) - Photo by deepbluemia

2014 was the only year when the “Best Athlete of the Year” award eluded these two icons of Artistic Swimming. In a year without Olympic Games nor World Championships, the prize went to China’s Huang Xuechen, for her brilliant performances at the World Cup and at the Asian Games. At the FINA event – where China got the overall title -, Huang was second in the Team and Free Combination, while she won these events in the continental showcase on that year. Additionally, the China star is the happy owner of five Olympic and 14 World Championships’ medals (none of them gold) throughout her very successful career.

A milestone in 2015

The World Championships in 2015 (Kazan, RUS) marked an important turning point in the history of Artistic Swimming: for the first time, men were allowed to compete at the FINA showcase competition, in the mixed duet technical and free event.

On that year, Aleksandr Maltsev (RUS) and Bill May (USA) received the FINA recognition, after respectively winning the free and technical final in Russia.

In 2016, the award was not presented, as no FINA event included mixed events in the programme.



Bill May (USA) - Photo by deepbluemia

List of past winners*

Men

2015 – Aleksandr Maltsev (RUS) and Bill May (USA)

2016 – *no FINA events in mixed duet*

Women

2010 – Natalia Ishchenko (RUS)

2011 – Natalia Ishchenko and Svetlana Romashina (RUS)

2012 – Natalia Ishchenko (RUS)

2013 – Svetlana Romashina (RUS)

2014 – Xuechen Huang (CHN)

2015 – Svetlana Romashina (RUS)

2016 – Natalia Ishchenko and Svetlana Romashina (RUS)

**The FINA World Aquatics Gala “Soirée des Etoiles” has been successively organised in Doha (QAT, 2014), Budapest (HUN, 2015), and Windsor (CAN, 2016).*
