

Aquatics review of 2017: Diving - China number one but not unbeatable

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Tom Daley ended four years of Chinese monopoly to win the [FINA Male Diver](#) [1] of the Year award but China still ended 2017 top in almost every department of the FINA World Rankings. Daley has grown from boy wonder to man of steel in the best part of a decade at the highest level and the outstanding accomplishment of his career so far came at the FINA World Championships in Budapest when he regained the world platform title he had won as a 15-year-old in Rome in 2009.

Nonetheless, at the end of the year, Chinese divers led all the men's and women's rankings - based in 2017 on performances in the World Championships and the World Series and Grand Prix circuits - except the men's 3m synchro in which Russia prevailed, largely on the strength of the riproaring victory of Ilya Zakharov and Evgeny Kuznetsov at the World Championships. Meanwhile, at home in China, a new star was shining, as 13-year-old Zhang Jiaqi upstaged Olympic and world champions in the women's platform at both the National Diving Championships and the National Games.



Tom Daley (GBR)

Olympic champion Chen Aisen, who won all four World Series men's platform events, led the year-end world rankings on the 10m board and went on to amass a personal record total far higher than everything in Budapest at the Chinese National Games in Tianjin in August. Daley, however, fully deserved to succeed his rival as the FINA Diver of the Year. Winning the world title a year after his Olympics had imploded, when

he finished last in the 10m semi-final in Rio de Janeiro, made the Budapest triumph especially satisfying for Daley, all the more so because he did it under the most intense pressure imaginable. Chen had hurled down a tremendous challenge with a colossal score in the final round as the Chinese camp went wild. But that served only to strengthen Daley's resolve and the Briton matched Chen's tally to pull off a magnificent win.

"I was in a complete sense of competitive flow and I don't think in that moment there was going to be anything that could have stopped me," Daley told FINA Aquatics World Magazine after the championships.

Daley had finished on the podium in the four World Series events in March and April, missing the top step but claiming a silver and three bronzes. He produced his best when it mattered most, at the main event of the year, the FINA World Championships, which will stand him in good stead as he prepares for the biggest challenge of all, tilting for Olympic gold at the 2020 Games in Tokyo having freed himself from the pressure he put himself under in his doomed campaign in Rio. It will not trouble the 23-year-old Briton that the order in the world rankings went 1 Chen, 2 Yang Jiang, 3 Daley, because 1 Daley, 2 Chen, 3 Yang at the World Championships was the result which mattered most.

Shi Tingmao became the first triple winner of [FINA's Female Diver of the Year](#) [1] honour, an accolade won only by Chinese divers in the eight years since the awards were introduced in 2010. Double world champion in individual 3m and synchro 3m in 2015, Shi completed the golden Olympic double in 2016 and retained her two world titles at Budapest 2017, establishing herself in the pantheon of such illustrious all-conquering predecessors on the springboard as Gao Min, Fu Mingxia, Guo Jingjing and Wu Minxia. Wu, Shi's synchro partner in 2015 and 2016, was herself twice FINA Female Diver of the Year (2011 and 2012).



Shi Tingmao (CHN)

Shi was unbeatable in 2017, winning the 3m and 3m synchro golds at all four World Series events and then running the show at the Budapest Worlds, where she retained her 3m crown ahead of team-mate Wang Han and Canada's Jennifer Abel after winning the synchro 3m with new partner Chang Yani. That was more than enough to guarantee Shi top place in the FINA World Rankings for the women's 3m ahead of Wang and Canadians Pamela Ware and Abel.

Shi maintained her winning ways at the Chinese National Games, completing yet another individual and synchro double on the 3m board and earning the highest marks of her career in the individual event. Despite a waist injury Shi amassed 409.20 points from her five dives, compared with the 383.50 with which she had

won the world title the previous month. World silver medallist Wang Han was second again in Tianjin, this time with 386.55 points (359.40 in Budapest). Shi, who had earlier won the 3m synchro with Chang Yani, told the Xinhua news agency:



Shi Tingmao (CHN)

"It was my personal best score in my career and my best performance this year. I collected 406.05 at the Rio Olympic Games." Ever the perfectionist, however, she added: "I was not satisfied with myself... because I made a little mistake in my last dive. I should have done better with that score."

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The full length article is available in the latest issue of the FINA Magazine
