

## Virginie Dedieu (FRA): “Paris is going to be a rich competition”

FINA Communications Department

On the eve of the inaugural leg of the [3rd FINA Artistic Swimming World Series 2019](#) [1] in Paris, France, FINA met with one of the most successful and famous athletes in the discipline, France’s Virginie Dedieu.

Giving a hand during training to the German and French teams at the Maurice Thorez Aquatic Centre, the Sydney bronze medallist and multiple World, European and French champion, tells us her previsions for the World Series which integrates the annual French Open, held from March 1-3 this year in a neighbouring town of the French capital.



Looking ahead at three fierce days in the pool, during which athletics, elegance and rhythm will be showcased, Dedieu, 40 years-old and now retired since the Kazan 2015 FINA World Championships said:

“Results for this competition are difficult to predict. It will vary depending on the event.”

In the absence of the Russians, the dominant force in the discipline, many great names are still looking promising in this first international meet of the year.

“The Ukrainians, the Japanese and the Spanish are strong contenders. From what I have seen

here so far, Japan has one of the best teams. The podiums will really be mixed and varied because even the strong countries aren't necessary taking part in all of the events."

"For example, Spain, with Ona Carbonell, is registered for the Solo Free. She is definitely one of the favourites in the Solo. In the teams, I think the Ukrainian girls are the highest hopes. I haven't seen them swum but they are definitely here as a team. Most of the time, Ukraine takes part in all of the events available and make the most of the opportunities."



"It is going to be a rich competition and the podiums will be a surprise. It is certainly a good thing, as it allows the emerging countries to make a name for themselves on the international stage and to get ready for the next competitions."

Speaking about the French team, very close to Virginie Dedieu's heart, she confessed:

"I think, given the landscape here, we could have some French girls on the podium depending on the event. If the Ukrainians and the Spanish are swimming the Team events it might be difficult to get gold for the French girls but why not in the other events. They should at least be aiming for the podium in the Team events. Regarding the Duets, there are more athletes taking part so the twin's objective is to show they have improved compared to the previous years. They have started swimming together two years ago and they have really reached a milestone as they have been selected for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. They know they still have a long way to go and that they have to leave a good impression at each competition and opportunity."



After retiring a first time, Dedieu decided to come back to artistic swimming competition when the Mixed Duet was included for the first time in Kazan 2015. She has particularly welcome the addition of the male athletes to the sport.

“Personally I have loved and welcomed this innovation to the sport. It was the reason I came back in 2015. I represented France with my partner. I think it is a very good thing, not only for the men because they are finally recognised internationally as they didn’t have any competitions for them before but it is also opening new doors.”



“The culture is pretty open here so we have always had a few boys in our sport. They can now take part in important competitions and it is a huge motivation and recognition for them. We can see little boys in clubs wanting to commit and I believe it truly adds an additional dimension to our sport. With a man in the water, the routine is less focused on the synchronisation but more

on the exchange, the man carrying the woman and the dance like in artistic skating.”



Now a confirmed interior architect and mother of two, Dedieu misses many aspects of her sporting career.

“Luckily I have kept a lot of links with artistic swimming because I am passionate about it. I am not officially coaching on an annual basis but I think I can still transmit a lot. What I miss the most is the competition for sure, sharing intense moments, the adrenaline and the emotion. I also miss organising and planning my year around events and training. I miss witnessing my evolution and progress so I am trying to find this feeling again somewhere else.”

“I am sometimes still called to put together choreographies and for technical support both abroad and in France and I really like this aspect. I like sharing and spreading my knowledge with the girls and continuously create.”

Laughing Dedieu however admits she doesn't miss at all the gelatine the swimmers use to keep their hair sleeked back in the water during competition.

“Honestly there aren't many aspects I didn't like about the sport. It is a rich and complete sport, no repetition and it isn't rebarbative at all. There is a lot of creativity all the time. This is why I am still here and I feel I still have a lot to share and give back.”

Dedieu has definitely maintained her important role in Sport after retiring. She is heavily involved in the Paris 2024 Organising Committee, has a seat within the International Olympic Committee and FINA Athletes Committees and is also a commentator for France Television (artistic swimming and diving) at major global events.

“Sports values have always been very important to me. Trough Paris 2024, I am leading actions in schools and high schools with the aim to make teachers and professors understand how crucial sport is to the development of a person but also to improve the way studying and training work together for the athletes.”

“In my generation there was a stigma that athletes weren't good students and I want to change this wrong perception. It is proven nowadays that elite athletes are clever too because of the skills necessary to perform at such high level. Concentration and intelligence are key in our sport. Sport brings values such as sharing, adaptation, discipline, organisation and commitment

that are important in the working world and for a company.”



A total of 190 athletes, while 25 teams from Argentina, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, Curacao, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Singapore, Serbia, Switzerland, Slovakia and Ukraine will be performing their routine in Paris.

The four-day competition’s schedule unfolds as follows:

<b>FRIDAY 1 MARCH</b>	<b>SATURDAY 2 MARCH</b>	<b>SUNDAY 3 MARCH</b>
10:00-12:00 Technical Solo 14:00-17:00 Technical Duet 18:30-18:50 Technical Mixed Duet 19:00-20:30 Technical Team	10:00-13:00 Free Solo 16:00-16:30 Free Mixed Duet 16:45-18:00 Highlights	10:00-11:30 Free Combination 13:00-14:15 Free Duet (F) 15:30-16:45 Free Team 17:30 Exhibition Gala

You will be able to follow the competition LIVE streamed on [FINAtv](#) [2] and results will be available on [FINA website](#) [3].

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