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Diving, Day 6: Si upstages Olympic champion in world 10m duel

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Fourteen-year-old Yajie Si dethroned defending champion Ruolin Chen, the Olympic gold medallist, in the final of the women's 10m platform at the FINA World Championships. Si, the youngest finalist, and Chen were exactly level after three of the five final dives, having astonishingly recorded precisely the same scores on each effort. Bu Si broke the deadlock in the fourth round as Chen faltered after Si had registered her own lowest score. The teenager then held her nerve in the final series and withstood a rousing challenge from the Olympic champion, whose final dive was not enough to bring her the gold. Chen, who had won her fourth successive world 10m synchro title earlier in the week, had been aiming to become only the second woman to retain the world individual 10m crown and emulate the great Mingxia Fu, who won in 1991 and 1994. It was the sixth Chinese one-two in the event and the seventh Chinese victory in 15 editions at the Worlds. Si triumphed with 392.15 points, with Chen, four times Olympic champion, having won 10m and 10m synchro gold medals in 2008, less than four points adrift on 388.70. European champion Iulia Prokopchuk of Ukraine scooped the bronze on 358.40, more than 30 points behind the Chinese pair. It was the sixth diving title won by China out of the seven thus far contested in Barcelona. Only the men's 10m synchro, won by Germans Sascha Klein and Patrick Hausding, has escaped them.

Victoria Lamp of the USA took the lead in the opening round with an excellent armstand dive, with Chen and Si bracketed together just behind. The Chinese pair also recorded identical scores in the second round when they moved to the top of the order. Chen and Si registered identical scores again in the third round, stretching their lead to more than 40 points ahead of Pandelega Rinong Pamg of Malaysia, who was deducted two points for initially failing to hold an armstand at the start of her dive. Chen faltered in the fourth round, enabling Si to move 8.25 points clear, with Prokopchuk moving into third place. Chen outscored Si in the final round but remained 3.45 points adrift. Sarah Barrow of Great Britain finished fourth on 346.45 but team-mate Tonia Couch, second in the semi-final between Chen and Si, had to settle for ninth. Australia's Olympic silver medallist Brittany Broben failed to make the final after finishing 16th in the semi-final.

{youtube}1rdzF8sVnoI{/youtube}

QUOTES

Gold Medal: Yajie Si (CHN)

“Overall, my performance was quite good, especially the first four dives where I was consistent. I am very excited with this gold”.

“Secret for success? Train hard and not be lazy!”

Silver Medal: Ruolin Chen (CHN)

“I am pretty satisfied with my final, except for the fourth dive [207C, back 3 ½ somersault – DD 3.3]. I had only performed this dive once and wasn't very sure on how it could result here in Barcelona. It went a bit wrong...”

“The competition is as it is: someone wins, and someone has to lose. The key is how you manage your failure. If you keep looking back, you won't do it better; if you look ahead, your failure will just be a bad memory”.

“Until the Games in 2016, this Olympic cycle will be relatively easy for me in comparison with Beijing 2008 and London 2012. Having strong opponents in the Chinese team is an additional motivation for me to perform well”.

Bronze Medal: Iulia Prokopchuk (UKR)

“I cannot believe that I am seated here, with my first medal at a World Championships around the neck! It seems so unreal... And my first thought at the moment is that I will be enjoying nice holidays after the competition!”

“If we can beat the Chinese? Nothing is impossible, but we don't reveal our secrets... The idea is to be at the top in 2016 in Rio and try perhaps to do better than the Chinese”.
