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Diving, Day 7: Golden treble for He on 3m board

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Chong He won the men's 3m springboard crown for the third time in succession, storming through to scatter his rivals and bring China their seventh diving title out of eight so far contested at these FINA World Championships. He looked vulnerable for a while, with a slight blip in the third of the six rounds of dives, but bounced back magnificently to win by more than 36 points after team-mate and 2007 champion Kai Qin had blown his title hopes with a nightmare dive in the third round. Russia's Evgeny Kuznetsov looked as though he might deny the Chinese, just as fellow Russian Ilya Zakharov had done at the 2012 London Olympics. But He had other ideas, with two mighty dives at the end which brought him victory with 544.95 points. Kuznetsov claimed the silver (508.00) and Yahel Castillo gave Mexico their third diving bronze of the championships (498.30). Qin had to settle for fifth (473.25), behind Ukraine's Illya Kvasha (494.10), the 1m silver medallist in Barcelona. Zakharov, who relegated Qin and He to silver and bronze at the London Olympics, failed to qualify for the final after finishing 14th in the semi-final at the Montjuic Municipal Pool. Qin and He, who won the 10m synchro crown ahead of Kuznetsov and Zakharov earlier in the week, have now between them won the world 3m individual crown four times in succession, with He's treble matching the three golds won in the 3m springboard by Phil Boggs of the USA at the first three world championship editions in 1973, 1978 and 1982.

He, the 2008 Olympic champion, took the lead in the first round, ahead of Kuznetsov, with Qin, who opted for a lower degree of difficulty dive, sixth. He also recorded the highest-scoring dive in the second round, with Qin moving up to third behind Kuznetsov. The third round was a shocker for Qin, who bungled his entry and dropped to 10th in the rankings. Team-mate He also faltered, allowing Kuznetsov and Castillo to leapfrog ahead of him. But He moved back to second behind the Russian in the fourth round, with Qin still only seventh. He hit the front in the fifth, regaining the lead with a magnificent forward 4-1/2 somersaults which earned him 102.60 points, Qin matching that exactly to rise to fourth in his tough medal quest. Chong He proved unstoppable after that, nailing his concluding forward 2-1/2 somersaults and 3 twists for 99.45 points. Qin, the top semi-final qualifier, could not pull out the big final dive he needed and finished well outside the medals.

{youtube}k33mlfrXLq8{/youtube}

QUOTES

Gold Medal: Chong He (CHN)

“It was a hard final, but I am happy with my performance. The other athletes also prepared themselves very well and I sincerely congratulate all the medallists”.

On the additional pressure on the Chinese team after the defeat at the London 2012 Olympics in this event: “We don’t need

to prove anything. Everyone knows the strength of our team and its capacity. If one fails, we keep on training, and we move forward. Nobody can be on the top all the time - we just need to grow-up, assimilate our mistakes and face positively the future”.

“I perform some of the most difficult dives in the world, so I constantly need to evaluate my capacities”.

On the absence of Kai Qin from the podium: “An outdoor competition always brings more challenges – there is the sun, the

wind... Sometimes, the rankings may change, and I feel some pity for Qin, but during competition I only focus on my dives”.

Silver Medal: Evgeny Kuznetsov (RUS)

“It was a very interesting final, with some mistakes, but I am obviously happy with this medal. After the Olympics, we hadn’t perhaps enough time to rest, so I feel a bit tired after this so long season”.

Bronze Medal: Yahel Castillo (MEX)

“This final had a lot of strategy from the best divers, but I knew I was competing with the best in the world!”

On performing well in difficult dives and not being so good in a “simpler” one (205B – back 3 ½ somersault 3 twists, DD

3.0): “I always miss that dive. When I return home, I will definitively abandon this dive and find another one that won’t

cause me so many difficulties...”

“I will enjoy three weeks of vacation: one with my family, one with my friends, and one alone, when I can think about my dives and in the way to improve them”
