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High Diving, Day 3: Duque, the King in Barcelona!

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He was already the most iconic athlete in High Diving. His successes at the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series, his charisma and his experience (38 years old) had made Orlando Duque from Colombia a symbol of this thrilling and challenging discipline. Today, in the port of Barcelona (ESP), he officially became the first men's world champion in High Diving after a brilliant final, in which he combined technique, steadiness and harmony in all three dives he performed. Moreover, he also won the first title ever for Colombia in the history of the FINA World Championships. Duque, literally meaning Duke, was this time King in Barcelona! In the end of the two-day competition – the 13 participating athletes performed their first two dives on July 29 -, the Colombian star concluded with an overall 590.20, a mere 0.90 points ahead of silver medallist Gary Hunt from Great Britain. Hunt, 10 years younger than Duque, was the fourth after Monday's preliminaries, but two very solid dives (DD 3.8 and 6.3!) allowed him to take the lead after the fourth round. However, a less successful last combination (DD 5.6) dictated his second place. The bronze went to Mexico's Jonathan Paredes, who was also third after the first two rounds.

Duque has been competing in this sport for the last 15 years and was the man to beat in this final. That said, Hunt, the winner of the World Series in the last three years had also his eyes on the first official world title in High Diving. Presenting the most difficult dives of the final – notably the above mentioned 6.3, an impressive three somersaults and four twists, the highest possible DD in diving -, the British great is known for pushing always further the boundaries of difficulty in the sport he loves.

Paredes is the rookie of the company. At 23, the ever-impressive Mexican diver is evolving very quickly and has demonstrated in the past two years that his fear of heights is now just a bad memory.

{youtube}O0i_Zfb4WeA{/youtube}

QUOTES:

Gold medal winner: Orlando Duque (COL)

"It's a very special moment. The FINA World Championships have a great value and, when looking into the archives of High Diving in the future, my name will always appear as the first one!"

"About the conditions here in Barcelona, they were excellent and everything worked out well. It's very pleasant to dive in front of so many people. The platform was also very solid and the visibility in the water was fantastic."

"For the last five years, we had a great battle with Gary. In his last dive, he did a mistake that should not happen. Beating him here in Barcelona is a great feat for me!"

"On Jonathan, at 23 he is technically prepared. He is now confident, and has all the conditions to shine at very high level in this discipline. I've been his advisor for the last couple of years, and now I almost regret it... he is almost as good as me [smiles]!"



Orlando Duque (COL), King in Barcelona! - credit: Giorgio Perottino/Deepbluemia

Silver medal winner: Gary Hunt (GBR)

"The level of the performances was just great. I kept listening to that ripping sound of the water, meaning that the entries were good. In my case, I missed unfortunately the last dive, but I feel amazed after winning this medal. This was a great moment for our Sport!"

On 1st World Championships medal: "I'm really happy but I'm disappointed that I didn't come first because I was in the lead going into that last round. But I feel like I dived well. I missed one dive out of my five and it was really close. Also just to have a World Championship medal, I never thought I would see one in real life so to have one around my neck now is just amazing."

On the cheering crowd: "It's a great feeling, you need a little bit of a boost up there because you got so much nerves and you're scared. We're all scared up there because we all know what can happen. So when you hear the crowd behind you, it just boosts you on and gives you that energy that you need to jump."

On injuries and will to go on: "If you stop something after you got hurt, then you'd never learn. I think all of us have landed badly and had injuries but it's just about how you deal with that. It's a great sport because you have to deal with all those kinds of things and it makes it all the more worthwhile."

Bronze Medal: Jonathan Paredes (MEX)

"I feel very honoured to be on the same podium than these two great names in High Diving! Especially with Orlando, we have a very special relationship, and being in this competition close to him is a dream that came true. When we have started the World Series six weeks ago, we commented this final in Barcelona and we said that we should be in the podium together. And here we are, in the same podium. Orlando is a great friend and being able to share his knowledge and experience is a great privilege – it's like a kid playing football and being introduced to Pele..."

"Now, it's time to look ahead, to keep training and develop new dives and new DDs."
