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“FINA Best Athletes of the Year” honoured after a memorable 2019

FINA Communications Department

After a very exciting competitive year of 2019, highlighted by the FINA World Championships in Gwangju (KOR), the list of the “FINA Best Athletes of the Year” is known in all FINA six disciplines.

In **Swimming**, the 2019 distinction goes to **Caeleb Dressel** (USA), among men, and to **Sarah Sjöström** (SWE) in the

women’s category. The North American star was the athlete to beat in Gwangju, with no less than eight medals throughout the FINA showcase: gold in the 50m and 100m free, 50m and 100m fly, 4x100m free and 4x100m free mixed relay; silver in the 4x100m medley and 4x100m medley mixed relay. Moreover, he established a new World Record in the 100m fly. It is the second consecration for Dressel, after a very successful year also in 2017.

For Sjöström, the FINA World Championships were also an opportunity to shine in the pool, with five podium presences in the Republic of Korea: gold in the 50m fly, silver in the 50m free and 100m fly, and bronze in the 100m free and 200m free. As with the men’s winner, this is also the second time Sjöström is winning the award, after the 2017 accolade.

In **Diving**, the top honours went to Chinese representatives, with **Xie Siyi** winning among men and **Shi Tingmao**

triumphing in the women’s field. Xie was the strongest in the 3m springboard events in Gwangju, winning both the individual and synchro finals. At the FINA Diving World Series, he was the second best in the overall ranking of the individual 3m and winner in the synchro variant.

If for Xie, this is his first “Best Diver” title, for Shi Tingmao this distinction is not a novelty. The 2019 award is the fifth consecutive one for the Chinese ace, also a 3m springboard specialist, with victories in both individual and synchro events in Gwangju. Additionally, she was the third best in the annual circuit of the Diving World Series.

In **High Diving**, things were quite straightforward, with **Gary Hunt** (GBR) and **Rhiannan Iffland** (AUS) getting the 2019 accolade. They both were the winners of the two FINA events of the year, the FINA High Diving World Cup and the FINA World Championships. For Hunt, this is the fourth victory, after 2015, 2016 and 2018. For the Australian great, this is the third consecutive distinction, after 2017 and 2018.

In **Artistic Swimming**, Russian powerhouse was honoured in 2019, with **Svetlana Romashina** and **Svetlana**

Kolesnichenko sharing the victory for the Best Female Artistic Swimmer of the Year. They both won the Duet Technical and Duet Free events in Gwangju, with Romashina (winner in 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2016) taking also gold in Solo Free and

Kolesnichenko (the best in 2017) prevailing in Solo Technical. Among men, **Aleksandr Maltsev**, also from Russia, was the best in 2019, after triumphing in the mixed Duet Technical and Duet Free in Gwangju. Maltsev had been already honoured in 2015 and 2017.

In **Open Water Swimming**, **Kristof Rasovszky** (HUN) dominated the men’s field, with a World Championships’ gold medal in 5km and the overall title in the FINA Marathon World Swim Series, the 10km annual circuit. It is the first accolade

of this kind for the Magyar champion. Among women, the top honour went to **Ana Marcela Cunha**, the Brazilian star,

winner of the 5km and 25km event in Gwangju. She was also the top-athlete in the Marathon Swim Series. This is the sixth consecration for Cunha, after previous successes in 2010, 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018.

Finally, in **Water Polo**, the choice was also obvious, with the 2019 top-awards going to **Italy**, among men, and **USA** in the women's field. They were both the winners of the respective tournaments at the FINA World Championships in Gwangju. While this is the first success for the European team, the North Americans are used to this honour, after consecutive successes since 2015.
