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DWS, Montreal, Day 3: Abel (CAN) and Williams (GBR) excel with gold?

Greg Eggert, FINA Media Committee Honorary Secretary

The friendly host nation Canada allowed Russia to claim the most medals at the Montreal edition of the three-leg FINA/CNSG Diving World Series. The Russian athletes earned a total of nine medals which included five gold, one silver and three bronze medals.

The Canadians, enjoying the home team advantage won the greatest number of gold medals, six, along with two bronze medals. Three of those golden nuggets were won by Jennifer Abel, a Montreal resident who trains at the “Centre Sportif du Parc Olympique”, the same the competition was held.

Abel heard 'O Canada', her national anthem played six times, but three times just for her. Abel won the 3m Synchro Springboard with diving partner Melissa Citrini Beaulieu, the Mixed 3m Synchro Springboard with diving partner Francois Imbeau-Dulac and also the individual gold medal in the 3m Springboard.



Photo by Antoine Saito

The most decorated male diver was Russia's Viktor Minibaev who won two gold medals, one in the 10m Synchro Platform with Alexandr Bondar and the second in the Mixed 10m Synchro Platform event with Ekaterina Beliaeva. Diving individually, he earned a silver medal in the 10m Platform.

Noteworthy performances at the first of three stops included gold medals for two men who had never medaled before:

Canada's Phillippe Gagne won the men's 3m springboard event: the 22-year-old had never won a World Series medal of any colour in his life, and he was crowned the champion on February 29th. So rare was a performance like this that the last time a Canadian male had won a gold medal was ten years ago when Alexandre Despatie struck gold in Veracruz, Mexico. It was a fitting performance for Leap Day in the Leap Year of 2020.

Nineteen-year-old Noah Williams won the first gold medal for Great Britain this season in men's 10m Platform event. It's was also William's first individual World Series and he was competing in this event against one of his training partners, Olympic medallist Tom Daley.

Women's 3m Springboard

Olympic bronze medallist Jennifer Abel won her second gold medal at the FINA World Series in the 3m springboard event. Abel, 28 from Laval, Quebec scored 363.00 points easily earning her spot at the top of the podium. She and her teammate Pamela Ware both scored 72.0 points on their first dive, putting them in a tie for first after the first round of dives. Abel dove an Inward 2 1/2 Somersaults from the pike position while Ware executed a Back 2 1/2 Somersaults from the pike position in her opening salvo. Ware's second dive, a Forward 3 1/2 Somersaults pike kept her in first position after the second dive while Abel stumbled on her second dive. Ware scored only 63.00 points on her Reverse 2 1/2 Somersault pike and dropped to fourth position after her second dive.

Abel recovered over her next three dives while Ware's fate moved in the opposite direction, dashing hopes of two medals for Canada in this event. After being more than 16 points out of the lead, Abel took over the top score in the six-diver field by scoring 74.40 points on her third dive, a Forward 3 1/2 Somersaults pike. She remained in the first position following her fourth and fifth dives, and scored 42.75 more points than the silver medallist, Maria Poliakova, from Russia. It was the second medal for each athlete, Abel won the gold medal in the 3m Synchro Springboard and Poliakova was the bronze medallist in the same event.

Annabelle Smith, 27 of Australia was only three points behind the Russian silver medallist. Smith competed in the 3m springboard synchro event at the 2012 and 2016 Summer Olympics, and won a bronze medal four years ago at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Ware finished a disappointing sixth in today's event.



Photo by Antoine Saito

QUOTES

GOLD - Jennifer Abel (CAN)

“The second dive is the one that I always hesitate a little bit on, that’s why it’s in the second spot. Once it’s over, I know I can put the pedal to the metal and go get lots of points. This morning was a little tougher for me. I am really happy to have been able to deal with it, put it behind me and come back strong for the final. I had no doubts and I was able to put the disappointing prelim results behind me. I’ve really been working on technical points that will get me closer to my objectives and become the best diver I can be. Today, I really wanted to work on those, maybe risk missing a little but I knew that in the afternoon, I’d be more awake, more warmed up. And that’s what happened.”

“I was really happy. On the last two dives, I was screaming underwater. But I also knew after my fourth dive that I’d have to stay in the zone, that it wasn’t over, that there was still a big dive to do. I was really proud of how I was able to appreciate that moment, when I was on the board and the fans were cheering for me. My last dive is the hardest. It’s a 3.4 DD. It’s last, and there’s a reason for that. When I need it, I know I can do it and that’s exactly what I told myself when I got on the board: this is my dive and I am going to nail this. I’ve been doing it really well lately, more and more regularly.”?

“I didn’t add any pressure on myself because the Chinese were not there but of course, the podium was more accessible and we are at home. It’s important for me to show people how hard we work. This year is super important, any pressure I felt came from me. I wanted to do my best, show everyone that I am getting better every day, that I’m

more stable and stronger. That's what I did today. It's not the first time that I was the first diver. It doesn't really happen that often. So, it's a different experience but I can't say that I hated it! As long as it doesn't happen too often!"

SILVER - Maria Poliakova (RUS)

"It was really good today. I was finally able to have fun. It was fun and also exciting. I did my personal best internationally and I have room to work on a few things I need to improve. I am always trying to make things better and I am excited to get back to work. I'm not yet qualified for the Olympics. Russia still needs to pick up one more spot at the world cup and then we have our trials in June."

BRONZE - Anabelle Smith (AUS)

"It was a very tight finish with my teammate Esther Qin, I was just 0.15 points ahead of her. I don't really pay attention to the scores. I didn't do it as well as I had hoped on my last dive and I thought, 'argh, I probably dropped down'. But when I saw Esther had the same points but just below, I felt bad for her. Luck went my way today. We have our trials in June for Olympic selection. I just have to keep training and hopefully I will make the team then."

Men's 10m Platform

Noah Williams won the first gold medal for Great Britain in the men's 10m Platform event, at his first World Series event. He has won silver medals in the 10m synchro platform with Matthew Dixon at the 2018 European Championships and also at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. In 2019, he made his World Championship debut at the World Championships in Gwangju, Korea. Williams, 19 and partner Robyn Birch finished fourth in the mixed 10m platform synchro event, and won qualification for the 2020 Olympics team from Great Britain. He lives in Hackney, England, was born in London and now trains at the London Aquatic Centre, the venue of the 2012 London Olympic Summer Games.

Williams' first two dives were each third best of the first and second rounds, putting him 17.50 points from British teammate Tom Daley who was in the lead after the second round of dives in the six-man field. Daley who won the 2009 Rome World Championship and the 2017 Budapest World Championships as well as a bronze medal from 2012 London Olympics in this event, dropped into fifth place in his third dive and remained in that position through the fourth, fifth and sixth and final round.

Viktor Minibaev and Aleksandr Bondar of Russia earned the silver and bronze medal respectively. Minibaev scored 89.60

points in his Inward 3 1/3 Somersaults pike to lead the six-person field after the first round, but he finished 20.70 points behind Williams. He leaves Montreal with three medals, having won a gold in the 10m Synchro Platform and a bronze in the Mixed 10m Synchro Platform. He is the most decorated male diver of the first edition of the World Series. His teammate Bondar will depart Montreal with two medals having previously won gold in the 10m Synchro Platform.



Photo by Antoine Saito

QUOTES

GOLD - Noah Williams (GBR)

“The field was really good. It was my second competition of the season because I had Nationals earlier in the year. It’s really great to put in a performance like this. I came in with not much pressure because it’s my first individual World Series and it’s great to come out with a result like this. For Tom (Daley) it was his first competition of the season so a bit more shaky for him.”

SILVER - Viktor Minibaev (RUS)

“My performance was satisfactory, and what I need most is to have four better dives. I also need to be more confident in my dives. It's not my first trip to Montreal, I am used to it and I feel at home. I will be preparing for the World Cup where I hope that my country can pick up another spot for the Olympics.”

BRONZE - Aleksandr Bondar (RUS)

“I am pleased with my performance today, but not as pleased with the final score. I will spend the next three weeks working on my list before the event in Kazan. I plan to be stronger in the next two World Series events.”

Mixed 3m Synchro Springboard

RESULTS

GOLD – CANADA, 314.52 points

Jennifer Abel

Francois Imbeau-Dulac

SILVER - GREAT BRITAIN, 309.57 points - 4.95 behind

Thomas Daley
Grace Reid

BRONZE – MEXICO, 283.20 points - 31.22 points behind the leader

Dolores Hernandez Monzon
Osmar Olvera Ibarra



Photo by Antoine Saito

QUOTES

CANADA (gold)

Jennifer Abel: "I always really looking forward to diving with François because it's always fun to do synchro with François. We've only had one practice since last summer's World Championships, so it was important for us to control ourselves. I'm wasn't worried! I am so happy to have been able to perform like this, I really don't think I could have done any better. I am even happier to have won three gold medals at home, in front of my family, and really show them what I am capable of doing."

François Imbeau-Dulac: "Jenn's family is unbelievable. Hearing them cheer for us as soon as we got on the boards gave us a huge energy boost. Tonight's gold medal was a great way for me to change the script of the last two days and to finish on a high note. We had very little time to train together but we knew we simply had to have faith in each other and we'd finish with a smile on our faces."

GREAT BRITAIN (silver)?

Thomas Daley: "Today there were some ups and downs. I did some really good dives this morning and I did a couple of good dives this afternoon. I am coming back from a bit of an injury and I only got back to training last week, so I am glad that I was able to compete here in the first place. I know that I ran out a little bit of steam, today, but that's just training endurance and it will come back in a few weeks. I will be competing in the Kazan and London World Series events."

"It was a serious injury but that was six weeks ago, and it's not serious now. I wasn't able to compete at the Nationals or to dive for five weeks but now I'm back. I was really happy with the mixed event considering the 'hurdle step' that I got on my last dive."

"I know that the only competition that matters is this one summer in Tokyo and you just have to do it on that day, something that I learned the hard way a couple of times. You can win all the World Series events or you can lose all of the World Series events and it really doesn't matter. I know that I just have to trust the process and get there day by day."

Grace Reid: "I was really pleased with today. It was the first time that we have competed together since Korea last summer. We were not sure how it was going to go, but we picked up the silver and we are really pleased. Individually I felt it was quite good. It's never perfect and still things to be bettered and improved. The Montreal World Series stop is amazing and they always put on such a great show and I always love to come to Canada and some really good performances."

MEXICO (bronze)

Dolores Hernandez Monzon: “Training for this event and competing in synchro works both ways and it generally helps to develop better dives.”

Osmar Olvera Ibarra: “We are from the same club, we train together a few times a week for synchro. We both train individually for 3m. Even though this isn’t an Olympic event, competing in the Mixed Synchro has helped us feel stronger and more confident in our individual events. Obviously, I have very strong competition in Mexico against Rommel, Yahel and Jahir but I feel confident I can fight for those spots.”
