



FÉDÉRATION
INTERNATIONALE
DE NATATION

Published on *fina.org* - Official FINA website (<https://www.fina.org>)

XIE Siyi (CHN): “It is a big surprise for me”

Zhou Xin, Editor from Asia, FINA Aquatics World Magazine (CHN)

Every Chinese male diver at the World Championships won a medal in Gwangju, so the race for the top FINA

award was really thrilling. Cao Yuan amassed the most points but you need to win an individual title to be eligible

for the award – and Cao’s synchro partner Xie Siyi beat him in the 3m event. In fact, platform specialist Yang Jian

was level with Xie on total points, so we used the World Series synchro results as a tie-breaker. That clinched it for

It is your first FINA award as the Best Male Diver of the Year. What would you say about that?

Thank you, FINA, and many thanks to those who support me. It is a big surprise for me. I never thought about it. The award is not only for me but also for my team, including my coach, team-mates, doctors and the whole team staff, since we are a big family. I really want to show my gratitude to them. The award also inspires me to work harder every day and gives me a boost to show my best at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

It was a breath-taking game

How do you evaluate your 2019 performance? Are you satisfied?

It is a year of growth that I can see my improvement in every aspect. I would like to give myself 80 points for my performance for the whole year, if full marks are 100. There were some mistakes during the year but I overcame all of those ups and downs. I think I can be stronger in mind.

What was the most successful moment of the year?

I won a hard battle in Gwangju at the World Championships, where I retained my title in the 3m springboard. I snatched the gold in a three-man showdown featuring Olympic individual champion Cao Yuan, (Olympic) synchro winner Jack Laugher and myself. I started from fourth in the first round, then moved to third after my second attempt and stayed among top three before the last dive, 109C (forward 4-1/2 somersaults, 3 twists), while Laugher had a flying start but suffered a last-dive collapse. It was a breath-taking game. Jack performed very well, while it was very difficult for me to get high scores when I was behind for most of the competition. I can still remember the nervous and thrilling feeling. I was proud of myself as I fought until the last moment and secured my title.



In fact, I felt bad during the one-month training camp before the Worlds. I was not in my best shape and lacked confidence. I felt like I was in a cage and I wanted to break out. The competition in the men's springboard is always fierce as many divers are gold-medal contenders.

What did you learn from that battle?

First of all, to concentrate on myself all the time. I did not watch the performances of others and only thought about my technical details during the competition. To keep cool and calm in any situation is another key point. I have discussed with my team-mates many times and prepared for different scores and situations happening during the competition, no matter if I am in the lead or behind. I think I need to improve the quality of my dives. And of course, never give up and fight until the last moment.

I am a slow type of person

Which competition do you think was your best-ever performance?

I should say the final in 2017 World Championships in Budapest was one of my perfect competitions. I have high expectation of myself and want to make myself better and better each time. Maybe I expect too much and deny myself most of the time. I should adjust my target and improve step by step.



Which divers do you think are your top rivals?

Jack Laugher! He is a talented diver and the most difficult rival in my mind. Jack is good at high DD with great quality, while Cao Yuan is my team-mate, my synchro partner and Olympic champion in both platform and springboard. Cao is very experienced since he competed in the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games.

What do you think of Cao, as you are partners and rivals at the same time?

Cao has the talent to come up with a balanced performance on both springboard and platform. He has a strong sense of dives and could deliver perfectly even if he is woken up in the middle of the night. He is good at body control and full of passion, while I am a slow type of person. We complement the advantages of each other and work together in the international

events. It is a great feeling that you have someone just beside you to support you.

The competition within China is always tough. How do you secure a ticket to the Olympic Games?

There are three or four qualifying events for us to claim an Olympic berth and I need to finish in the top two positions in the overall standings in the individual event. I cannot say I am certain to earn a ticket despite winning the World Championships and our national championships in September. I will continue to fight at the World Cup next year and other national qualifiers.

It was the darkest period of my life

Approaching your first Olympics, what is your expectation?

I am excited that I am closer to my first Olympic Games. It is my dream to compete in the Olympics. But first of all I need to go through the process of qualifying and preparation smoothly with a cool and calm mind. Do well in the present and I will have confidence in the future.

What are the biggest obstacles you have faced in your career?

I overcame two bad injuries that almost ruined my diving career before 2017. I was a former platform diver and good at high DD, such as 109C and 407C. I was nominated to be the partner of Olympic champion Lin Yue in the synchro platform and expected to fly high in 2013. However, I broke my right ankle in early 2014 and the doctor told me that I would never dive again. I was desperate at that time but I did not want to give up. I did dry-land physical training every day and tried my best to keep fit. One year later, I made a comeback in the pool and switched to training springboard. I was qualified for the 1m springboard for Kazan 2015 and I won. During the five legs of national qualifications for the Rio Olympic Games, Lin Yue and I placed first in the men's 3m synchro. However, I suffered another big blow when I had a relapse of my previous ankle injury and I needed surgery one more time. My dream to compete in Rio faded. It was the darkest period of my life. I did not know what to do and asked myself whether to quit diving thousands of times. I walked out of self-doubt after my best friend

Chen Aisen, double winner at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, encouraged me: 'I did it, you could do it too.' Fortunately, I regained my form and confidence with the help from the team.

Do you have motto for yourself?

Make a little progress every day that may lead to a breakthrough at last. Details determine success or failure.

