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Team event: Ukraine, Japan and Italy ahead

Eliana Alves, FINA Media Committee Member in Brazil

The penultimate day (Saturday March 5) of the FINA Synchronised Swimming Olympic Games Qualification Tournament and test event, taking place at Maria Lenk Aquatic Centre, introduced changes in the world hierarchy of the sport.

The teams of Ukraine (92.2855) and Japan (92.0997) offered a real show and virtually sealed their spot for the Rio 2016 Games.

With the smallest margin, Ukraine ended up first and ensured the team a more relaxed approach to Sunday's event, the Team Free Routine.



Team Ukraine ©Giorgio Scala / Deepbluemia

The remaining spot will be between Italy and Canada, separated by approximately half a point, which is another profound change in the world of synchronized swimming.

Spain, who grabbed silver and bronze in the team event at Beijing 2008 and London 2012, ended up the first day of the team event in the fifth position. And today everything indicated that the duet only will make it to the Rio Games for Spain.

Last year, at the Kazan (RUS) World Championships, when free and technical routines made different podiums in each (in the Olympics and Pan American Games are added the notes of the two routines), the Japanese team was ahead after both routines, winning bronze behind Russia and China, while Ukraine finished in fourth place.

Here in Rio, Ukraine started to change the game and tomorrow (Sunday) the nation will move from modern to classic, a radical change compared to what was presented today, a modern and electronic music called "Tsunami".

Japan opened the day to the sound of "Iyasaka Nippon", the Festival of Japan, and was cheered by the public with a technical routine that included so much content, using the entire pool, looking more like a free routine.

The Japanese totalled 92.0997 points, divided into 27.9000 implementation; 27.9000 36.2997 on artistic impression and the required elements, which represent 40% of the choreography compared to 30% of each other.

When it seemed that nobody would beat the Japanese, Ukraine, the penultimate competing team, was even more perfect and got 92.2855 points (27.8000 + 28.2000 + 36.2855). The difference between the two teams was only 0.1858 points.

Since Spanish coach Anna Tarres, who led her country to the Olympic medals in Beijing 2008 (silver) and London 2012 (bronze), started to work with the team, Spain has been considered one of the best teams in the world.

“I am focused on getting an Olympic medal. I think we still cannot really beat Russia, but Ukraine have the same body type and impresses with the motivation that they show, overcoming difficulties such as living in a country at war and with many economic difficulties” said Anna Tarres, who caused astonishment by revealing that the

choreography presented today was launched last November, just four months ago.

Between the two best performances came the routines of Spain, France, Canada and Chile. The Spanish, with "Modern Spanish Flamenco" scored 88.8637 points and the faces seemed to guess what would follow.

"I liked our routine and I am delighted with the arena. But I found our score very low, could have been better" said Paula Klamburg, member of the Spanish team.

France came after with "French Cancan" and the "Moulin Rouge", right after Spain, with 85.4794 points. Finally came the first surprise, Canada, with "The Kinslayer by Nightwish" Cirque du Soleil. The Canadians did better than Spain.

"We swam without pressure because we had the strongest teams in front of us. We are excited because it was a big challenge. Tomorrow it will be with all the emotion in search of this Olympic spot" said Claudia Holzner, one of the champions of the Pan American Games in Toronto. Since then, through the World Championships of Kazan, the team changed two girls.

After Canada, Chile scored 72.3526 points and finished in the last position.



Team Italy ©Giorgio Scala / Deepbluemia

The Italians, performing the sound of "Interstellar", overcame the Canadians with 0.5472 points, anticipating that the decision will be very tough and exciting. In Kazan, the Italians lost to the Canadians in the technical routine, but returned in the free routine, changing from sixth and seventh place. But the two teams surpassed Spain, which ranked fifth in the two routines in Russia.

The countries qualified for the team and duet events at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games so far are: Brazil, Russia, China, Australia and Egypt, and Ukraine, Japan and Canada in duets, totalling five teams and eight duets already guaranteed a spot in the Olympics, which will a total of eight teams and 24 duets.
