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First ever Olympic team event qualification for Ukraine

Eliana Alves, FINA Media Committee Member in Brazil

Tears of joy and tears of disappointment were seen in Rio de Janeiro (BRA) on Sunday March 6, the last day of the FINA Synchronised Swimming Qualification Tournament, the test event for the Rio 2016 Olympics.

The synchronised swimming qualification began to take shape for the first ever Olympics to be held in South America.

The last three teams completing the group of eight that will compete for an Olympic medal qualified today at Maria Lenk: Ukraine (first ever Olympic qualification for the team event), Japan and Italy. The five teams previously classified are: Brazil, Russia, China, Australia and Egypt.



Team Ukraine (gold) ©Giorgio Scala / Deepbluemia

Spain, medallist in the last two editions - silver in Beijing and bronze in London – will be missing this event as the team finished in fifth position this weekend in Rio.

All ranked teams also confirmed the duet, so Italy, third in the team event, secured a spot for the team event. The first two - Ukraine and Japan - were already among the eight teams who had stamped the passport before Rio's test event. So the eight qualified teams are: Brazil (host nation + representing the American continent), Russia (European spot), China (Asian spot),

Australia (Oceania spot), Egypt (African spot), Ukraine (gold medal at the tournament), Japan (silver medal at the tournament) and Italy (bronze medal at the tournament).*

The second round of the free duet routine was tough. A title between Ukraine and Japan, and the other for the last Olympic spot, with Italy and Canada. The Italians' heart was stronger, with the theme "The Season of Heart". The latter did better than the Canadians, who performed on "Fire and Ice - Guardians of the Earth." The Italians scored 92.0667 against 91.9000 for Canada. In total, with the sum of the technical routine from Day 1, Italy scored 181.7487 and Canada 181.0348.

"We love the city, the people, the pool, the organisation, everything was beautiful. Overall I'm very happy, everything was "issimo!", as we say in Italian! This was an historic result because we weren't the favourites but we still manage to get the spot. It is important to compete in the Olympic arena, getting used to the spaces, the points... anyway, it was great!" said Sara Sgarzi of Italy.

The rest of the podium was completed by Ukraine (gold medal of the Tournament) who performed with the classical music of "Natsnaker Tchaikovsky" and Japan.

"We are very happy. It is such an honour to grab the gold in the qualification tournament! The Olympic spot is also amazing. We are very excited!" said Kateryna Sadurska of Ukraine.

Teammate Olena Grechykhina showed gratitude for the Brazilian public: "The public is so kind! And although we are accustomed to an indoor swimming pool, we loved the outside pool."

When the team competition finished, the Brazilian duet, formed by Luisa Borges and Maria Eduarda Miccuci, presented their free routine, with the theme "Amazon", and soon after spoke about the event.

"It was a great experience, although we know that in the Olympics, the crowd will be more intense. We are a little bit anxious for the arrival of the Games, and we are evolving from the world, and we will do everything to further improve our technique up to the Games. We are training hard, on average eight hours a day, with final goal to reach the Olympic final." Eduarda Miccuci (BRA) said.

After the team event and the second round of the duet free, the duets qualified for the 2016 Olympic Games are: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine and USA. *

Test Event participating countries were:

Argentina, Austria, Aruba, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, France, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, USA, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Venezuela.

**all qualified teams and duets are subject to their NOC/NF confirmation to FINA that they will use their allocation quota place by April 15.*