

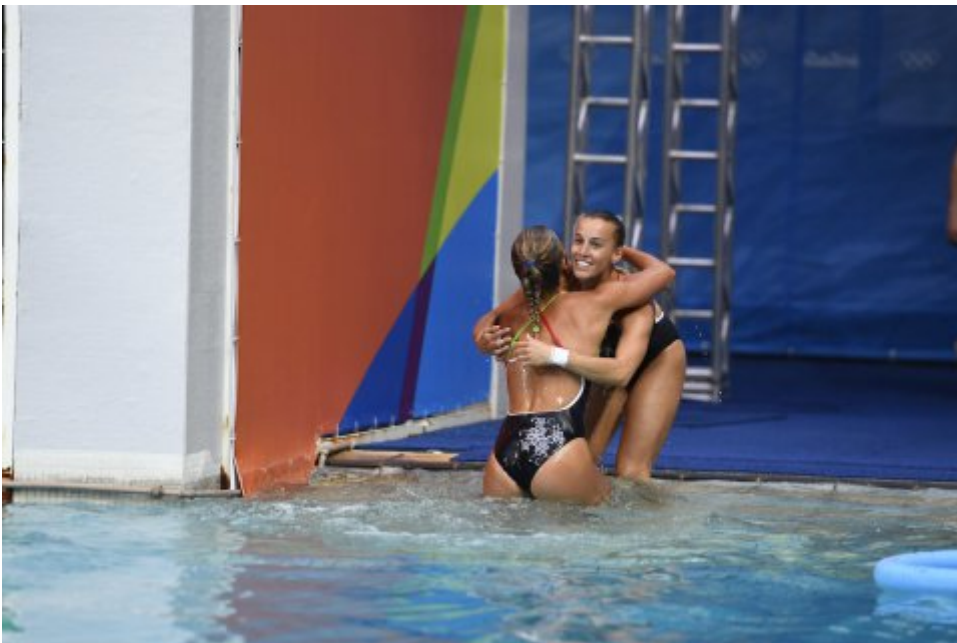
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Diving, Finals, Day 1 - Wu and Shi give China a golden start

Derek Parr, FINA Media Committee Member

Wu Minxia won the fifth Olympic diving gold medal of her fine career when she partnered Shi Tingmao to a commanding victory in the women's synchronised 3m springboard and gave China the winning start on the boards that came as no surprise from the sport's leading diving nation as competition began in the Maria Link Stadium outdoor pool.

Wu, who won the Olympic individual 3m crown at London 2012 after years in the shadow of perennial champion Guo Jingjing, made it four Olympic 3m synchronised golds in a row, sharing a runaway triumph with Shi, her partner in victory at the last two FINA World Championships of 2013 and 2015 – two of seven in the 3m synchro event for Wu at the Worlds. She is the first diver to win five Olympics gold medals. Wu's first two Olympic synchronised 3m wins came with Guo, the third with He Zi in London and the fourth now with Shi.



Tania Cagnotto and Francesca Dallape (ITA) celebrating their silver medal ©Giorgio Scala / Deepbluemia

Wu, who was persuaded to put aside thoughts of retirement a few years back, and Shi led from start to finish under grey, overcast skies on a chilly, breezy afternoon and prevailed by more than 30 points, amassing 345.60 from their five dives. They embraced joyfully at the end of their golden master class but no more happily than Italy's Tania Cagnotto and Francesca Dallapè, who claimed silver with 313.83. Cagnotto, 31, had won her first world championship gold – the 1m title - a year earlier in Kazan, bringing her total to 10 medals at six editions of the Worlds, but an Olympic medal had always eluded her and Rio represented her last chance.



Australians Maddison Keeney and Anabelle Smith took bronze ©Giorgio Scala / Deepbluemia

This time, however, silver looked on the cards for the Italians all the way as Cagnotto finally joined father and coach Giorgio as an Olympic diving medallist, with Giorgio first there to give her a hug. Tania and Dallapè, 30, dived consistently, holding second place throughout the competition, and finished well clear of the rest. Behind them an absorbing scrap was unfolding for bronze in a contest punctuated by the whine of police car sirens outside.

Malaysia's Jun Hoong Cheong and Nur Dhabitah and Great Britain's Alicia Blagg and Rebecca Gallantree shared third place for the first two rounds. The Malaysians then eased clear, only for Canadian pair Jennifer Abel and Pamela Ware to gain the edge in the fourth series, with one round to come. Unfortunately for the Canadians, with a repeat of London 2012 bronze beckoning Abel, they finished less than one point short, Australians Maddison Keeney and Anabelle Smith just pipping them, somewhat to their own surprise – 299.19 to 298.32.

Wu Minxia (CHN), gold, women's 3m synchro

“Being outdoor, the competition is always challenging. But here, everything went well. During the final, I never think too much in the result, it goes one dive after the other.”

“When I got in touch with diving, I immediately thought it was a very exciting sport. Despite having now much more experience, I always feel stressed before an important competition.”

“The Chinese success is mainly due to our constant search for perfection. Moreover, our predecessors have set the level very high and this is a great motivation for us.”

“Guo Jingjing always helped me a lot. She has been my older sister, taking care of me. Even now that I have some medals in the Olympics, she will always be my big sister.”

“After I conclude my diving career, I would like to contribute to the development of sport in China and learn other things that I couldn’t until now.”

Tania Cagnotto (ITA), silver, 3m synchro

“In the morning there was a lot of wind and we were a bit worried. But in the afternoon, things went better. To be honest, it is sometimes nicer to dive outside. There is a better atmosphere.”

“My father (and coach, Giorgio Cagnotto) was trying to keep me calm. He told me that nothing would change after this competition, no matter the result. As we are not staying in the Village, it doesn’t seem we are at the Olympics. But finally, things are quite serious, and this medal arrived.”

“We are used to dive against the Chinese. It’s like running against Bolt, we are always behind. We don’t think about gold, that’s reserved for China. We wanted first of all a medal. Gold was too much for us, this is the best we could do.”
