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## FINA /Alisports World Aquatics Gala – “Soirée des Etoiles” reward the best athletes of 2016

FINA Communication Department

The best male and female athletes of the year across FINA’s six disciplines were awarded tonight in Windsor, Canada, right on the riverfront overlooking the Detroit skyline (USA). The awards were handed out on the occasion of the third edition of the FINA World Aquatics Gala Diner which now has a long-time partner Chinese giant Alisports, it was announced at the

beginning of the festivities tonight. The partnership will run up to 2025 (more information here [1]).

The yearly gala pays tribute to the greatest aquatic stars of the year. Four additional awards were presented for the best swimming performances (man and woman) of the year as well as two special awards: the FINA award and the Alisports Award who respectively went to Michael Phelps and diving ace Ruolin Chen (CHN).

Winners have been chosen through a selection process which looks at the points collected at the most important FINA events and the Olympics. In swimming, World Records points were also taken into consideration.



The annual ceremony tonight was held in the Colosseum within the Caesar Windsor Hotel, usually used as a big concert hall for the region.

The 2016 winners are:

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Michael Phelps

*Men*



**Swimming**

Katinka Hosszu

*Women*

Adam Peaty  
Katie Ledecky

Great Britain  
United States

*Best Swimming Performance*

Serbia  
Player: Dejan Savic

*Men*



**Water Polo**

USA  
Player: Adam Krikorian

*Women*



**Diving**

Chen Aisen

*Men*

Shi Tingmao

China

*Women*

Svetlana Romashina

*Women*



**Synchro**

Natalia Ishchenko

*Women*



**Open Water**

Ferry Weertman

*Men*

Sharon Rouwendaal Netherlands

*Women*

Gary Hunt

*Men*



**High Diving**

Lysanne Richard

*Women*

The following coaches were also rewarded on the occasion: • Bob Bowman (coach of Michael Phelps, USA) • Shane Tusup (coach of Katinka Hosszu, HUN) • Dejan Savic (coach of Team Serbia, men's water polo) • Adam Krikorian (coach of Team USA, women's water polo) • Alex Rochas (coach of Gary Hunt GBR) • Chris Huber (coach of Lysanne Richard CAN) • Marcel Wouda (coach of Ferry Weertman, NED) • Philippe Lucas (coach of Sharon Rouwendaal, NED) • Tatiana Danchenko (coach of Svetlana Romashina and Natalia Ishchenko, RUS) • Liu Ben (coach of Chen Aisen, CHN) • Liu Ben (coach of Shi Tingmao, CHN)

Finally, the FINA Media Award of 2016 was awarded to Clémentine Blondet, from the French sport daily newspaper L'Equipe.



**FINA gathered the athletes' fresh reactions back stage.**

Best male swimmer of the year: Michael Phelps (USA)

“I really wanted to finish the job and finish my career that way. That silver medal from London was haunting me I wasn't happy with it. I wanted to take my title back. I have had so many opportunities to represent my country at the highest level. It has truly been amazing. I mean, 28 medals is still unbelievable.” “The biggest difference between London 2012 and Rio 2016 was that I enjoyed the Rio Games a lot more, I was like a kid in water.” “I said it already I will not come back in Tokyo. I started when I was 15. I wanted to change the sport of swimming. This was my goal back then. There is still more to be done. I have never been afraid to dream big. I hope we will see another kid thinking alike” “It was fun to end my career on a three people tie. It is very rare, hadn't seen this since 2004. It is a good rivalry.”

Best female swimmer of the year: Katinka Hosszu (HUN)



“It's quite crazy to be here tonight as the year is still not finished - in a couple of days, we start competing at the FINA World Swimming Championships!”

“To be Olympic champion was a big dream for me. As you know, I had won almost everything, only an Olympic medal was missing. It has been an amazing journey! Rio was really a special moment for me.” “Disappointments or regrets? Not really! I always try to learn from my less positive experiences and overcome them.” “Budapest 2017: I have my own specific goals, but I generally keep those for me. But I want to create a great show in Budapest, in front of my home crowd.”

**Best male diver of the year: Chen Aisen (CHN)**

“First of all I want to thank everyone who supported me. The synchro event was definitely easier for me. My partner is more experienced than me. He is a great diver. It really taught me a lot to be paired with him.” “I am still quite young so beside the competition I want to try something new and not only focus on the training.”

**Best female diver of the year: Shi Tingmao**

“I have achieved my goal for this year I can say. It was my first time in the Olympics and I got two medals. It is very special and I'm happy about it. It was a big challenge to compete outdoor but we feel very lucky to have won despite the conditions. My age doesn't matter, I still got an Olympic medal!” “Before thinking about Tokyo I need to focus on what comes first - training for Budapest 2017.”

**Best male open water swimmer of the year: Ferry Weertman**

“For the last 6 years, I was working towards the goal of achieving the Olympic gold. It finally happened in Rio! And it was the best experience of my whole life.” “It was a realistic goal, I knew I could make it. You have to be ready

and fit for that day, and it worked out! After my silver in Kazan, I know I was in good shape.” “It was a bizarre race. I started swimming far from the pack, but at a certain moment Jordan Wilimovsky, the winner in Kazan, touched my feet. I saw it and thought to myself - this won't happen again. I then accelerated and did my own race. At the arrival, I knew I had touched first, but (Spyros) Gianniotis was initially the winner. After the longest 16 minutes of my life, I was finally declared the winner.” “2017 will be a tough year, but I kept the same coach and I feel I am in a great shape.”

**Best female open water swimmer of the year: Sharon Van Rouwendaal**

“In Kazan I was pretty sure that Rio would be great for me but then in October I had a shoulder injury so I started to doubt. I lost all my power and couldn't sprint, couldn't go fast and in the pool it was the same. I was a little depressed I think because Rio was fast approaching, in less than 4 weeks.” “If I was asked to sign for a bronze medal without racing I would have said yes. During the race I was already very tired after 6km but I somehow managed to touch the pad first.” “I then became an Olympic champion. I showed everyone I could do it even though I had a tough year. I always said I was going to be an Olympic champion since I'm 4.”

**Best male high diver of the year: Gary Hunt (GBR)**

“This award is just a nice end to a tough year. There was no sure thing this year. I have introduced a new dive and it definitely wasn't always easy. It however kept everyone on their toes which is good. More challenges are to come and I will keep working. I want to be more consistent. The World Championships is a unique opportunity to perform in such a huge stage, I look forward to taking part in it.”

**Best female high diver of the year: Lysanne Richard (CAN)**

“If you told me three years ago that I would have been here today I wouldn't have believed it. Three years ago I gave birth to my daughter. But who knows maybe I would have believed in myself. The High Diving World Cup in Abu Dhabi provided us with very conditions, the water was perfect and the high diving community is like a family. We are always happy for each other it's a really nice small group of people.”

“My kids like my sport. It is also part of their life. They see how much I train and they know I'm fully prepared. I don't take any risks so they are not scared. In 2017 we have to add one more dive and I want to work to be more consistent and want to improve the DDs of my dive. And most importantly I want to keep having fun, it's the most important!”

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