

Diving Day 3 - China back in charge with two more diving titles

Derek Parr, FINA Media Committee member

China reasserted their supremacy on the diving boards with victories in both finals on Day 3 of the Budapest World Championships to take their golden tally to three and soften the blow of two defeats the previous day.

Peng Jianfeng narrowly won the men's 1m final from team-mate He Chao and Italy's Giovanni Tocci, while Ren Qian claimed her second gold in the Duna Arena, winning the women's 10m synchro with Si Yajie a day after claiming China's first title of the championships with Lian Junjie in the mixed 10m synchro.

Day 2 had ended with two defeats, Australia's Maddison Keeney winning the women's 1m and Evgeny Kuznetsov and Ilia Zakharov of Russia the men's synchronised 3m final.

China won 10 of the 13 titles at the last edition of the world championships in Kazan in 2015.



Ren Qian/Si Yajie (CHN), gold - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepbluemia

Women's 10m synchro

Olympic champion Ren Qian captured her second gold medal in two days when she partnered former world champion Si Yajie to victory in the women's synchronised 10m final, prevailing over pairs from DPR Korea and Malaysia, who collected silver and bronze respectively.

Sixteen-year-old Ren, who won the individual platform crown at the 2016 Rio Olympics, had claimed her first Budapest gold medal alongside Lian Junjie in the mixed 10m synchro, the first diving event of the programme.

Ren and Si, the 2013 individual platform world champion at 14, stretched ahead of their closest rivals in the last two rounds of the five-dive final to win by just over 16 points from North Koreans Kim Min-rae and Kim Kuk-hyang.



Kim Min-rae/Kim Kuk-hyang (PRK), silver - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepbluemedias

Kim Kuk-hyang beat Ren to the 10m gold at the 2015 Worlds in Kazan for her nation's first-ever aquatics world title. For Kim Min-rae this was her second Budapest medal, following a bronze in the mixed 10m synchro with Hyon Il-myong.

Malaysia's Jun Hoong Cheong and Pandeleda Pamg, the Olympic silver medallists, matched the Chinese pair in the first round and narrowly led them in the second, performing consistently to claim the bronze.

Ren and Si notched an aggregate 352.56 points from their five dives, with the DPR Korea duo second on 336.48 and the Malaysians third on 328.74.

Canada's Meaghan Benfeito, who bagged world silver in 2013 and 2015 as well as 2016 Olympic bronze alongside Roseline Fillion, could not quite add to her medal hoard, finishing fourth on 315.78 with new partner Caeli McKay.

Men's 1m

Peng Jianfeng and He Chao scored a one-two victory in what ultimately turned into a close battle in the men's 1m springboard final to bring China their second diving title of the 17th FINA World Championships.

Peng appeared to be heading for a clearcut win as he led by 34 points from He Chao with two dives to go. But he faltered in the penultimate round and in the end less than five points separated the top three as Italy's Giovanni Tocci hurled down a powerful challenge to the leading pair with his last dive.



Peng Jianfeng (CHN), gold

He Chao, the 3m world champion in 2015, edged past the 22-year-old Italian, who had been outside the top three for the first five rounds, leaving Peng – diving last but still with a 10-point lead – with one dive to decide it. Peng’s forward 2-1/2 somersaults with twist was not his best but it was just enough for gold. Peng won with a six-dive aggregate of 448.40 points, with He Chao taking the silver on 447.20 and Tocci the bronze on 444.25.

It marked a gratifying return to the podium for 25-year-old He Chao after Olympic disappointment last year when he failed to qualify from the preliminary round of the 3m event. And it brought China back to customary winning ways after defeats in the women’s 1m (won by Australia’s Maddison Keeney) and men’s 3m synchro (Russia’s Evgeny Kuznetsov and Ilia Zakharov) on Day 2 when Ren Qian and Lian Junjie scored the sole Chinese win in the mixed 10m synchro.



He Chao (CHN), silver

China have now won the men's 1m world title nine times out of 12, including the six most recent editions.

The last non-Chinese winner was Canada's Alexandre Despatie in 2005. Germany's Patrick Hausding, Olympic 3m bronze medallist at the 2016 Rio Games, had been in the top three throughout the first five rounds but the 28-year-old European 1m silver medallist could not withstand Tocci's challenge and finished fourth, five points adrift of the Italian.



Giovanni Tocci (CHN), bronze

European champion Illya Kvasha of Ukraine, 1m silver medallist at the last two world championships, failed to make the final after a botched second dive in the preliminary round. Kvasha, however, gained consolation on Day 2 when he shared bronze with Oleg Kolodiy in the men's synchronised 3m final. Kolodiy finished sixth in the 1m final.

QUOTES

Men's 1m springboard

Jianfeng Peng (CHN), gold

"Finally I reached the level I wanted to be at. My fourth dive was the best, I became too confident and did not concentrate enough for my fifth. This moment was enough to make a mistake and the other got closer to me. Fortunately my last went well and I could win."

Chao He (CHN), silver

"First of all, congratulations to Giovanni for the bronze medal. In a contest, anything can happen, we can never know the result in advance, we just have to do our best. In fact, this is a great result, we are very satisfied with it. Personally, after the prelims I feel I gave everything, so I am happy. Competition is always very high, many practice and patience is required to be able to win. Jianfeng performed very well, he showed great results."

Giovanni Tocci (ITA), bronze

"This bronze feels like a gold medal for me. I just hoped that I can finish this event with a great result. It's even better, because I could win a medal in a World Championship. We were so close with the competitors till the end. The most important thing was to concentrate through the whole competition, and focus till the last dive and last second. When I saw the score on the board, I felt an unbelievable feeling and happiness, I can't find the words. I will have two more events. I'm going to focus on them right now and only celebrate this bronze when I will be at home."

Women's 10m platform synchro

Ren Qian/Si Yajie (CHN), gold

"We were very excited at the beginning, this was our first competition together, so we are very happy with the result. We are relieved, and we can have a rest now. The final was not easy, we made some mistakes, so we have to work hard, because we want to win many more medals for China in the future".

Mi Rae Kim/Kuk Hyang Kim (PRK), silver

"We are quite happy to win the silver medal. We train only in our home country, therefore we are grateful for our trainers and all those who helped us to reach this result. We are confident, we want to be even more successful in the future".

Pandelela Pamg/Jun Hoong Cheong (MAS), bronze

"We are very happy and grateful. This bronze medal is the result of a lot of sacrifice and hard work, therefore we feel blessed and we are really proud. We did our best in the final, and we are satisfied with the result. After all these years, we feel honoured to be ranked among the top athletes in our country. We will never give up and we seek for further improvement".
