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PR 94 - FINA awards Best Athletes of 2017

FINA Communication Department

The world's best aquatics athletes of the year were honoured tonight (Saturday December 2) in the fourth edition of the FINA World Aquatics Gala "Soirée des Étoiles" 2017 held in Sanya, China.

Swimming legends Caeleb Dressel of the U.S. and Sweden's Sarah Sjöström received the **FINA Best Male/Female**

Swimmer 2017 award respectively, a first for both athletes, while Croatia and the USA were honoured with the

FINA Best Male/Female Water Polo Team 2017 recognition respectively. The U.S. female water polo team has bagged the highest FINA award for the fourth consecutive time, since the inception of the Gala in 2014.

Great Britain's Thomas Daley received the **FINA Best Male Diver 2017** title for the first time, while Shi Tingmao (CHN)

bagged the female equivalent award for the third consecutive year, since 2015.

In **artistic swimming**, Russia's Svetlana Kolesnichenko got the top honour, while two male competitors, Italy's Giorgio Minisini and Russia's Aleksandr Maltsev shared the prize. They took one gold apiece (mixed duet free and mixed duet technical) at the FINA World Championships in Budapest last summer.

Marc-Antoine Olivier (FRA) and Ana Marcela Cunha (BRA) were awarded with the **FINA Best Male/Female Open**

Water Swimmer 2017, and high divers Steve LoBue (USA) and Rhiannan Iffland (AUS) completed the list of winners tonight in Sanya.

Masters athletes Bela Banki (HUN, swimming, 97) and Maurine Kornfeld (USA, swimming 96) were also praised during the evening.

Finally, the **FINA Media Award of 2017** was awarded to Chinese newswire Xinhua News (represented by Mr Zhou Jie).

FINA President Julio C. Maglione said: "At the FINA World Championships, but also during our top annual events during the last months, our best athletes were able to shine for the delight of the spectators on site, but also for the millions of TV viewers that regularly follow our competitions. Their effort and commitment make Aquatics bigger and gives FINA a privileged rank in the Olympic world."

"We also pay a fair tribute to coaches tonight. These men and women that are able to detect a potential champion, and then guide this boy or girl to excellence, are a central piece of Aquatics' success!"

The "Soirée des Etoiles" (the "Evening of the Stars") was first held in Doha (QAT), before the start of the 12th FINA World Swimming Championships (25m). For 2015, it was organised in Budapest (HUN) on January 31, 2016. The 2016 awardees were known in Windsor (CAN) on December 4, 2016, a couple of days before the start of the 13th FINA World Swimming Championships (25m).

2017 WINNERS [1]

The following coaches were also rewarded on the occasion:

SWIMMING

Gregory Troy (coach of Caeleb Dressel, USA),
Johan Wallberg (coach of Sarah Sjöström, SWE)

WATER POLO

Ivica Tucak (coach of Team Croatia, men's water polo),
Adam Krikorian (coach of Team USA, women's water polo)

DIVING

Jane Figueiredo (coach of Thomas Daley, GBR),
Zhao Wenjin (coach of Shi Tingmao)

ARTISTIC SWIMMING

Rosella Pibiri (coach of Giorgio Minisini, ITA),
Gana Maksimova (coach Aleksandr Maltsev, RUS),
Tatiana Danchenko and Tatiana Pokrovskaya (coaches of Svetlana Kolesnichenko, RUS)

OPEN WATER

Philippe Lucas (coach of Marc-Antoine Olivier, FRA),
Fernando Possenti (coach of Ana Marcela Cunha, BRA)

Kyle Mitrione (coach of Steve LoBue, USA),
Todor Spasov (Rhiannan Iffland, AUS).
