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ASWS, Quebec City, Day 3: 2 Gold for Canada and 1 Gold for Japan

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The 2019 FINA Artistic Swimming World Series in Quebec City, Canada came to its finale this Saturday with another day of creative, exciting, and high skilled routines. The events still to be contested were the Free Solo, Team Combo and Team Highlight. The competitive portion of the evening was followed by the Gala.

In the Free Solo event, Japan's Yukiko Inui won her seventh gold ASWS medal as a soloist. Saturday's performance earned her a 93.1667. Inui is the highest ranked Free Soloist of the circuit with a 93.7583 she achieved in leg 6 in Greensboro (USA). Even though Inui is ranked second in the Technical Solo, Yukiko shared that she “prefers swimming the technical routine”.



Photo by Dan Robichaud

Yukiko on her preparations for the 2019 FINA World Championships: "I will be working on connecting more with

the judges when I swim, more eye contact, and making them notice me. I have never won a medal at a World Championships and I want to be on the podium in Gwangju."

With an ASWS personal best score, 90.8667, Canada's Jacqueline Simoneau ended her 2019 circuit at home by clinching the silver medal. Edged on by a cheering crowd, Simoneau's energy throughout the routine swum to Freddie Mercury's "Somebody to Love" was remarkable. Simoneau participated in five stops in the Free Solo event accumulating one gold, two silver and two bronze medals. Closing out the podium was Germany's Marlene Bojer, 80.8333, winning Germany's first medal in the ASWS Free Solo event.

The first gold medal for Canada in this leg of the ASWS was won in the Team Combo event. Their routine told the story of the four houses of the Harry Potter Hogwarts school, even their bathing suits were decorated to show the four different houses. With an 80.0667, they displayed the most convincing routine to top the podium. The silver medal went to Korea who with 77.5667 just edged out Hungary's score of 77.3000. Notable was the creativity of the Korean's routine. During their routine, themed "Jungle Book", the Korean swimmers used facial expressions, arms and legs to depict several different animals in the Jungle.



Photo by Dan Robichaud

Head Coach Miho Yoshida is the choreographer of the routine. Korea's Artistic Swimming is excited to be hosting the 2019 World Championships: "Artistic Swimming is not so popular yet in our country, but we hope that that will change. We are working hard to make our country proud of us."

The last set of medals to be won was for the Highlight event. Earning an 89.3667, their best yet, Canada's routine "The new power generation" was superior to Hungary's "Agents". The ladies from Canada proudly performed for their home crowd to earn the last of the gold medals. This medal makes number 29 for Canada in the ASWS, currently only surpassed by Japan who has earned 31 medals in the 2019 ASWS.

Canada's Assistant Coach Kasia Kulesza on winning at home and Canada's goals: "It is honestly an amazing feeling to know that you can perform at the last of the ASWS in front of our Canadian crowd. It was so energizing; the girls could feel the crowd. It gave them a lot of energy and they were very proud to be able to perform for the Canadians. The gold medal is the cherry on top of the sundae. We are very proud of them, with all the work they did since January, it is a fresh team, they worked so hard. They have only been together for three or four months. We will be going to Korea and then to the Pan-American Games. The goal for the Pan-American Games is to win, of course, and to qualify for the Olympic Games. I think this team is ready, we are on the right track. They have been making progress at every competition. It will be the ultimate thing for our season this year."

After the last of the competitive events, close to twenty FINA "A" and "G" International judges representing eleven countries were relieved to have completed their assignments. Much has been done by the FINA TASC to develop and educate judges all over the world, to provide guidelines for scoring, and to support judges with their duties and

responsibilities.



Photo by Dan Robichaud

Canada's FINA "A" judge Diane van der Pol on the importance of the ASWS for judges: "First, I think it's great that we have so many competitions. There is way more opportunities for the athletes to get to various locations, because we are all over the world. It is wonderful for the judges, because we can get exposed to seeing way more athletes as well, and seeing more routines, and spending time together as judges, and growing and learning as judges. It is, also, great for the coaches, because they can get feedback all year, and it is exciting for us to hear and see the improvement of the athletes. The feedback from the judges to the coaches and the ability for the coaches to use what they can to improve their athletes, it is a fabulous situation. The profile for our sport is growing because of the ASWS and I think it is fantastic that FINA is investing in it."

The Gala event for the athletes was a delightful mixture of current, old, and comical routines, showcased by 10 countries. The support of all the teams for each of the presentations, cheered on by a huge crowd of spectators, is a clear indication that the addition of the Gala event is a huge success. During the closing party at the Concorde Hotel in historical downtown Quebec City, Judi Enns Bradette, President of Canada Artistic Swimming expressed her thanks to the hosts Canada Artistic Swimming and Quebec Excellence Synchro Club with the support of Quebec City Business Destinations and Natation Artistique Quebec.

Bradette on the impact of hosting the ASWS in Canada: "How fortunate we are that we get to showcase the talent around the world more than once a year. We had the privilege in seeing the best of the world competing here. Which is wonderful for the athletes, wonderful for the sport and wonderful for the audience. Last year the format was with our qualifier, which included all our athletes, from 12 years and under all the way up to Senior, who got to see the best in the world, and that would never happen. So, the excitement around the pool witnessing not only our national team, but the others, was absolutely phenomenal, and it attracts more swimmers to the sport. Here we have done it in combination with the Masters Championship, which is amazing. You get the support of the Master swimmers and it's wonderful for the athletes to see that you can do this for the rest of your life."

The final medal count for ASWS #7:

China - 6 Gold
Canada - 2 Gold, 4 Silver, 2 Bronze

Japan - 2 Gold, 2 Silver
Hungary - 1 Silver, 3 Bronze
Kazakhstan - 1 Silver
Korea - 1 Silver
Colombia - 1 Bronze
Germany - 1 Bronze
