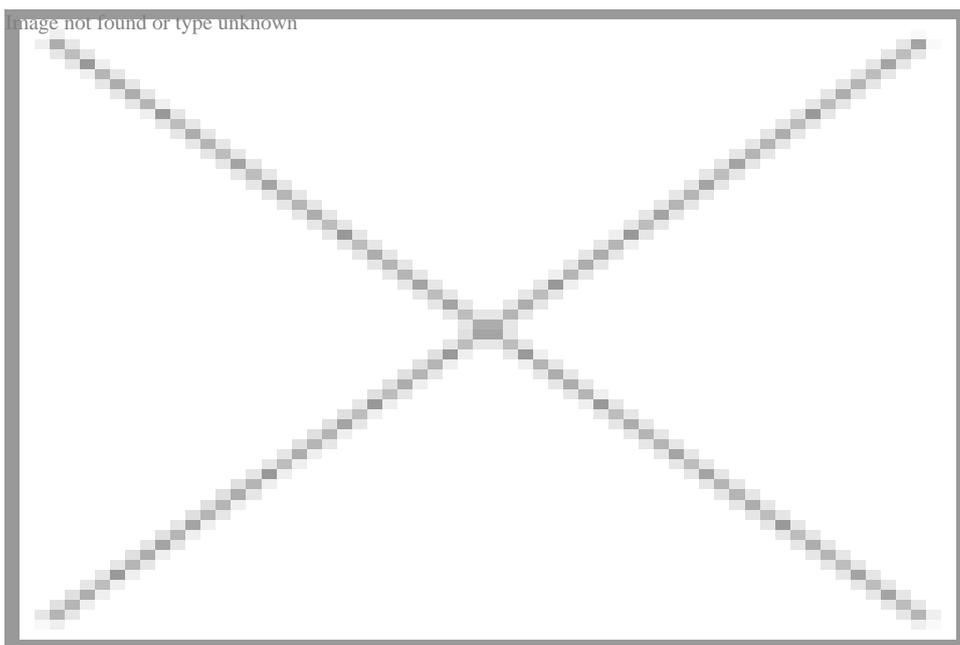


Artistic Swimming, Day 3: Russia continues its winning streak

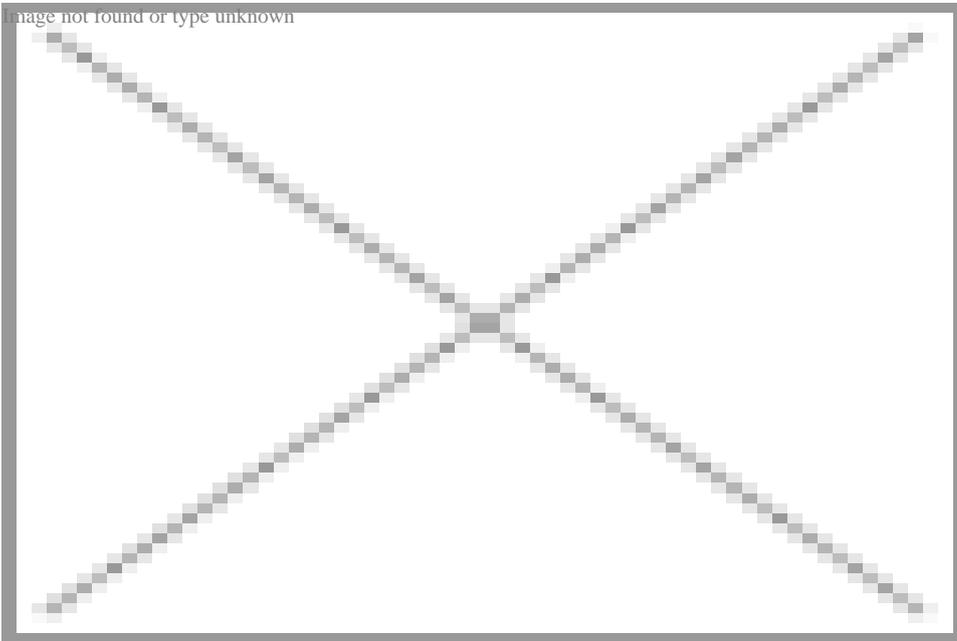
Maureen Croes, FINA Media Committee Member & Anna Kozin, FINA Media Committee Chairwoman

During the evening of Day 3 at the 18th FINA World Championships in Gwangju, Korea, the medals for the Technical Duet event were up for grabs. After the preliminary round the Russian, Chinese, Ukrainian and Japanese duets would be fighting for the three spots on the podium. The favourite for the gold medal is the reigning World Champion from Russia Svetlana Kolesnichenko, last evening's gold medalist in the Technical Solo event paired with Svetlana Romashina, four-time world champion in this event.

Since the separation of the Duet event into the Technical Duet and the Free Duet events in 2007, Russia has won the gold medal at each of the World Championships. The pair has only once swum together at the 2013 Barcelona World Championship. Romashina was part of the winning duet in 2009, 2011 and 2015, and Kolesnichenko won the gold in 2017. Today, Kolesnichenko and Romashina demonstrated that Russia is still the best. Their routine, simply called "Fantastic Tokyo" swum to music by the Japanese duo Hifana, a subtle hint that they have their eyes set on the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Russia won the Duet event at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and at every Olympics since. Svetlana Romashina swam the duet event for Russia in 2012 and 2016. With a score of 95.9010, Kolesnichenko and Romashina claimed the gold medal.



The Chinese duet, featuring Artistic Swimming veteran superstars Sun Wenyan and Huang Xuechen, was on a mission to change history. The pair recently returned to the competition pool, bringing with them multiple World Championship and Olympic Games medals and lots of experience. China has finished second to Russia in the Technical Duet event for the past four World Championships as well as at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. Sun Wenyan and Huang Xuechen swam their routine themed "Gamer" beautifully, expressing the search for hope, freedom, and courage, using facial expressions and leg and arm movements to show a clear contrast between the darkness of the pursuit and the brilliance of the yearning for freedom. Although Sun and Huang received a higher score than in the preliminary round, the score of 94.0072 points was not enough for the top spot on the podium yet earning them another silver medal.



During the preliminary round, the difference between the Ukrainian and the Japanese duet was only 0.14 points, a slim margin. Japan's Yukiko Inui, bronze medalist in the Solo Technical event last night and bronze medallist in 2015 World Championships in this event paired with Megamu Yoshida swam their routine "Ninja Sakura", depicting two cunning ninja's who invaded a castle with the intention to seize it, only to be sidetracked by the sweet aroma of Sakura. Yukiko and Megamu performed better than during the preliminary round, improving to a score of 92.1116.

The pressure now shifted to the Ukrainian duet of Marta Fiedina and Anastasiya Savchuk, who needed to step it up in order to claim the third step on the podium. Savchuk, has won five World Championship medals, however, none in the Technical Duet event. Very young, but talented Fiedina has yet to win a World Championship medal, and Ukraine won its first medal in this event in 2017. Ironically, the theme of their routine "Prism of a Perfect Day" was right on the mark. Fiedina and Savchuk proved that when looking through the prism of life and on the verge of impossible, everything is possible. Scoring 92.5847, Marta Fiedina and Anastasiya Savchuk earned a bronze medal in the Technical Duet, their first World Championship medal.

QUOTES?

Svetlana Romashina (RUS), gold:

On her comeback after giving birth to a baby:

"I can say that it was hard to training again. I feel I belong to artistic swimming. I feel at home at the pool. It was something unusual to stand on the pool deck in Budapest two years ago and be a coach. But now I'm 'in' again."

On her goals:

"I try not to think about the record number of world or Olympic titles I can get. I truly want to show beautiful performances and make my comeback memorable."

Svetlana Kolesnichenko (RUS), gold:

On her reunion with Romashina:

“I knew Romashina would come back. Of course, I couldn’t be 100 percent sure. Anyway, I was waiting for her. She is my hero. I have no idea how she manages to be a mother and an elite athlete.”

“I can’t say that we paired up without any problem as if we never part with Svetlana. Although it didn’t take too much time to get used to each other again. And you see the result.”

Xuechen Huang (CHN), silver:

On their performance:

“We are quite satisfied with our routine. It was strong and we definitely did better than in the preliminary. We are happy with this start but we will try to get more during this championship and at the upcoming Olympics.”

On her comeback after giving birth to a baby:

“I miss the baby. But I love the sport. I want to prove myself that I can do it even at the age of 29. I must say that my skills improved a lot after restarting my training. We are full of strength and energy as we worked very hard. Sometimes we put ourselves to tears. We have a goal and we try to achieve it.”

Marta Fiedina (UKR), bronze:

On motivation after being fourth in tech solo:

“I was disappointed. But that defeat was like an impulse to move forward, to work harder. I realised that there was no reason to give up. The competition has just started. I said to myself: ‘You have a goal. Go for it’. We have a strong and united team. I’m sure we will succeed.”

Anastasiya Savchuk (UKR), bronze

“Emotions run high. We are so happy to finish third. That was a long way to get this bronze. We really fought for it. It’s unbelievable. Just can’t find the right words to express all my feelings.”
