



FÉDÉRATION
INTERNATIONALE
DE NATATION

Published on *fina.org* - Official FINA website (<https://www.fina.org>)

Artistic Swimming, Day 4: Third gold for Russia and first ever gold for Ukraine

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

Tonight's final for the Mixed Technical Duet was packed with World Championship medallists from 2015 Kazan and 2017 Budapest. This is the third time that the Mixed Technical Duet is contested at the FINA World Championships.

Russian swimmers Mayya Gurbanberdieva and Aleksandr Maltsev, silver medallists in both 2015 and 2017, were ready to challenge the reigning World Champions Manila Flamini and Giorgio Minisini from Italy. Also in contention for the medals were the duet from the USA Bill May, the 2015 Kazan World Champion, paired with Natalia Vega Figuero, and the Japanese pair, Atsushi Abe and Yumi Adachi.

First to swim was the Russian pair, performing a passionate Tango dance in the water, Gurbanberdieva and Maltsev had an electrifying connection, which captivated the audience. Receiving 92.0749 points from the judges, they were unsurpassable and claimed Russia's first gold medal in the Technical Mixed Duet event.

Manila Flamini and Giorgio Minisini, the Italian duet performed a love story in the water between two different species, a mermaid and a triton. Dramatizing the difficulties needed to be conquered, Flamini and Minisini received 90.8511 from the judges for the silver medal.



The race for the bronze medal would be between the Japanese Atsushi Abe and Yumi Adachi, and USA's Bill May and Natalia Vega Figuero. Swimming a routine themed "Siren", to music composed by Canadian Benoit Jutras, the Japanese duet, Atsushi Abe and Yumi Adachi, showed the seduction and tempting of a Siren on a sailor, while executing the required elements. Abe and Adachi received 88.5113 points earning the bronze medal, Japan's first World Championship medal in the Mixed Technical event.



May and Vega's routine themed "K Pop", a Korean genre of pop music, was an upbeat, happy and animated routine. The music, their bright yellow suits, their presence in the water, was appreciated by the Korean spectators, but the 86.9235 was not enough to reach the podium.



Another milestone was reached in the development and progress of the Artistic Swimming discipline this evening in the second event on the program. It was the debut of the Highlight event at the 18th FINA World Championships. In 2017 the Highlight event was added to the Artistic Swimming events and it has been an official event for the 2018 and 2019 Artistic Swimming World Series.

A Highlight routine is swum with 10 athletes and must include a minimum of four acrobatic movements, a connected or intertwined action, and a float that gives a kaleidoscopic effect.

Tonight, in Gwangju, eight teams were in the running for the medals. Although, this number of participating countries is on the low side, the routines presented were full of energy, each one unique, with creative choreographies showing the acrobatic abilities of the athletes. The Highlight event was very well received by the spectators.

The Ukrainian Highlight routine, “Praying for Peace”, showed unique highlights and patterns that were distinctly superior, the handstand of one of the athletes on the feet of another possibly being the most memorable. For their exceptional performance depicting their hope for World Peace, the Ukrainian team received 94.5000 and the first World Championship gold medal in the Highlight event.



Italy’s Team, honoring the World Championships host Korea, with their routine themed “Dragons” celebrated the presence of the different type of Dragons in the Korean Culture. The Italian athletes donned creative caps with the dragon triangles characteristic of dragons. Their acrobatics were powerful, and earned them 91.7333, just edging out the Team from Spain, for the silver medal.



Swimming to music by the rock band AC-DC, the ten Spanish athletes performed a routine choreographed by Mayuko Fujiki, an Olympic medallist as an athlete (Atlanta 1996) and as a coach (2004 Athens, 2008 Beijing and 2016 Rio). The routine themed “Thunder” was supported by the energy, power and rhythm of the swimmers. Noteworthy were the “red and black leather” bathing suits, fitting attire for a rock concert. Receiving 91.1333 Spain claimed the bronze medal and the third step on the podium.

QUOTES

Mixed duet technical

Aleksandr Maltsev (RUS), gold, On the first gold in technical routine:

“I had silver in technical routine in Kazan-2015 and Budapest-2017. So it was important to be victorious this time. We worked hard with my partner to achieve our goal.”

On the progress of mixed duets:

“The level of top-six duets is constantly growing. They become stronger. It’s a real pleasure to watch their programs. And we have newcomers. A duet from Australia will compete in free routine. They had their debut at the Chinese stop of the World Series. The number of athletes doing mixed in different countries is also rising. Four (!) local mixed duets took part in World Series in Japan. That’s wonderful.”

Maya Gurbanberdieva (RUS), gold:

“I was a little bit nervous as this is my first World Championship. But thanks to Aleksandr and our coach Gana Maksimova who supported me all the time I got through this. It’s good that we had an intense season and took part in World Series. That experience helped me a lot.”

Giorgio Minisini (ITA), silver: On the result:

“We think we did good. There was improvement. We just tried to do our best. The rest is not depending on us but on other factors.”

On working with four-time Olympic champion and coach Anastasia Ermakova:

“We made both programs with Ermakova. Actually every program since Kazan-2015. We feel confident working with her. We can do all choreography in less than one week. And then only clean and modify programs. We understand each other. She is a genius.”

Yumi Adachi (JPN), bronze:

“We wanted to show our best. We are happy to get a medal - the first one in this routine for team Japan.”

Bill May (USA), 4th place

“It makes me very happy to be here. That’s inspiring to see everyone improving. It’s amazing to see such passion and hard work. And people really respect this event. It truly makes the sport grow. If you look back at 2015 and at the first World Championships in Kazan, you can compare and confirm that people are interested and enjoy this discipline. And it’s great for the sport.”

Highlight team

Yelizaveta Yakhno (UKR), gold:

“This is the favorite routine for team Ukraine because we are good at lifts, throws and other acrobatic elements. We won three legs of the World Series. So we were one of the top contenders. That’s great we managed to take the first gold in highlight at the World Championships.”

Linda Cerruti (ITA), silver:

“I really enjoy to swim highlight. We are happy with the result. This choreography – the dragon theme – is new. We worked on it during the one last month before the Championship. We had no time to prepare it in advance. Time for practice was short. Nevertheless we did great.”

Ona Carbonell (ESP), bronze:

“The audience enjoys highlight a lot. There are so many interesting elements in the routine. People like the performance. It’s good for the sport. As for the medals, we hoped to step on the podium and we succeeded.”
