

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

High Diving, Day 3: Perfect “triple quad” gives gold to Hunt

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When Gary Hunt arrived today at the high diving venue in Gwangju (KOR), he probably had one question in his mind. “How will I succeed in my ‘triple quad’?” The “triple quad” refers to Hunt’s favourite combination, a back 3 somersaults, with 4 twists in the free position – in the diving numbering, it’s simply a 5268D. This is a magic combination for the British star: with it, he won competitions; with it, he also lost. The most notable case was the 2017 edition of the World Championships in Budapest, two years ago.

We had to wait until the fourth and last round of the competition to know the answer to that question in Hunt’s mind. But the reply couldn’t be clearer: with three perfect 10s from the judges, in a dive with a DD of 5.2, it’s easy to do maths: 30 by 5.2 equals 156.00 points. The maximum possible. The number of perfection. The score that allowed Hunt to recover the world crown, after the 2015 gold in Kazan and the unsuccessful performance on the shore of the Danube River two years ago.



Steve LoBue (USA) - Photo by gettyimages

Fourth after the initial two rounds on Monday, Hunt (also the best in the 2019 World Cup) was very solid in the third combination – an inward with 3 somersaults and ½ twist (5461B) -, but was still third before the last round of dives. Then, came the 5268D and an accumulated total of 442.20 for the world title in Gwangju.

Before that, Steve LoBue (USA), world champion in 2017, seemed secure in the lead. He finished first on Monday, with a 8.85 advantage over Jonathan Paredes (MEX) and over 24 ahead from Michal Navratil (CZE). Came round three today and LoBue remained confident and flawless, performing also a 5461B, slightly worse than Hunt (95.40 for the North American, 97.20 for the British ace). In the last round, closing the field, LoBue was slightly short in the entry of his back 4 somersaults, 2 twists, getting 119.85 from the judges. That wasn't enough to secure the gold, after Hunt's massive score. In the end, LoBue had to content with silver, in 433.65.

The bronze went to Jonathan Paredes, second after the first three rounds, but presenting a last dive with a lower DD ("only" 4.6). Despite executing an almost perfect back 3 somersaults, 3 twists, the 128.80 points for this dive were short to get the silver. The Mexican, bronze medal in Barcelona 2013 and silver in Kazan 2015, finished third in 430.15.



Jonathan Paredes (MEX) - Photo by gettyimages

Medallists two years ago in Budapest, Michal Navratil (CZE, silver in 2017) was this time fourth and Alessandro de Rose (ITA, bronze) concluded in fifth in Gwangju.

Orlando Duque (COL), first FINA world champion in 2013, pioneer and icon in this discipline, and completing 45 years old next September, announced the end of his career this year, and dived for the ninth overall position in Korea.

22 divers took part in the competition, with only the 12 best after the third round selected for the last series of dives.



Photo by gettyimages

QUOTES

Gary Hunt (GBR), gold:

“It’s hard to explain your feelings after such a final. I’m still shocked! I was a bit disappointed after the first two rounds, but I decided I should fight until the end. I learnt a big lesson in Budapest – I messed up with this dive (5268D) because I couldn’t handle the pressure. The execution of the dive was also not so secure then – I’ve improved a lot since 2017. I now know what I have to do. The level of the competition here in Gwangju was impressive – just look at the fight to get to the last 12 spots. This is quite positive for us; it means that new talents are emerging. We have a great friendship among this group of divers. We all go through the same experience, so when we do it well we also like to celebrate together. The High Diving route is a path plenty of bumps and rocks. You need to be ready for that ride. But, in this case, fear is what makes the sport enjoyable. Fear makes it fun. Since 2013, at the FINA World Championships, we are competing in a controlled environment. That’s not always the case, especially when we dive in natural conditions. I love both dimensions of the Sport.”

Steve LoBue (USA), silver:

“I feel pretty excited right now. Gary is doing that ‘triple quad’ for a long time now... before I even started to dive (smiles). The truth is that the level is going rapidly up, the DDs are improving and we must be proud and satisfied with the overall development of the sport. I think we have our share of responsibility in that improvement. My way of dealing with the fear? I take a deep breath, look around and admire the nice environment from the top of the platform.”

Jonathan Paredes (MEX), bronze:

“I am super happy. In 2013, I got my first medal, in 2015 my second one, and in Budapest 2017 I was out from the podium. It’s nice to be back! And it’s nice to be back and share the podium with these guys – they are great and I admire them a lot! The World Championships have a special dimension – they don’t happen often. When you compete in an annual series, you can fail here and there, but you can still recover. Here, it’s not the case – you must be competing knowing you don’t have a second opportunity for the next two years. You must be ready for the ‘important’ one!”

Orlando Duque (COL), 9th:

“This will be my last FINA competition. I intend to retire at the end of this year, still completing the Red Bull World Series. I had two serious injuries in 2018 and despite feeling and competing quite well in Gwangju, I believe it’s time for my body to rest. I am quite happy to leave in a very good moment for the Sport and I’ll be very happy to be on the ‘other side’ of the discipline, helping to the development of High Diving.”
