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Youth Artistic Swimming Worlds, Samorin, Day 3: survival test well passed

Olga Kamardina, FINA Correspondent in Samorin

322 rising stars have tested their technical merit, accuracy and must-have skills during the Figure session on competition Day 3 at the inaugural FINA World Youth Artistic Swimming Championships in Samorin, Slovakia. The uneasy exam was well passed with a number of A-marks depicting really high level of drills of the 13 – 15 years old competitors.

“A Figure session is always a challenge, though it may well be viewed as a boring and a quieter part of the artistic

swimming competition, - said **Lisa Schott, FINA Artistic Swimming Technical Committee Chairwoman.** –

Figures are very useful from the technical point of view. If there are no Figure sessions, coaches would stop training them, and we, on the contrary, wish to encourage them to train them as much as possible. The younger the swimmer is, the more important is to acquire the basic skills and perfect the future skills. I always see fruits of practicing Figures. Figure Session is one of the steps towards the big professional career”.



Unlike usual practice, today in Samorin there were a lot of spectators at the stands, however they were supposed to be quiet. According to the rules, they could not interfere in the Figure session process and therefore were forbidden to loudly support their athletes. Coaches were not allowed at the deck as well. Competitors were left by themselves in front of the judge's panels. All dressed in black swimsuits and white caps, artistic swimmers individually performed 4 figures to have the scoring summed up with those of their respective routines. Heron Rudy, official mascot of the competitions, had cherished a hope to see young prodigies from around the globe executing the name-brother Artistic Swimming Figure, however the choice of this year fall on other prominent Figures.

The "survival test" of Samorin included the "ever in place" for 13 – 15 years age group "Rio" and "Ariana", and a random-selected "Jupiter" and "Oceanea". In fact, Figure session brought a few surprises as the Russians kept on dominating the third day to go.

Viktoriia Rodionycheva posted the day's high of 82.7765 points, chased by her teammates Anna Sokolova, 82.5922, and Daria Kirsanova, 82.4784. All three have virtually outscored Varvara Subbotina's result for the Figure session at the Junior Worlds of 2016, 82.0856. The best of the rest world was Ukrainian Anastasiia Soldatenkova and Inha Valkova, breaking the 2nd ten on 79.7686 and 79.1314 points, as American Kim Claire collected the 16th best score, 78.0353.



Photo credit to Peter Sukenik

Results of the Figure competitions became the part of the Preliminary routines totaling chart to picture a few changes, comparing to the previous days ranking. Daria Kirsanova of Russia firmly confirmed herself as the one to beat, and currently seats atop on 169.0452 points overall. Ukraine's Anastasiia Soldatenkova is placed second, as she collected 164.1018 points, and Iberian Alba Garcia managed to keep to her third spot, 158.9626, an inch ahead of her Italian chaser Susanna Pedotti with 158.5607. Soloists from Korea, Japan, China, Kazakhstan, USA, France, Greece and Germany have also done qualification hurdles.

Russians are first heading into the Team final, totaling 167.4156 points, whereas Ukraine strengthened their 2nd position with 161.6321 points, and Spain resting on third with 159.5445 points. The other successful nations of the Top 12 are: China, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, USA, France, Canada, Greece and Belarus. The composition of the duet's part will be almost the same, missing the latter and seeing Germany instead. The change in the top 3, comparing to the preliminaries free routine came as Spanish Mercedes Diaz/Alba Garcia of Spain narrowly edged out Italy's Vittoria Meucci/Susanna Pedotti, 156.5580 – 156.1668. Russian Violetta Evenko/Diana Mirgazizova and Ukrainian Sofiia Sereda/Anastasiia Soldatenkova reign supreme, totaling 166.8686 and 162.7989 respectively.

A few remembers, that Figure session boast a big history and has been a part of Olympic Games and World Championships for some 20 years to go. First, they entered the international program in 1979 at the World Cup in Tokyo.



“I remember performing them at the FINA World Cup in 1995”, - recalls **Olga Brusnikina**, 3 time Olympic

Champion of Russia, Honorary secretary of the FINA Artistic Swimming Technical Committee. – In 1994 – 1996 in Moscow we even conducted a special Figure competition for juniors, 3 days long. No routines - only figures, which was a bit challenging, and no way boring”.

“I always liked Figure sessions – both as a coach and as an athlete, - shares her take on the Figure theme **Tamara McGregor**

, FINA Artistic Swimming Coaches committee member, Olympic Champion of the USA. – I remember, that in 1993, 1994,1995 we had been doing them at senior level alongside technical and free routines. It was a big challenge to the core strength. It normally took about 3-4 hours a day to master them, both in the club and at the national team, but enjoyed the process. Maybe because I have always been good at them, always in the top 10. “Spiral” was my favorite figure, because it was a bit challenging and I could perform it very nicely as well”.

“The figures chosen are quite complicated for this age group of girls, - comments on the Figure composition

Virginia Jasontek, vice-chairman of the FINA Artistic Swimming Technical Committee and mother of bronze

Olympic medalist of 2004. – We have “Rio”, which is the most risky Figure out of the four, but I like it very much indeed. There is a ballet leg, a thrust, and then a 360 degree spin. It is very beautiful, but always a challenge for the swimmers. Even though if you make it everyday on a regular basis, there is always room for a surprise.



“Ariana” is all about stretching, featuring 3 splits: left, right and central. The beginning leg over and the walk-out at the end are also very important, the scores should reflect all parts of this figure. Jupiter demonstrates force and support sculls, stability, and height in vertical position as they change from the arch position to the vertical one. Oceania showcases movement from the surface arch-position to a high vertical and then finishes with a 720 degree spin”.

According to **Monika Thuringerova**, coach of the team Slovakia, Figures are the most objective part of the artistic

swimming.

“Every participant wears a suit and a cap of the same color, nobody knows who is who. There is no emotions, it’s all about technical drills, which leaves no room for personal preferences. Everything is in your own hands, and your results reflect how hard you have trained before the competitions, - she says”.

“We train figures up to 3 hours every day, however we can assure you the figures chosen are quite hard, - note

Daria Ogorodnikova and Polina Lartseva of Russia. – “Jupetier” is a big test for your core strength. Besides that, it is

very long, and more than that, you have to raise one leg vertically at the end of the figure. This is the first time we swim Figures outdoors. The sun is shining bright, which makes it more difficult to find an orienting point enabling to assume a good positioning. The roof of the stands and referees are very useful in this respect here”.

“In the open water you’d simply be better aware of your movements, - adds **Atira O’Neil of the USA.** Figures are

the most technical and skills-based side of the artistic swimming. It is 50% of the final score, so it counts very majorly. Swimmers are supposed to show all their technical skills of the execution, sculling, and others, and actually this is what they need to be technically an excellent swimmer. I love Figure session. It’s all about your strength and drills. You are alone in front of judges.”



Photo credit to Peter Sukenik

“Watching sideways is very important, - shares the trick **Canadian Meghan Lapierre.** - To pass your exam you are to

learn the lesson. Unless you learn a simple lesson, you can't move on further as your knowledge and experience are not enough to progress. The same holds true for the figure session. Figures are fundamental and vital as they are laying the basis for the strong technical command. Not all the 4 figures here in Samorin are my favorite, but I think, I have done my best and was assessed well".

The 1st FINA World Youth Artistic Swimming Championships in Samorin will resume tomorrow, on 31 August, as the first 3 sets of medals will be awarded in Solo, Mixed Duet and Free Combination finals.

Competition results

1st FINA Youth World Artistic Swimming Championships

Day 3 30 August, 2019

Figure Session/Top 30

1. Rodionycheva Victoriia (RUS) 82.7765, 2. Sokolova Anna (RUS) 82.5922 3. Kirsanova Daria (RUS) 82.4784 4. Ogorodnikova Daria (RUS) 82.0020 5. Mirgazizova Diana (RUS) 81.0039 6. Lartseva Polina (RUS) 80.9627 7. Bakai Alena (RUS) 80.8275 8. Akhmetzianova Aliia (RUS) 80.5412 9. Evenko Violetta (RUS) 80.5333 10. Zelenko Eva (RUS) 80.1039 11. Soldatenkova Anastasiia (UKR) 79.7686 12. Valkova Inha (UKR) 79.1314 13. Mustafina Lyaysyan (RUS) 78.5804 14. Prudius Aleksandra (RUS) 78.1843 15. Sereda Sofiia (UKR) 78.1627 16. Kim Claire (USA) 78.0353 17. Hunter Keana (USA) 77.8412 18. Garcia Marina (ESP) 77.7510 19. Garcia Alba (ESP) 77.7294 20. Hur Yoonseo (KOR) 77.6824 21. Yakimova Zhaklin (KAZ) 77.6392 22. Jaillardon Oriane (FRA) 77.4333 23. Pedotti Susanna (ITA) 77.4275 24. Parra Valeria (ESP) 77.0745 25. Tuyakova Yasmin (KAZ) 76.9196 26. Matyntseva Mariia (UKR) 76.9020 27. Austranti Alessia (ITA) 76.6725 28. Myasnikova Arina (KAZ) 76.7020 29. Chassaigne Lalie (FRA) 76.6725 30. Hryhorova Valeriia (UKR) 76.6020
