



After the seventh and final event in Synchro

Russia wins six gold, but Spain is the overall best

In the last event – Team Free - of the synchronised swimming competitions of these 13th FINA World Championships, Russia conquered its sixth gold medal, beating once more Spain and China, who got respectively the silver and bronze. Despite these successes, the regularity of the Iberians in Rome was rewarded with the FINA Trophy for the best nation in the competition: in the Italian capital, Spain conquered one gold (Free Combination, where the Russians were absent) and six silver medals (in the events Russia came first – solo, duet and team, both in technical and free).

In front of a huge crowd at the Foro Italico, Russia confirmed the first place of the preliminaries and finished with a total of 99.167 (including two perfect '10'), while the Spaniards "skeletons" (their swimsuit depicted the human bones) were second in 98.167. The same difference (one point) separated the silver from the bronze, conquered by an inspired Chinese team (97.167).

After the seven events on the programme, Russia and Spain were naturally the strongest nations in Rome, but China was surely the best example of a team that is steadily progressing over the years – before this championships, they had never medalled at this level, but after their performances in the Italian capital, they take home four bronze and one silver medal. A great success for a country that was far from the podium area some years ago, but has made a huge progress, namely thanks to the hiring of a Japanese coach. Noteworthy is that China is not betting on the solo events, just presenting its competitors in duet, team and free combination.

Together with China, Italy was a newcomer to the podium of the FINA World Championships, certainly deserving the bronze medal by Beatrice Adelizzi in the Solo Free event. Normally ranked fifth/sixth in the world, the Italians have presented very solid routines, and besides the medal, they were fourth on two occasions – Solo Technical and Free Combination. In front of their fans, the Italians were obviously thrilled to swim in such an

atmosphere and their only challengers in terms of the volume of applause at the Foro Italico were the Spaniards, led by the charismatic Gemma Mengual.

Another positive outcome of this competition was the re-emergence of Canada as one of the powers in this artistic discipline. Having won their last medals at the 2001 FINA World Championships (in Fukuoka, JPN), the Canadians had lost some momentum in the last editions of the championships, a troubling circumstance for a nation that was one of the pioneers of synchronised swimming worldwide. In Rome, Canada got two medals – bronze in the Solo Technical and Free Combination -, and showed to the world a new and bright generation of swimmers, led by Marie-Pier Boudreau Gagnon and Eve Lamoureux.

This evolution and the appearance at the highest level of new countries deserved a positive comment from Anna Tarres, the head coach of Spain: "It is an opportunity to develop the sport. In the global market, synchro is still a minor sport, so the fact that more countries are winning medals; this can be a good source for future development and it definitively makes this discipline more interesting to follow for the fans and the media," she considered.

On the side of deceptions at these championships, two countries need be mentioned: USA and Japan. If in the first case, the decline of the Americans was visible since the 2005 edition in Montreal, the performances in Rome will oblige those responsible for this sport in the US to certainly review their strategy: no participation in solo, duet free and free combination, seventh in team technical, eighth in team free and 12th in duet technical. A very poor result for a nation that have accumulated 25 medals in the history of the World Championships.

Also disappointing was Japan. With a total of 39 medals since 1973, these were the first championships in which the Japanese swimmers did not get a single medal! A "tragedy" in a country where this discipline is a

Medals Table
After day 8

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	TOTAL
CHN	7	5	7	19
RUS	7	3	2	12
GER	3	0	0	3
GBR	2	0	0	2
ESP	1	6	0	7
ITA	1	1	4	6
AUS	1	1	1	3
MEX	1	0	0	1
USA	0	5	1	6
CAN	0	1	4	5
GRE	0	1	0	1
BRA	0	0	1	1
CUB	0	0	1	1
MAS	0	0	1	1
RSA	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	23	23	23	69

real national sport and where the swimmers are considered stars. In the Italian capital, the Japanese participated in all events and were always in the top-six, but their best classification was fourth in the duet technical final.

On the teams to watch in the future, it is worth noting the national squads of Ukraine and France. Overall, the advantage goes to the Eastern Europeans, but the French are progressing well and presented on the last day a very original team free programme (seventh position). Great Britain is also doing a remarkable effort in the lead-up to the 2012 Olympic Games in London, having occupied in Rome positions between the seventh and 10th place.

OPEN WATER

Maurer back on top in the 25km

Angela Maurer (GER), already an open water icon, has earned another medal to add to her FINA World Championship collection after winning the 25km at Ostia Beach. She is now the owner of eight medals from various FINA Championships - 4 bronze, 2 silver, and now 2 gold (both of her titles are in the 25km, the first of which she earned in 2006). Maurer touched home in 5h47m48, with silver medallist Anna Uvarova (RUS) finishing in 5h47m51, and Federica Vitale – giving the large Italian crowds gathered along the shoreline something to cheer about – took bronze in 5h47m52.

Afterwards, Maurer explained: “My goal in Rome was a medal and I got gold,” adding that she made use of all her experience to win. Regarding the conditions, she noted that “with waves it is important to swim in the lead”, and that although she likes the heat and the waves “today there was a little too much”.

Uvarova, who has never before won a World Championship medal, was a little more explicit when she mentioned the course: “It was very difficult because of the sea. It was really wavy.” She attributed her presence on the podium to her finish, saying she was very satisfied with her final sprint. “In the last lap I sped up, I swam very fast. When I realised I was third, I aimed at reaching the Italian girl (Vitale) and I managed to overtake her.”

Vitale, who also won a 10km silver medal at the 2005 World Championships – called her medal “the greatest thing [she] has done until now”. This time I really wanted to make it.” Vitale also explained that she has been facing “hard years”, and that she gave everything she could in these six hours and over the last six months. I did my best, especially so I could win in my town.”

Race highlights

After 1h50m of swimming, Uvarova, and three other favourites – distance specialist Natalya Pankina (RUS), Kate Brookes-Peterson (AUS), who won two bronze medals in Melbourne in 2007, and Martina Grimaldi (ITA) were sharing the lead position. Hours later, as the competitors were finishing their sixth of ten laps (3h30m of swimming behind them) the situation remained unchanged except that by this time two swimmers had left the race: the first was Zaira Cardenas (MEX) with serious jellyfish stings, and the other was Brookes-Peterson,

suffering from dehydration and exhaustion.

By the conclusion of their 7th lap, Pankina, who would finish in just 9th, was leading, followed by Grimaldi and Maurer. These three set the pace for some time, but not without appearances at the front by Eva Fabian, and Celia Barrot (FRA), who placed 5th in the end. Vitale had started to make her move towards the lead, and Margarita Dominguez (ESP) was also regularly applying pressure. Domingue would end up taking the frustrating fourth position at the conclusion of the race.

With 1500m left to go, Dominguez, Maurer and Grimaldi were battling it out for the medals. But unlike in the men’s race, numerous other swimmers were right on their heels and they were facing a considerable challenge if they wanted to hang on to the top-3. It was a very close, fast finish considering the momentous distance they had crossed, and in the end Maurer’s experience gave her the edge and she is World Champion once again.

Cleri gives Italy first Gold

Valerio Cleri has given Italy its first gold medal of these 13th FINA World Championships by winning the men’s 25km open water race at Ostia Beach today in a time of 5h26m31. The silver went was Australia’s Trent Grimsey, who touched home almost 20 seconds later in 5h26m50, and Vladimir Dyatchin (RUS) secured bronze in 5h29m29. Race conditions were choppy, with large waves and relatively high winds. Swimmers had to complete 10 laps of 2.5km.

This is an extra sweet victory for Cleri after he finished a disappointing fourth in the 10km on Wednesday. Even better, he earned this medal at home in Italy in front of a joyous crowd of supporters lining the beach to cheer him to the finish. He emerged from the water smiling ear-to-ear with his hands in the air; he even took a small bow.

The only other medal Cleri has won at a FINA World Championship was silver in the 10km in 2006, when he was also competing in Italy – in Naples. Following the race Cleri said he had done his best, explaining: “This time the race was less exciting, but maybe it was better. It was a different situation because there was no final sprint (unlike the 10km event). In the last two laps I decided to swim faster and faster.”

Grimsey is a newcomer to the FINA podium club. He finished 8th in the 10km and just 16th in the 5km, so his top-three finish was a nice

improvement for him and will certainly be a motivating factor for his career. Following the race he admitted he “really wanted to win a medal this week,” and that he had “learnt a lot after the 5km earlier in the week, which gave me some good experience and I just hoped I would be able to use that today.”

On his result, Dyatchin said: “I am satisfied with having won a medal after the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games (at which he competed in the 10km but was disqualified), even though I won gold in Melbourne in 2007.” Dyatchin has been a force at FINA World Championships, and this bronze represents the eighth medal he has collected since 2001 (3 bronze, 2 silver and 3 gold).

Race highlights

Cleri moved to the head of the pack early and more or less stayed there until the end, although there was some rotation in the leadership in the opening stages of the distance. Notably Libor Smolka (CZE) led for a time at around the 2h20m mark, as did Bertrand Venturi (FRA) after about 3h. Venturi would eventually finish in a strong 6th place. Shortly after, Bryan Ryckeman (BEL), who would remain a contender until the end and finish in 4th place, took the lead and would proceed to periodically race side-by-side with Cleri (likely as a strategic move). As the swimmers reached the 15km mark, the situation remained unchanged.

After 3h50m of racing – at the conclusion of the 7th lap – Simon Tobin (CAN) took a turn in the lead, but Cleri, in second, as well as Ryckeman, were never far away. Soon, they both moved back into the lead for a time before Venturi overtook them at the conclusion of the 8th 2.5km lap and an incredible 4h30m of swimming behind them. Fifteen minutes later – entering their final lap – Grimsey made his move and settled into second place. By that time Dyatchin had also emerged among the leaders, bumping Ryckeman to 4th. Twenty minutes later (with 5h10m of racing completed) these swimmers were holding their positions.

Cleri and the other pacesetters were on the homestretch, but the wider pack had dispersed as the conditions (the waves, heat and distance) took their toll. From 600m to the end, Cleri continued to increase his lead and touched home to the delight of the spectators.

DIVING

China conquers 14 medals in Rome

The Chinese pair of Liang Huo and Ye Lin has won the last diving final of the 13th FINA World Championships by capturing the Synchro 10m Platform. This medal gives Team China an overall victory in Rome with 7 gold, 4 silver and 3 bronze medals after the completion of the programme.

David Boudia and Thomas Fincham of the USA finished in second place 25.74 points behind China. Jose Antonio Guerra Oliva and Jeinkler Ernesto Aguirre Manso scored 456.60 – just 0.24 less than silver medallists.

Liang Huo and Ye Lin were the strong favourites in this discipline. The pair won at the previous World Championships in Melbourne as well as at the Beijing Olympics. According to the final results, one could say that there was little intrigue involved, but in fact there was. In the 5th round, the Chinese team made a technical mistake. Both divers missed the entry of one of the most difficult dives – the 207 B (3.5 somersaults Back Pike) but they were lucky to do this mistake very similarly – without breaking their synchronisation. This is why China's general score didn't suffer. The point difference between China and Cuba decreased to 11.16, but that was not enough to shake China's confidence.

Diving can be quite unpredictable, but the superiority of the favourites in this event was evident even in the first two "optional" rounds. These two dives were not complicated, so no team acquired any advantage regarding difficulty in this part of the competition. Results of the leaders are generally equal at this stage of the competition and this is the main reason why the real fight starts usually in the third round.

Liang Huo and Ye Lin however, moved ahead by almost 9 points in these two rounds. They got nine "tens", which was quite a good way to show that the team is more technically perfect than any other pair in the competition.

The audience waited for a new surprise from the youngest finalist Tom Daley, who became world champion in individual platform final only days ago, but the British partnership didn't look great in this event: two of their attempts (407 C and 307 C) were spoiled terribly and the team ended its performance in 9th position.

Jose Antonio Guerra Oliva and Jeinkler Ernesto Aguirre Manso had never been among the medallists before. Guerra Oliva surprised the audience in 2005 – he got silver on the 10m platform in Montreal and finished less than 7 points behind the World Champion – Jia Hu. It is not easy to find a partner for such a remarkable diver, but not impossible: here in Rome the Cuban team made that clear to everybody.

The last round was unbelievably competitive. The score of the previous rounds were so close that each of the three pairs – USA, Cuba and Germany could have become silver medallists. Together with China they were going to execute the same twist diving combination with maximum degree of difficulty – 3.8. Liang Huo and Ye Lin set a record score with 107.16, Patrick Hausding and Sasha Klein got the second highest points – 102.60 but the Germans had a lack of good luck in this final: they ended up one step from the podium.

The last round also changed the leaders' positions. Cuba (92.34 for the dive) dropped from the second to the third position; USA (98.04) thus got silver in this event, and in team standing too, with four medals overall.

The Russian team, which won this discipline at the 2005 World Championships in Montreal, and got silver in 2007 in Melbourne, was also one of the favourites this time around. However, the experienced Gleb Galperin and Dmitry Dobroskok were injured and missed the competition. The substitute team (Ilya Minibaev and Ilya Zakharov) failed to compete on such a high level.

WATER POLO

Second-round winners head to women's quarter-finals

World League champion United States of America, Canada, Olympic champion Netherlands and Italy advanced to the quarter-finals of the women's water polo competition.

The four moved through second-round play with USA defeating China 12-9, Canada downed Germany 13-7; the Netherlands struggled to beat New Zealand 9-7 and Greece upset Italy 10-9 in front of 3500 people.

While three games looked settled early, the Dutch had to come back from two down late in the final quarter to avoid the biggest upset of

the tournament.

Kiwis are normally flightless birds but they were flying, having to equalise three times and go ahead just before the final break.

The margin became two and could have been three except for a missed opportunity. A Dutch triple in two minutes put paid to New Zealand's valiant assault.

Dutch star Noeki Klein said: "We started badly. We were not aggressive enough, as usual. New Zealand didn't have anything to lose, so they risked more than us. We were a bit unlucky but we could not be defeated by New Zealand. In the end we succeeded in reversing the result." It makes for some interesting match-ups to see who will progress to Wednesday's semifinals with USA taking on Group D winner Spain, Greece earning a shot against Group C winner and World Cup champion Australia; the Netherlands against Group B winner Russia and Canada to play Group A winner Hungary. In the 13-15 semifinals, Kazakhstan beat Uzbekistan 16-4 and Brazil bettered South Africa 16-2.

Men's competition on Sunday involves the second round in which features Canada against China at 11:40, Germany-Montenegro at 15:30, Australia-Romania at 16:50 and the feature game, Italy-Serbia, at 21:00.

South Africa and Brazil play in the 13-15 semifinals at 09:00 followed by Kazakhstan-Macedonia at 10:20.

Game 49, 09.00, women, UZB 4 KAZ 16

Referees: Farid MONER (EGY), Risto DAMCEVSKI (MKD).

Quarters: 0-5, 1-4, 1-3, 2-4

Extra man: UZB 1/8; KAZ 3/7

Kazakhstan had too much in reserve for Uzbekistan in the clash of the Asian teams. Kazakhstan was more controlled while Uzbekistan struggled on attack, even getting within striking distance, especially in the first half. As the game continued, Uzbekistan started to make an impression but too late to miss Monday's play-off for 15th and 16th places.

Game 50, 10:20, women, RSA 2 BRA 16

Referees: Nader GHAFOURI (IRI), Stephen KNIGHTS (NZL).

Quarters: 1-7, 0-2, 1-3, 0-4

Extra man: RSA 0/5; BRA 5/13

Brazil moved into the play-off for 13th-14th with a sturdy showing against an inexperienced team. The opening period set the tone for the match leaving PEDROSA to score at will. South Africa struggled in the extra-man plays but

would have been happy to defend eight of Brazil's chances.

Game 51, 11:40, women, CHN 9 USA 12

Referees: Filippo GOMEZ (ITA), Gabor KISZELLY (HUN)

Quarters: 2-4, 3-3, 2-3, 2-2

Extra man: CHN 1/11; USA 3/11

The USA eased into the quarter-finals with what was really a comfortable margin. China always had to come back but could never capture the draw, even trailing by five goals at one stage in the third quarter. A four-goal burst either side of the final break brought China back to 10-9 behind but STEFFENS and GREGORKA put the game beyond doubt. Both teams closed shop in the final four minutes despite each taking a timeout. China could be called unlucky in that it was given a penalty shot when the ball had already passed into the back of the net when 4-2 down. MA had the shot blocked and the USA immediately responded for a 5-2 lead. GAO revelled in the game with five goals, three from the penalty line.

Game 52, 15:30, women, CAN 13 GER 7

Referees: Daniel FLAHOVE (AUS), Alan BALFANBAYEV (KAZ)

Quarters: 4-1, 4-2, 3-2, 2-2

Extra man: CAN 3/9; GER 2/12

Canada earned a shot at Hungary in the quarter-finals following a consistent and encouraging victory over Germany. The extra-man statistic might not be what coach OATEN wants but the manner in which Canada ground out the victory bodes well for future matches. PERRAULT had a spectacular match with four goals, including one from the penalty line and one on counter-attack. German captain DIEROLF tried to drive on her team to no avail and it always appeared that Canada was worthy of a top-eight berth.

Game 53, 16:50, women, NZL 7 NED 9

Referees: Mario BRGULJAN (MNE), Guy PINKER (RSA)

Quarters: 2-1, 0-2, 4-2, 1-4

Extra man: NZL 2/11; NED 3/12

The Olympic champion Dutch may be a vastly different team from Beijing but the champion nature of the group came through in the clash with a feisty New Zealand team warming up for the hosting of next year's FINA World Cup in Wellington. New Zealand struck hard in the first half and deserved the lead, until the Dutch struck back to lead 3-2 at halftime. The Kiwis levelled at three, four and five and when SMITH scored her second consecutive goal at 1:14, New Zealand led 6-5. A frustrated Dutch coach, MAUGERI, gained a yellow card at the break. MASON rifled in a goal from 10m for a two-goal

margin and tight six-on-five defence all game proved telling. MASON erred at 3:29 when interfering with a free throw and the Dutch were one goal short at 3:29. Another New Zealand error and Mieke CABOUT scored on counter just 14 seconds later for 7-7. Noeki KLEIN scored at 1:36, also on a big counter, after a forced pass was intercepted. Mieke CABOUT claimed the winner from centre forward 34 seconds from time to gain a clash with Russia in the quarter-finals. As with the matches against Canada and Australia, New Zealand failed to finish out the game but in this match it came within a whisker of a huge upset.

Game 54, 21:00, women, ITA 9 GRE 10

Referees: Mark KOGANOV (AZE), Sergio BORRELL (ESP)

Quarters: 4-4, 2-1, 3-4, 0-1

Greece stunned the 3500-strong largely Italian crowd with the opening two goals but then the Italian hero CASANOVA knocked one in from two metres and then outswum the field on counter for her second less than a minute later. The scene was set and two ANTONAKOU goals had Greece one ahead before BOSURGI spun one in on extra four seconds from the first break. Italy's youngest player, EMMOLO, drilled one from seven metres while ROUMPESI did the same for Greece. BOSURGI scored on extra for 6-5 and an opportunity for Italy to go two up went begging when captain DI MARIO had her penalty attempt swatted away by TSOURI. Italy went two ahead after the turn but Greece came back to lead 8-7 and Italy rebounded for a 9-8 edge. GEROLYMOU replied with a penalty goal to end the third quarter at 9-9. TSOUKALA sent Greece ahead from a seven-metre shot at 4:55. Neither side could score and Greece took two timeouts late with Italy having a final shot after going to a timeout at eight seconds but an incorrect shot by DI MARIO sent Italy out of the championship.

RESULTS



TEAM FREE

1. Russia RUS 99.167
2. Spain ESP 98.167
3. P.R. of China CHN 97.167
4. Canada CAN 96.000
5. Italy ITA 95.000
6. Japan JPN 94.000
7. France FRA 93.000

8. Ukraine UKR 92.667
9. United States of America USA 91.667
10. D.P.R. Korea PRK 89.667
10. Great Britain GBR 89.667
12. Brazil BRA 88.333



MEN – 10M SYNCHRO PLATFORM

1. HUO L./LIN Y. CHN 482.58
2. BOUDIA D./FINCHUM T. USA 456.84
3. GUERRA O. J. A./AGUIRRE M. J. E. CUB 456.60
4. HAUSDING P./KLEIN S. GER 455.76
5. CHIARABINI A./DELL'UOMO F. ITA 411.03
6. KWON K./CHO K. KOR 408.84
7. McCORMICK R./ROSS R. CAN 406.98
8. GARCIA I./SANCHEZ G. MEX 400.83
9. BRICK M./DALEY T. GBR 390.36
10. MINIBAEV V./ZAKHAROV I. RUS 389.91
11. KAPTUR V./VARLAMAU A. BLR 385.77
12. BONDAR O./GORSHKOVOZOV O. UKR 384.87



MEN – 25KM

1. CLERI Valerio ITA 5:26:31.6
3. DYATCHIN Vladimir RUS 5:29:29.3
4. RYCKEMAN Brian BEL 5:30:18.4
5. BRANDA Loic FRA 5:30:20.9
6. VENTURI Bertrand FRA 5:30:22.9
7. CAPELL Brendan L. AUS 5:30:27.5
8. VITEK Rostislav CZE 5:32:38.8
9. TOBINDAIGNAULT Simon CAN 5:34:48.2
10. SMOLKA Libor CZE 5:35:06.4
11. RYAN Sean USA 5:36:22.2
12. VOLPINI Andrea ITA 5:36:37.9

WOMEN – 25KM

1. MAURER Angela GER 5:47:48.0
2. UVAROVA Anna RUS 5:47:51.9
3. VITALE Federica ITA 5:47:52.7
4. DOMINGUEZ Margarita ESP 5:48:37.6
5. BARROT Celia FRA 5:49:00.7
6. HEISTER Linsy NED 5:49:08.1
7. GRIMALDI Martina ITA 5:49:36.7
8. BILLER Stefanie GER 5:50:08.8
9. PANKINA Natalya RUS 5:50:36.8
10. FABIAN Eva USA 5:50:41.5
11. HANSON Emily USA 5:53:01.6
12. NUNEZ MORERA Esther ESP 6:06:45.7