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## DWS, Montreal (CAN): “We are ready, so ‘fasten your seatbelts’”

Greg Eggert, FINA Media Committee Honorary Secretary

Diving Plongeon Canada has welcomed many of the world's best divers as they host the first of three stops of the FINA/CNSG Diving World Series. Five months before the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, it is in Montreal that the world's most talented divers will begin their season with the FINA/CNSG Diving World Series. The notable absence in this first leg is the Chinese team, affected by the worldwide disruption caused by the coronavirus outbreak. The disruption has unfortunately resulted in the cancelation of a Diving World Series event that was originally scheduled in Beijing.

A total of 72 athletes representing 12 of the world's diving powerhouses are ready for today's first events. They will perform their best artistic and athletic exploits for a spot on the podium and in an effort to ascend the world rankings.

"The City of Montreal is pleased to welcome the FINA/CNSG Diving World Series for a third year. I invite all Montrealers to come out and cheer for the members of the Canadian diving team during this international event, and wish good luck to all athletes," says the Mayor of Montreal, Valerie Plante.

"The 2020 edition of this renowned event will be especially exciting, since many athletes who are preparing for the upcoming Olympics are expected to be refining their skills at the top of their game," said Penny Joyce, Chief Operating Officer at Diving Plongeon Canada. "The Diving World Series will offer an Olympic preview to diving fans in Montreal and represents a fantastic opportunity for them to see some of Canada's Olympic hopefuls in action just a few months before they leave for Tokyo."



Photo by Antoine Saito

The event will be contested from February 28 to March 1, 2020. The competition begins at 12 noon this Friday at the Montreal Olympic Park Sports Centre, which has been fully renovated and is considered to be one of the finest diving facilities in the world.

The FINA Diving World Series is a high-profile competition which offers an annual meeting opportunity for the world's brightest diving stars. This prestigious and exclusive event invites internationally recognised divers, many who are medallists from previous Olympics, World Championships and World Cups. In 2020, the next two World Series stops will be in Kazan (RUS) and London (GBR).

Divers are invited to participate at the 2020 World Series based on their results from the 2019 FINA World Championships in Gwangju, South Korea. The top-8 ranked divers in each individual event and the top-6 teams in each synchronised event earn qualification and host countries are eligible to invite divers who have met the international standards.



Photo by Antoine Saito

The opening Press Conference was moderated by retired Canadian Olympian Roseline Filion. Filion has twice earned a bronze medal in the 10m platform synchro event at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London and the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, paired with her partner of seven years Meaghan Benfeito.

Filion spoke briefly about the impressive make-over of the venue for the Diving World Series before introducing Kathy

Seaman the Honorary Secretary of the FINA Diving Committee and Mitch Geller, the Chief Technical Director of Diving Plongeon Canada.

Kathy Seaman, Honorary Secretary of the FINA Diving Committee: "It's a pleasure to be in Montreal for the start of the Diving World Series, and the 3-stop series is a really important part of the Olympic preparation for the athletes. With us this weekend are 14 medallists from 2016 Rio Olympic Games and 21 medallists from last summer's FINA World Championships in Korea. Their participation will have a big impact on this event.

This is a big year - 2020 is the Olympic year and that says everything. I have recently visited the Olympic pool in Tokyo and it is spectacular. You will see divers here who will be on the podium at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. It may be snowing outside, but these divers are ready to put on a fantastic show here."

Mitch Geller, Chief Technical Director of Diving Plongeon Canada: "This is the home stretch and the culmination of a 4-year training cycle for the divers and for many it is the apex of their career. Team Canada is ready and solidly prepared. Our men will be working towards locking down the remaining five qualifications spots for the Olympics, and we will be vying for medals in all of women's events.

The Canadian men are developing rapidly and I regard the depth in our men's programme today is greater than any other time. We have some strong up and comers. The 3m men have had a string of close podium finishes. A consistent performance this weekend could put them on the podium. I'm not expecting a podium finish, but it's viable. Some of men are performing their best in their career at the point. Absent the Chinese athletes, our men are in a position to reach the podium and learn what that's like. There is something tangible in their sights.

It's unfortunate that China could not attend the festivities but this will create opportunities for those who are seeking podium spots. This will result in the fiercest battles and many photo finishes. ?

Our international visitors include Olympic medallists Tom Daley (GBR) and David Boudia (USA) and FINA World Championship Gold medallist Maddison Keeney (AUS). Daley, 25, will be looking to be at the top of the podium in the 10m event and 30-year-old Boudia is seeking to establish himself on the 3m board. Keeney, 23, will up the ante in Montreal by performing the most difficult list of divers in the history of the women's 3m event.

The format is designed to offer the most impressive presentation that diving has to offer, so 'fasten your seatbelts'.

There are no prelims, instead two semi-finals, so it' will be a 'take no prisoners' mandate for the athletes. The competition is quick and intense and it will highlight the best that diving has to offer.

Bringing the world together in an event like this is a monumental undertaking, but the team at this venue has transformed the pool into an aquatic theatre. I extend my thanks to Diving Plongeon Canada's many sponsors and our funding partners: Canadian Olympic Committee, Sport Canada and Own the Podium."



Photo by Antoine Saito

Filion next introduced Canadian synchronised diving partners Jennifer Abel, 28 and Melissa Citrini-Beaulieu, 24. Abel was one of Canada's youngest ever divers when she made her at the age of 16 in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. She earned a bronze medal in the 3m synchro event with Emilie Heymans at the 2012 Olympic Games in London. Abel earned six silver and four bronze medals over five FINA World Championship events since 2011 Shanghai, a record for the most medals by a Canadian diver at the FINA showcase. Citrini-Beaulieu won a silver medal, together with Abel at the 2017 World Championships in Budapest while competing in the 3 m synchro springboard.

Jennifer Abel (CAN): "This year is different in many ways, first is that I am diving with a new synchro partner, Melissa who is sitting next to me. We already know that we will be competing at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics in the 3m synchro event. I am working really hard on my programme and I am doing what I want to do and assuming responsibility for the consequences. I am still getting there slowly but I will be there for the Olympics."

Melissa Citrini-Beaulieu (CAN): "Now that we have nailed down our spot for Tokyo, we can breathe a sigh of relief and focus 100% of our energy on perfecting our dives. with a view towards a podium finish at the Olympics."

Last year, Canada won 16 medals on the FINA/CNSG Diving World Series, including nine bronze, six silver and one gold.

The Montreal Olympic Park was built for the 1976 Summer Olympic Games. The Centre Sportif has hosted the FINA Diving Grand Prix from 2007 to 2012 and also the FINA Diving World Series since 2018. The complex features 1m, 3m, 5m, 7.5m, and 10m towers, and numerous 1m and 3m springboards. The state-of-the-art venue also features world-class dry-land training areas with padded floors, dry boards, trampolines, and resistance training equipment. This event is scheduled to be hosted at the Olympic Park Sports Centre again in 2021.

In Canada, the event will be webcast by CBC as well as on CBC's Road to the Olympic Games. CBC/Radio-Canada and RDS are returning as the host broadcasters, assuring that Canadian diving fans will be treated to exceptional coverage and exclusive stories. Internationally, this event will reach millions of households in 15+ countries.

The programme of the competition in Montreal will unfold as follows:

### **Day 1 – February 28?**

Women's 10m platform synchro  
?Men's 3m springboard synchro  
?Women's 3m springboard synchro?  
Men's 10m platform synchro

### **Day 2 – February 29?**

Women's 10m platform  
Men's 3m springboard  
?Mixed 10m platform synchro

### **Day 3 – March 1?**

Women's 3m springboard?  
Men's 10m platform?  
Mixed 3m springboard synchro

### **2020 FINA/CNSG Diving World Series calendar:?**

1. Montreal (CAN) – February 28-March 1?
  2. Kazan (RUS) – March 20-22?
  3. London (GBR) – March 27-29
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