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## First junior mixed duet champions crowned

Olga Kamardina, FINA correspondent in Hungary

Two remarkable events highlighted penultimate day of the 16th FINA World Junior Artistic Swimming Championships in Budapest. Mixed Technical Duets first vied their junior merits, and Free Team Final saw Russia en route to the clean golden sweep.

### **MIXED DUET TECHNICAL**

The 6-participant Mixed Duet Technical final kicked off another fruitful day in Budapest. Fantastic Duna Arena was a full pack, wishing to celebrate the first juniors mixed champions in the history. The quest for the medals was rich in bright performances and innovative choreography. However, pace-makers remained the same, and the always favorites Russians, which swam first, were very convincing unveiling their story.



Photo: credit to Jozsef Szaka

Alina Mantuleko and Mikhail Vasiliev presented a routine called “A little less conversation” by Elvis Presley. It was a stream of emotions, which were properly highlighted by required technical elements. Staged and choreographed by the 3 times Olympic champion Olga Brusnikina and her assistant, the program did not save much energy of the swimmers and specifically had a play on lifts, very spectacular and very complicated. As a result, the most entertaining program in Budapest scored Alina Mantulenko and Mikhail Vasilev 83.6404 points, absolute personal best, which will not be ever repeated.

“The overall we have collected is neither bad, nor great, - acknowledged Alina Mantulenko of Russia. – Our coach said, she is pleased with the result, but we know, we can do better. Unfortunately, we shall never improve this overall during the competitions, as this is my last year in the junior age group, and my teammate Mikhail will have to look for the new junior partner”.

The bar, set by Russians, was pretty high, and none of their competitors, swimming afterwards, could either repeat or approach the gold winning total.



Photo: credit to Jozsef Szaka

Chinese vied Japanese for their first silver appearance in Budapest, and could be congratulated on such a success. “Wings of Liberty”, narrated with a strong Asian philosophical accent, was a good aide to Rong Liu and Haoyu Shi. Scoring 79.8538, they had nothing better to do but to stand still and wait for their opponents. Jimma Iwasaki and Kana Miyauchi of Japan performed to “They don’t care about us” by Michael Jackson and swimming last played them a bad trick. Japanese youngsters, coached by Keiko Chilba, did not cope with the pressure and could not jump over their heads. Receiving 78.7287, they were a little over 1 point adrift to the 2nd ranked pair.

“We saw Chinese swimminh and thought they have left the door open for us, - shared their emotions Jumma Iwasaki, as they completed their program. – We felt spiritually high, but were a little nervous, and this was not a good help in our story. Our coach has just congratulated us on the bronze medal, but we know now it could have been a medal of the different color”.

There were 3 other nations in the competition, which presented their Mixed Duet Technical programs. “Mahhabbah” by Troppkillaz performed by Kazakhstan’s duo burned the fire on the stands, but scored lowly 67.5128 points. Another story by Michael Jackson, called “Thriller”, was staged by Greece, which was a better difficulty level and accordingly went forth to fourth, 74.3927. Slovak duo, having the first night at the international arena, showed out of contest as their junior swimmers, aged but 13, were too young to be chasing merits.

## TEAM FREE

Russian festival went on in the Team Free final. Like two years ago in Kazan and 4 years ago in Helsinki, the European powerhouse kept on dominating all the way through to the final round and landed gold, which none could actually have doubted.



Photo: credit to Jozsef Szaka

Their “Batman” story was staged by legendary Svetlana Romashina and Natalia Ischenko, largely decorated by acrobatic elements. According to the judges, the execution was close to perfect, as the overall received exceeded 92.7347, registered on the Technical portion yesterday. Russian mixed pair also managed to improve on themselves, comparing to the European Junior Championships in Helsinki and to the prelims, in all cases braking through an impressive 93 points mark.

“The stakes were high to match expectations of the crowd, - explained team’s captain and one of the most experienced members of the Russian junior team Milena Maretich. - We were up to defend the title earned at the previous championships, and show our European win was not a coincidence as well. Was it difficult to earn 93.6667 points? Yes, of course. None sees, but we work very hard to achieve such good results and keep up the skills level”.

Second and third places were to be played between 3 nations.



Photo: credit to Jozsef Szaka

China swam first to introduce their philosophical masterpiece entitled as “Heaven and Earth”. Mysterious and surprising it was, claiming some worthy 89.4000 points. Japanese came out straight after with another conceptual “Ka” story on the Cirque du Soleil music. Naturally reserved and self-controlled Asians could not keep tears realizing they were 1.1667 points ahead of their main challengers.

However, it was up to Ukraine to seal distribution of the medals. The “Divergent” dance burst out with energy, contained innovative elements and strong and impressive lifts. One of the final scenes pictured Oleksandra Burdova walking on the surface of the water, with her teammates backs serving to support her. It scored marvelous 91.8000, which hit again Ukraine’s seasonal best in the Free routine.

“In this program particularly we have done a very difficult choreography for the junior level, - said Marta Fiedina of Ukraine, which previously won 2 silver medals in solos. – We are very grateful to the National team choreographers and coach Svitlana Saidova, who staged this routine for the Olympic Games-2016, and for us it was a big honor and responsibility to present it here at the FINA World Junior Artistic Swimming Championships”.

Asked on how they feel about the 6th silver to go, the Ukrainian junior said, they were simply happy.

“We shall not speak of the silver curse, - she laughed. – Our opponents are very strong, and we shall say some 5 teams can equally claim podium, so we are very successful and very happy about the medals”.



Photo: credit to Jozsef Szaka

“They are in the league of their own. They are very strong, - commented on the podium’s composition coach Kasia Kulesza of Canada. Her own team ranked 7th, at some 5 points to the medal-winners. – We are happy, we have managed to qualify to the finals and show there a good result. My young swimmers did a good job, I am very proud of them. We have substantially improved on our season’s best, comparing to other competitions. And of course, we have learnt a lot and I hope we will make good analyses and good use of the information obtained for the future”.

No major surprises were registered in the 5 to 12 placements. Spain secured 5th position, which they obtained in the Prelims, scoring 87.8667 points. They were chased by Italy, Canada, Greece, USA, Switzerland, Mexico and Great Britain.

With one day to go in Budapest, the medal’s chart of the 16th FINA World Junior Artistic Swimming Championships sees Russia atop with 7 gold medals, followed by Ukraine with 6 silver pieces, and Japan with 1 silver and 3 bronze medals in the pocket. China is the 4th awarded nation resting on 2 bronze medals.

Competition day 5 will finish the competition program of the 16th FINA World Junior Artistic Swimming Championships in Budapest tomorrow, on 22 July, 2018. The ultimate two sets of medals are on offer for the Mixed Duet Free and Free Combination Team Finals.



Photo: credit to Jozsef Szaka

## **Competition results. 16th FINA World Junior Synchronised Swimming Championships. Day 4**

### **Mixed Duet Technical Final**

1.RUS (Mantulenko Alina/Vasilev Mikhail) 93.6404, 2. CHN (Shi Haoyo/Zhang Yiyao) 79.3538, 3. JPN (Iwasaki Jimma/Miyauchi Kana) 78.7287, 4. GRE (Gkortsilas Vasileios/Papageorgiou) 74.3927, 5. KAZ (Lyakh Sofiya/Makhanbetiyarov Olzhas) 67.5128.

### **Team Free Final**

1. RUS (Bazlova Anna, Maretich Milena, Snisarenko Kira, Titova Sofia, Zhavoronkova Arina, Gayday Tatiana, Nesterova Valeriya) 93.6667
2. UKR (Burdova Oleksandra, Kornieieva Daria, Lykhman Yevheniia, Shylo Valeriia, Fiedina Marta, Stulienkova Kateryna, Kulyk Anastasiia, Nosova Anna) 91.8000
3. JPN (Fujiwara Mana, Sato Tomoka, Ueda Rena, Watanabe Yumeno, Hosokawa Asaka, Takano Sakura, Wada Ami, Yoshida Rie) 90.5667
4. CHN (Li Xiuchen, Liu Jinhan, Liu Jintong, Meng Xinyue, Wu Qianxuan, Lyu Rong, Lin Yanjun, Wu Jingyan, Xiang Binxuan) 89.4000
5. ESP (Arboix Clara, Garcia Paula, Hernandez Mireia, Bellver Teresa, Gomez Selena, Jimeno Irene, Tio Iris, Carreras Oriana) 87.8667
6. ITA (Brogioli Costanza, Murru Marta, Ruggiero Lucrezia, Sportelli Isotta, Iocoacci Marta, Rocchino Carmen, Savi Aurora, Zunino Francesca) 86.4333
7. CAN (Armstrong Emily, Czarkowski Jaime, Hopper Paige, Spott Emma, Barrett Catherine, Gauthier Mikaelle, Regnier Jaiden, Winkelaar Cassandra) 85.1333
8. GRE (Dipla Ifgeneia, Kofidi Vasiliki, Papageorgiou Nikoleta, Vasilopolou Georgia, Gkagianni Nefeli Aikaterina, Kourgiantaki Olga, Taxopoulou Anna Maria, Zouzouni Violeta) 83.5000

9. USA (Alwan Grace, Goot Nicole, Neely Cassandra, Elian Yara, Remmers Abbygayle, Heffernan Hannah, Ramirez Daniella, Tchakmakjian Emmanuella) 82.4000

10. SUI (Bergonzi Clara, Fahrni Ilona, Mello Paloma, Thoni Alyssa, Helfer Anouk, Dario Mel, Schupbach Babou, Varesio Margaux) 80.7081

11. MEX (Aguirre Erandi, Barrera Miranda, Martinez Alexa, Estrada Daniela, Meza Trinidad, Arellano Fernanda, Sida Sofia, Martinez Andrea) 81.2333

12. GBR (Costello Millicent, Larsen Cerys, Rushton Daisy, Taylor Abigail, Hampson Greta, Lloyd Daniela, Smith Harriette, Usher Victoria) 79.7000



Photo: credit to Jozsef Szaka

## Competition schedule

**Day 5 - July 22, 2018**

11:00 Free Combination Preliminary

16:00 Mixed Duet Free Final

17:00 Free Combination Final

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