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Synchronised swimming: where appearance matters

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The most richly decorated contenders of the 17th FINA World Championships will be synchronised swimmers. Due to the features of this discipline (and the extraordinary venue) we can expect a highly spectacular tournament in the arena established on the City Park Lake. Here is a brief description about the importance of outlook as well as about tools used by synchronised swimmers.

Similarly to other disciplines emphasizing aesthetics and femininity synchronised swimming requires perfect appearance. It does not refer to body type, sporty shape, nicely toned muscles only, but plenty of other aspects, as well.

Synchro suits shall be in line with the topic and music of the programme performed in water. It is necessary that the judge as well as the audience shall have an idea about the topic and the type of music already when swimmers step on the podium. The combination of colours and the decorations reflect the imagination of swimmers in almost all cases, brought to life typically through handwork by professional designers and seamstresses.

It is a rather demanding work to sew suits in different sizes and decorate them one by one with hundreds of crystals, rhinestones and sequins. An important aspect is to ensure that such suits shall be worn comfortably while making movements, throws and lifts in water, the material shall fit perfectly throughout the routines and straps shall hold tight. Suits for routines shall be one piece and transparency shall be avoided. If the design requires some parts to be uncovered the only way to do so is by transparent, nude colour pieces of materials.

Characteristic „**hairstyles**” are made with household gelatine by swimmers themselves. Similarly to when baking a cake, the gelatine is heated with water, applied to tight buns in many layers and then dried. By this procedure a shield-like, shiny layer is formed on the hair ensuring maximum hold. Its glittering may be enhanced by applying glittering powder

matching the suit. Headpieces are accessories complementing suits and are key elements of the outfit since at every breath they are visible on the surface.

Make-up for synchro swimmers is in between theatrical make-up and casual style. It is aimed at emphasizing facial features, eyes and lips less visible from the distance, and in many cases it strengthens facial expressions, too. Cosmetics, powders, lipsticks, mascaras must be waterproof in order to ensure that swimmers look nice even after their performance waiting for the scores.

Nose clips are essential accessories for synchro swimmers, so much so that each swimmer has two of them during the routine. One on the nose and another somewhere attached to the suit in case the other one is lost or another swimmer swipes it off by accident. This little tool helps prevent water entering the nose while performing movements upside down in the water. This period may exceed 30-40 seconds which would be too long to exhale continuously. There is a world famous synchro swimmer who never used nose clips throughout her career: the French Virginie Dedieu, who is an Olympic bronze medallist, 3-time solo world champion and 5-time solo European champion.

At the 2017 FINA World Championships champions will be appointed in 9 events during the 7 competition days of synchronised swimming: one in solo, in duet, in team, two in mixed duet and one in combo, the specialty with 10-member teams.

Events will be hosted in a very special, historic venue, the City Park Lake, where spectators can follow the World Championships on the grandstands of 5000 seats.