

LEN Awards 2017

Adam Peaty and Sarah Sjoström head the winners' list

The jubilee 10th edition of the LEN Awards features the greatest European stars of the aquatic disciplines who enjoyed another outstanding year. In swimming Great Britain's Adam Peaty repeated his 2016 win while Sweden's Sarah Sjoström was recognised for the first time. Another Brit, Tom Daley came first among the divers, Russians topped the list in female diving and synchronised swimming, there was a French double in open water while water polo saw two goalkeepers rewarded. For the first time the best male synchro swimmer was also included to the winners' list.

"It was a challenge to pick the best ones in each discipline as European athletes amassed piles of medals at the World Championships in 2017" LEN President Paolo Barelli commented the voting. *"We are really proud of our greats who didn't stop showing their class, making Europe the most successful continent again."*

In the past ten years LEN Awards have become a highly appreciated recognition for the continent's best athletes. Since its inauguration in 2008, National Federations and LEN Officials are voting in higher and higher numbers to select the best ones of the aquatic disciplines. The 2017 World Championships had the biggest weight in assessing the respective athletes' performances though other major events might also be taken into consideration, like the European Championships in swimming (short-course) and in diving, or the Champions League and Euro League in water polo.

Percentages show that each sport had its most outstanding athlete in the last year, almost all wins can be labelled decisive. Adam Peaty's one in swimming was the most overwhelming as he received almost 80% of the votes while retaining his title from last year. Golds and world records at the World Championships, gold and a European record at the short-course Europeans rocketed the British lion to the top once more.

Sarah Sjoström was picked for the first time, she also got a large share (70%) while halting Hungary's Katinka Hosszu's march who finished atop in the previous four elections. The Swede can look back to a really exceptional season with three world titles, six new world records, an overall World Cup victory and a six-medal haul at the short-course Europeans in Copenhagen.

British divers maintained their run among the men, this was their third straight win. After Jack Laugher's triumph in 2016, platform world champion Tom Daley topped the ranks once again after 2009 and 2015. Among the women Nadezhda Bazhina earned her first-ever award (also a first for Russia in this category). She had two medals in the women's events at the Worlds,

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the only European female diver standing twice on the podium, making her a worthy successor of Tania Cagnotto (the Italian, who finished her illustrious career, received the LEN Awards a record 7 times, the last six came in a row).

Succession didn't cause any headache for the Russians in synchronised swimming at all: after Natalia Ishchenko and Svetlana Romashina had called it a day, a new queen took over the reign as Svetlana Kolesnichenko collected four gold medals at the Worlds. Naturally, she added the LEN Award to her tally, the 9th Russian win out of 10 here.

For the first time a vote was called to name the best male synchronised swimmer. This historical LEN Award goes to Giorgio Minisini who, together with his partner Manila Flamini, claimed Italy's first ever World Championship gold medal in the discipline by winning the technical routine in the mixed event.

Another national double was recorded in open water swimming. After the Netherlands swept the man and woman titles last year, now the French achieved this feat. Both Marc-Antoine Olivier and Aurelie Muller staged exceptional runs at the Worlds, they collected two individual medals apiece (including golds) and teamed up for another world title.

The water polo elections produced another kind of double: for the first time ever two goalkeepers were picked for the awards. Marko Bijac played a pivotal role in Croatia's World Championships triumph (and he came second with Jug Dubrovnik in the Champions League). Laura Ester's saves were also key in Spain's silver medal-winning performance at the Worlds and Sabadell's bronze medal in the Euro League.

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Swimming

Adam Peaty (GBR)
Sarah Sjöström (SWE)

Diving

Tom Daley (GBR)
Nadezhda Bazina (RUS)

Synchro

Svetlana Kolesnichenko (RUS)
Giorgio Minisini (ITA)

Open water

Marc-Antoine Olivier (FRA)
Aurelie Muller (FRA)

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Water polo

Marko Bijac (CRO)

Laura Ester (ESP)

For the all-time winners' lists please refer to the other file.

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