

LEN European Synchronised Swimming Championships 2008 Round Up

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Duet secure final spot

Britain's Jenna Randall and Olivia Allison booked their spots in the final of the Duet Free Routine after once again showing their true potential on an international stage. The first event for the British Champions was the Free routine where they showcased their new programme. Randall and Allison have been working on this routine for just over six months and after a series of amendments the girls were ready for the European stage.

They showed good synchronisation throughout the routine to secure high eights and took ninth place with a total of 86.400 points.

Randall and Allison debuted their new technical routine at the British Championships in December. National Performance Director Biz Price increased the level of difficulty in this routine to make the girls step up to the next level.

They took to the water with confidence in the second half of the duet programme. The pair showed improved power and propulsion through the water and with the added height on their boosts managed to take more high eights to score 86.500 points. They booked their place in the final after securing ninth place overall with a total of 86.450 points and look set to improve their European placing.

"It felt good today, but there were a couple of errors that we know we can correct," Randall said. "We are pleased with the scores but we know we need to work harder to get the higher marks. The routines are quite new for us and it normally takes a duet about two years to perfect their programme, so at this stage we are happy with the progress."

British Synchro is at the beginning of a development process in time for the London 2012

Olympics and centralised their athletes just over a year ago to ensure they're competing with the very elite of the sport in four years time.

Randall and Allison were the first to begin training as full time athletes and as part of their development they have become used to learning from international judges. The duet made their first senior international debut a year ago at the World Championships and since then have continued to make a name for themselves on the international circuit and for Allison the international exposure has been invaluable.

"After every competition we get feedback from international judges and from that we adapt our routines accordingly," Allison said. "So this means our routines go to the next level at each new competition. Our new routines are at a completely different level to anything we were used to. When we first started with Biz it was really hard to get used to the new levels of difficulty and now we are used to them we increase the levels again. Now we can generally pick up the new elements quite quickly."

Allison (18) is one of the youngest athletes on the senior international circuit and after facing up to major international competitions she takes nerves in her stride.

"We have been doing more international competitions than we ever have done and to start with nerves used to creep in, but now we don't get nervous it is more excitement," she said. "I look forward to doing the best swim possible. I try to focus nerves and use them to my advantage. I have a saying that I think sums this up perfectly and it is make your butterflies fly together, which means if they are working in unison they can help you with your swim. Our next challenge is the Olympic qualification event in Beijing and I am really looking forward to it. It will be like nothing we have ever been to before and I think it will be a great experience for us."

Spain's Gemma Mengual and Andrea Fuentes continued their dominance of the Duet event and finished in the top spot overall to put themselves in a strong place for the final. They scored 97.350 overall.

Italy's Beatrice Adelizzi and Giulia Lapi took second spot with 93.900 points to leave Ukraine to take the third spot with 93.150.

Randall shows promise in tough final

Britain's Jenna Randall continued to make a name for herself on the European circuit after a strong performance in the Solo Free final. She needed to ignore any fatigue she may have had after competing in both the Duet and Solo prelims to put in a good performance in the Solo Free final.

Randall went out looking strong and confident as she showed her true potential on an international circuit. The British Champion took on board the corrections National Performance Director Biz Price had worked with her on and managed to maintain a good body position in spins, while her power through the water continues to show improvement. The 19-year-old managed to keep up with the high paced routine and secured five 8.9s to improve her international standing and secure her place as ninth in Europe with a total score of 87.900 points.

"I am really pleased with that result," she said. "I aimed to go out there and put in more of a performance, which I lacked in the prelims, I also wanted to demand more from the judges. I achieved both of these elements in the final. I interacted more with the judges which grabs their attention and I felt more comfortable in performing the routine. I felt confident going into the final. I knew I could perform my free routine better than the prelims and that gave me the confidence to go out and give the best performance I could."

During training Randall works with Price to create a list of corrections that need to be worked on for the performance ahead. After a vigorous training session this morning Randall knew what had to be done to improve for the final.

"I knew my corrections needed to be good going into that performance and I think I managed to keep up with them well," she said. "I knew I had to keep control of my spins better and keep a stronger body alignment. I'm quite strong with my thrusts and we have been working on the best way to showcase these. I knew I had to keep control of them and this allowed me to show them to the best of my ability."

The gold medal in the Solo event went to Spain's Gemma Mengual (video above) who finished to rapturous applause from the audience and scored a total of 98.400. Russia's Natalia Ishenko (video below) took the silver with 98.300 points. It is the first time the World Championship medallist, Mengual, has beaten Ischenko. The bronze medal was claimed by Italy's Beatrice Adelizzi who scored 94.000.

For Randall being able to compete alongside world and Olympic medallists on the international circuit is a vital part of not only her development but also for the sport in UK.

"We have been at more international meets than ever before and this is not only good for us as athletes but for the country," she said. "In the lead up to 2012 it is great for Great Britain to be seen on the international circuit. Judges can see that we are improving and they are beginning to take notice of our progress and reacting well to it. We hope that this will lead us to success in 2012."

Duet boosts European standing in Final

Britain's synchronised swimming duet achieved their aim of improving their standing on the European circuit by finishing in ninth place in the Duet Free final. In the Free Routine Prelim, Britain's Jenna Randall and Olivia Allison struggled in places with their synchronisation and going into the final they knew they had to pull out a strong performance in order to place higher in the final.

The pair had been working hard through training to make sure they looked strong in the water and their figures remained in time. They also knew that being able to hold a greater level of consistency through their routine was important. They had to put any nerves they may have had to one side as they entered the final looking confident and from the moment they dived in the routine looked more powerful, they executed their lifts better and kept the pace high through each lap of the swim. This led to the pair getting more high 8s to secure their position of ninth in Europe and the best result at a European Championships for nine years with a total score of 87.300 points. For Randall this was a great way to finish off a promising performance from the British team.

"We went into the final wanting to put in a really good performance," Randall said. "We wanted to move above our rivals and we knew that would mean us focusing and swimming to the best of our ability. We were disappointed with the way we performed in the prelims and we knew we had more to give and knew we could get better scores. In training we have been focusing on our timing, from the video of our prelim swim we could see that we were out on sections and knew we had to bring it together in the final. Today we achieved this and met our goals from training."

With just one month left until the duet leaves for the vital Olympic qualifier in Beijing, the pair understands that taking on feedback from international judges is vital for their progress.

“The judges told us that we looked low in the final laps of the routine. I think our travelling eggbeater let us down in the prelims so we have been practicing keeping our height on the 2nd lap of the routine,” Allison added. “This helped with the overall presentation of the routine and I think this helped us get higher marks today. This morning we were working on our counts and focusing on keeping our body positions tight in our lifts, this gave us more height and makes us look more powerful.”

At the 2006 European Championships the duet finished in 13th place and since National Performance Director Biz Price has been working with the athletes the improvements they have made have continued to be impressive. After seeing the final performance Price knows how to take the athletes to the next level.

“It is great to see that we are moving up and above our rivals,” Price said. “I would like us to be gaining higher marks for the routines, but we are moving in the right direction. It was good to see that the overall impression of the routine was better this time around. I wasn’t happy in warm-up, they were quite out of time and this can really affect your performance. But in that performance the girls picked up most of the corrections from the prelims and from training. I can clearly see what I need to do with the duet to improve in time for the Olympic qualification event next month and I think we should be able to get even higher marks over there.”

The British Synchro squad consisted of:

Jenna Randall (Rushmoor)
Olivia Allison (Rushmoor)