



Diver's drive for medals makes a splash for Mexico

By LEI LEI
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — The women's 3m springboard bronze was Mexican Paola Espinosa's third medal at the Shenzhen Universiade and her 14th from the four Summer Universiades she has competed in since 2005.

Espinosa, who is known as the "diving queen" in Mexico, said she felt tired but remains enthusiastic about the springboard and platform events.

"What I'm doing right now is what I love, but not what is ordered by my coach or my country," the 25-year-old said.

"The competition at this Universiade is a little bit long for me, and I feel tired. But I've gotten used to it. I think competing is a pleasant thing, so I always forget the tiredness."

At the Shenzhen Universiade, Espinosa — the 2009 world champion on the 10m platform and bronze medalist in the 10m platform synchro — won the gold in her favorite event, the 10m platform, and a silver in the platform synchro with partner Tatiana Ortiz. She will also compete in the 3m springboard synchro tomorrow.

"I focused 100 percent on the platform, so I felt a little bit of difficulty on the springboard," she said, after claiming the 3m springboard individual bronze on Saturday.

"I will adjust myself tomorrow and get well prepared for the synchro event."

Espinosa's boyfriend, Rommel Pacheco, is also diving for Mexico in Shenzhen.

He claimed the silver with partner Jonathan Ruvalcaba in the men's 3m springboard synchro on Tuesday.

"When she claims a medal, I'm very happy, and so is she when I achieve good results," he said.

"The love between us has helped us to improve together."

Espinosa said she will compete on both the springboard and platform at next year's London Olympics.

Her Chinese coach, Ma Jin, expects at least a medal at the 2012 Games.

"I have to take more training to improve," Espinosa said.

"I have to improve on the platform, and I also want to do well on the springboard."

He all 'class' after victory

RISING STAR STILL SEES ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT BEFORE OLYMPICS



LU HANXIN / XINHUA

World champion He Zi led a 1-2 Chinese finish in the Universiade women's 3m springboard competition yesterday.

By LEI LEI
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — This one was for the kids at school.

World diving champion He Zi won Universiade gold in the women's 3m springboard yesterday and she was, of course, excited to claim the medal for her country.



DIVING

But she was just as excited to bring one back to her university.

"The biggest difference I felt at the Universiade from other events is that I represent not only China but also my university, Renmin University of China," said He, a journalism major.

He collected 384.70 points from five dives in the final to win the

gold, although she made some mistakes in her second dive, a forward 3 1/2 somersault. Her compatriot, Wang Han, claimed silver with 370.00 points, followed by Paola Espinosa of Mexico (323.60).

Even a gold medal wasn't enough to satisfy He.

"I will give myself 70 percent for the performances," she said. "I still have some weak points to improve."

Born in Nanning, in China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, He was selected for the Shenzhen diving team at an early age. Competing in her home pool at the Shenzhen Universiade made her feel comfortable.

"This is my first Universiade and I came back to the city that brought me up, so I feel at ease here," the 20-year-old said.

"Although I didn't spend much time here after I was selected to the national team, I always feel at home when coming back here," she said.

He began drawing attention in the diving pool during the era dominated by China's diving queen, Guo Jingjing, who claimed the world championship title on the springboard five times.

At the age of 16, she won silver medals in the women's 3m springboard individual and synchronized events at the 2006 Doha Asian Games.

At her first World Championships the following year, she won her first world championship on the 1m springboard.

After Guo declared her retirement at the beginning of this year, He teamed with veteran Wu

Minxia, Guo's former partner, for the synchronized event.

At the World Championships in Shanghai last month, He and Wu won gold in the women's 3m springboard synchro and she won silver in the individual event, beaten by Wu.

Claiming she lacks confidence, He says her personality is not that of a competitive athlete, but she keeps pushing herself.

"I used to doubt whether I was suited to being an athlete, but maybe I didn't know myself well," said He. "As an athlete, I always want to be better and better."

The ever-cautious He isn't willing to make a prediction about next year's Olympics.

"I dare not to think about the result at the London Games. I still need to improve my dives through training," she said.