

EUROPE



Countries represented:

GREAT BRITAIN: Sara Campbell, Georgina Miller

ITALY: Davide Carrera, Ilaria Molinari

AUSTRIA: Herbert Nitsch

FRANCE: Walid Boudhiaf

DENMARK: Mads Becker Jørgensen

Look at those flags above. Aren't they a boring assembly red blue and white stripes? The freedivers who come from these countries however are anything but boring...



England is sending the indomitable Sara Campbell (below), who has taken a year and a half off since the World Championships in 2007 to deal with familial issues. Wherever she keeps her freediving talent it doesn't seem to have been affected, and she is back to her grueling training routine of one day on, 2-3 days rest. On her website she has announced an intent to be the first woman to dive 100 meter in CWT. Considering that this is 66 body lengths, the equivalent of one of the men doing over 120m, it is a formidable goal indeed.

Georgina Miller (left) is another UK freediver who is quickly moving up the ranks, having just cracked the 50m barrier in CWT. She won't challenge Sara at this comp but powerful fin-strokes and fearless tenacity may push her into the ranks of the top women by the end of the year.

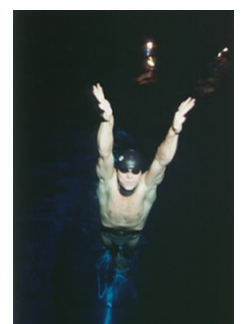


From Italy Davide Carrera and Ilaria Molinari (left) are continuing their progress in AIDA competitions. Last year, with Federico Mana they represented Italy at the teams world championships. Davide came a split second away from holding the national constant weight record with Federico when celebrations took him overtime on the surface protocol, but this is a mistake that seldom happens twice... Ilaria has represented the Italian women for almost a decade, but her youth and elegance show that she still has a lot to offer. Both are graceful and languid divers who push for new depths from well within their limits.

Nitsch will compete for the first time ever outside of Europe/Egypt, and after a relative absence from the competitive scene in 2008 he will have a lot to prove.

Herbert has been seen in Dean's Blue Hole with a monofin, swimming breaststroke and pulling on the line, so nobody, perhaps not even Herbert himself, knows which discipline he will be competing in, if not all of them...

Walid Boudhiaf (below), who will be representing France in his first freediving competition, is a truly multinational freediver - he





was born in Tunisia, raised in France, and now lives and trains at altitude in Bogota, Colombia. Something in his demeanour tells of deepset determination. In Colombia he maintains a grueling schedule, training several times a day, and reaching results at the pool that would be impressive even at sea level, not to mention over 8,000 feet up!

Mads Becker Jørgensen (left) is a respected Danish freediving coach who has recently been focussing more of his attention on his own training. Until recently most of the top Danish freedivers originated from a club in the city of Aarhus, on the main peninsula, but Mads is a member of a new camp of apneists who have been training in the capital Copenhagen.

Mads is concentrating on no-fins dives, and has Stig's 61m dive, previously a world record, in his sights...



QUICK QUESTIONS

1. who is the sportsperson (any sport) you admire the most (past or present)?

Walid: Umberto Pelizzari

Mads: Chris McDonell

George: Valentino Rossi. He is argueably the most talented rider ever.

Sara: Ellen McArthur, teeny-tiny British woman who smashed all expectations of what she was capable of in round the world yacht racing. A truly inspiring woman, amazing story of what can be achieved, and a great book - worth sitting down with for some motivation whenever you feel a bit down!

Ilaria: Not considering freediving, where Umberto to me is the absolute king ever; I really admire and have always supported Jury Chechi, the italian gymnast. As well as five gold and two bronze medals at the World Gymnastics Championships he won the Olympics title in the rings at Atlanta 1996 and was third at Athens 2004, at the age of 35, which is amazing for a gymnast, and despite several physical accidents which occurred in very delicate moments of his sport carrier, he always stood up and began training and competing again.

Herbert: I met Umberto some years ago, and respect him a lot, but I do not tend to admire anyone

2. what is the strangest thing you've done underwater?

George: i found some false teeth on a coral head, put them in my pocket and took them back to the shop. About a week or so later a man with no teeth came in asking about a course.... so I found the owner. Random.

Herbert: Hanging for 3 hours at night doing a deco stop on scuba

Sara: what are these questions....? PUBLISHABLE, it would be on a 60m dive, my first ever in cold water, wondering how I would ever train for this on a regular basis (not that I'd want to!!) - had a vision of myself sitting in one of those huge open supermarket freezers among the peas, chips and pizzas, in a bikini, holding my breath... Well, it might work... ? :-)

Mads: Penetrated a few hour old shipwreck

Ilaria: I have done very stupid but very funny underwater dances and choreographies with some friends of mine!

3. where is your favourite place to dive?

Mads: Kalymnos Island in Greece

Walid: The tunisian spots on the Mediterranean coastline where I used to dive when I was little.

George: The Chepstow quarry in the Uk... Salt free is an amazing set up, albeit a bit chilly. (*And I suppose Blackpool is your favourite beach in the world too - Ed*).

Herbert: Palau

Ilaria: French Polinesia: visibility is never-ending, you see any kind of fish and marine mammals underwater, you can play with savage dolphins, manta rays and more: it's divers' heaven!

Sara: So far I haven't found anywhere to beat the Dahab Blue Hole for training. But I did a stunning dive off Abu Nuhas reef, in the Gulf of Suez recently - it's littered with wrecks and I swam through the Giannis D, which was really, really beautiful (see pic)

4. do you have any superstitions or good luck charms?

Herbert: No.

Ilaria: I used to wear a certain wool hat before any training and competition, then I stopped competing for 3 years and when I started again I decided not to be bound to any object in particular, to be completely free and independent.

George: My red Ducati bikini is lucky.

Mads: Yes my little Buddha and a littele piece of coral.

Walid: I am not supertitious but I like to repeat a sufi preyer before an important challenge.

5. have you done a PB recently in training, and if so which discipline?

Sara, Ilaria, Herbert: No (*One of these may be lying or need updating... Ed*)

George: Had some happy static sessions in the pool before I came out here.

Walid: I am reaching 125m DNF in Bogota (at 2.600m above sea level)

Mads: DNF 136m and 6:51 in static

6. who would win in a dive-off between Donald Duck and Kermit the Frog? - and why?

Ilaria: Kermit. Donald seems to me a bit too agitated to freedive

Herbert: Kermit, frogs can hold their breath much longer.

Sara: No idea!!! But will choose Kermit as frogs are far cuter than ducks!

Mads: Kermit of course.... Kermit is much more aquadynamic and much less boyant because he doesn't have a huge fatty duckbutt to carry around under the water.

Walid: I guess Kermit the frog will be the winner, since he has more experience in deep waters and much more self confidence, as the song "Frogs in the Glen" says:

The deer can jump higher

The fish can swim faster

Than ever a froggie swam

But a deer can't dive deep

And a fish can't ribbet

So I'm proud to be what I am

Be proud of your flippers"

George: I had a small Kermit the frog when I was little. He accidentally went diving into the toilet and was retrieved several meters along the pipe by my reluctant mother before he reached the septic tank. So that's real evidence, I believe, that Kermit the frog is a superior diver.

(And with that hard evidence, and a tally of 12.5 - 2.5, I think we can conclude that Kermit would be the deeper diving toon).



I think something that would have an impact on Kermit's dive is the fact that he has someone's hand up his bum. Even if said puppeteer was a good freediver this would nonetheless classify it as a tandem dive or a disqualification no?

by Sam Trubridge on 2009-03-25 14:43:23

Donald Duck, what happened? Why did you lose the humans' favour for freediving? Sure the bloody frog cheats breathing through his skin, and wearing his lean green smoothskin suit has the easiest entry with hardly no buoyancy to fight. But Donald don't despair, your inventive courageous persistent character will allow you to go deeper than the wimpy flimsy frog. While you just into the glide, the frog will have a hard time in dark and cold water keeping his eyes from closing and falling into a deep -eternal- hibernation sleep. His skin breathing is also likely to fail because the salt will first clog up his pores and then dehydrate him. And you Donald you're a sailor all your life, you know and have lived the sea, just as your cozens, your penguin friends from down under! Gosh you would expect the Kiwi's to know better travelling all the way to the Bahama's! Anyway I've complete confidence that you can beat Kermit in Constant weight, keep the bird's pride high and show the frog why NO FROG will ever out dive a bird! KarsnPs, I like your support team, your 3 safety diving nephews, and your very generous uncle who no doubt can facilitate all your training time and equipment needed. His gold would also make up some very fancy neckweight to, sure to liked by your lovely Kathrin!

by Kars on 2009-03-26 13:05:42