

TONIA COUCH **9th at World Champs**

Tonia Couch (17) and Stacie Powell (from Southampton), were perfectly poised going into the Final of the Womens Synchronised Platform event at the World Championships in Melbourne.

They finished 5th in a very, very tight prelim, where just 2 points separated 3rd to 6th places.

Unfortunately, the pair couldn't sustain it going into the final and dropped 20 points, to 9th place, just 19 points off 3rd and a guaranteed berth in Beijing.

They will both have another shot in the individual event later this week but in a very complicated qualification process, the World Cup in Beijing at the beginning of 2008, will herald the second and last chance for Countries to earn spots for the Beijing Olympics.

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(British Swimming Website) **PROMISING PAIR SLIP UP AFTER IMPRESSIVE START** 19 Mar 2007 12:25

British divers Tonia Couch and Stacie Powell had a day of highs and lows at the World Championship pool in Melbourne after making the Women's 10m Synchro final impressively and then finishing a disappointing ninth overall.

A missed fourth dive did the damage for the British pair, who were lying in fourth place after round three, and in trying to make up too much ground on their final dive they slipped to ninth.

The day had started promisingly for Couch (Plymouth) and Powell (Southampton Diving) after they scored over 300 points for the first time internationally to qualify fifth for the final.

A steady start to their list of five dives saw them hold on to that fifth spot before a well executed Inward 2.5 Somersault saw them close on the medal standings to put them up to fourth.

Their next dive, however, was their downfall as the Forward 3.5 Somersault was some way out and they dropped to eighth. Playing catch up with the final dive the pair went for broke and ended the final in ninth with a score of 287.70.

"We're a little disappointed," said National Performance Director Steve Foley. "They were given their opportunity in the final, the door opened in round three but they faltered on their front 3.5 and the chance was gone.

"Considering Tonia's injury (thumb) and the fact they haven't trained together as much as we would have liked, we've seen some signs for the future though today with an excellent performance in the preliminaries.

"The big thing is that we've got a lot of work to do still and we saw that tonight. They've got to compete twice in one day and not just once. That performance shows we've got a way to go if we're going to be at the Beijing Olympics in the Women's 10m Synchro."

Powell was pleased with her own performance, which she hopes to take forward to tomorrow's individual 10m event, and is looking forward to working with Couch over the coming months to ensure Britain has a presence in Beijing.

"We had a great preliminary session but couldn't carry it through to the final," said Powell. "Earlier we showed we could compete with the best in the world but tonight was a different story. If we'd delivered the same type of performance our earlier score would have given us the bronze.

"There was more pressure out there in the final but it's the same for everyone and we have to learn to cope with that if we are to qualify the team for next year's Olympics later this season."

Partner Couch has been suffering with a thumb injury recently and this has hampered her ability to train as often as she would have liked with Powell.

"Personally I was pleased with the synchro element of our dives, considering our broken preparation, but the technical side of things needed to be better. "I had a really good take off on the front 3.5 but something went wrong afterwards and that put us off the pace. We tried to get back but by that stage we'd left ourselves too much to do."

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