

The Reigning Champ is Back and Back is the Champion

Artem Silchenko wins 6th stop of the 2014 Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series and Gary Hunt secures 4th overall title

Russia's Artem Silchenko has dominated the penultimate stop of the season in the capital city of the Basque Country, but Gary Hunt's second-placed finish is enough for the Brit to take back the title that he relinquished to the Russian in 2013. The rapidly-improving Kris Kolanus, from Poland, completed the podium for the first time in his World Series career as four rounds of 27m cliff diving delivered an unforgettable weekend in Bilbao. Sunshine, heavy showers and a rumble or two of thunder above the already dramatic setting of the Guggenheim Museum made for a truly spectacular event that was witnessed by an unbelievably huge crowd of 52,000 enthusiastic spectators who lined the Nervión River underneath La Salve Bridge.

Still regaining power after a mean shoulder injury, the 30-year-old Russian (522.40pts) dove to an impressive victory, his first since the 2013 final in Thailand. The only 10 of the competition, the day's highest score for a single dive (173.60pts) and a big move up in the overall standings from fifth to second – Artem Silchenko is the fourth athlete to win a competition in the current season. The man on the second spot of the podium was the all-time favourite from England, Gary Hunt (501.80pts), who locked his fourth World Series title in six years with today's result. Poland's biggest diving talent, Kris Kolanus (460.00pts), a rookie in the 2014 season, is the new face in the top three.

As the season comes down to the wire and only the top five of the overall standings automatically qualifying for next year, the fight for vital ranking points is tight. England's Blake Aldridge holds fifth place after today's second-to-last stop, but Jonathan Paredes is nipping at his heels and only 10 points behind (540pts) in sixth. Positions four to eight are all still fighting for one of the coveted top-five spots, which will be decided during the final competition of the 2014 season in four weeks' time.

After a passionate Spanish crowd in Bilbao were treated to some breathtaking three-second flights, the cream of the cliff diving crop will meet again for the final showdown of the season in Yucatan, Mexico, on October 18, to crown the male and female champions.

QUOTES OF THE WINNERS

Gary Hunt (UK)

I'm so happy. I've had one slip-up in Portugal but I'll forget about that. It's been a wicked year and it'll be a pleasure to dive in Mexico knowing the title is already secured. All the time I've been here I've been diving really well and then I missed my hardest dive in the second round today and I was kicking myself. When I was on the end of the platform for my last dive, I just told myself 'imagine this is the last time you'll ever get to do this dive' and I was really happy with how it went. I have won the title before, and not being on top of the podium for that event, so it's not quite perfect, but Artem's not won one this year so I'll let him have it!

Artem Silchenko (RUS)

My back armstand was great – I got one 10 – and I'm so happy. My power is coming back and I've worked so hard in the gym and I'm getting back to my best. I want to finish the season strongly now.

Mexico is the final stop and before then I will go back to Russia and be ready for the final. The crowd was crazy and very passionate. I'm happy and I think the spectators are as well.

Kris Kolanus (POL)

It's an amazing feeling to be on the podium. All my hard work and the sacrifices that I've made are being rewarded. It's the first time that I've hit all four of my dives. I got mostly 9s so I'm really happy with that. I need to work on my take-off and, who knows, I may get a 10 next competition! I started the year slowly and I did a bad dive in Ireland and it was very hard to come back after that. But now I'm full of confidence.

Results Stop 6, Bilbao

1. Artem Silchenko | RUS | 522.40pts
2. Gary Hunt | UK | 501.80
3. Kris Kolanus | POL | 460.00
4. David Colturi | USA | 454.80
5. Blake Aldridge | UK | 449.30
6. Orlando Duque | COL | 442.10
7. Michal Navratil | CZE | 433.25
8. Steven LoBue | USA | 383.85
9. Jonathan Paredes | MEX | 318.50
10. Miguel Garcia (wildcard) | COL | 275.55
11. Andy Jones | USA | 266.75
12. Anatoliy Shabotenko (wildcard) | UKR | 266.70
13. Cyrille Oumedjkane (wildcard) | FRA | 250.90
14. Alessandro De Rose (wildcard) | ITA | 245.95

Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series 2014

It's pure, it's fast and it takes your breath away. Cliff divers leap aesthetically from almost three times the Olympic height and hit the water at speeds of 85kph, protected only by their concentration, skill and physical control. Since 2009, the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series has featured the biggest talents, the most promising newcomers, and since 2013 has also provided a platform for women. Seven tough competitions for the men, three challenges for the women – in its sixth season this jaw-dropping sport will hit new as well as proven ground in the Caribbean, North and Latin America and Europe between May and October to determine a new champion for both men and women.

Maurice Lacroix is the official watch partner of the 2014 Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series.