



## NING ZETAO: IT WAS A DREAM FOR ME JUST LIKE FOR THE ENTIRE ASIA

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SPORT



Ning Zetao emerged victorious in the 100m freestyle event finishing the race with a time of 47,48. He became the first Asian world champion in the 100m freestyle event at the FINA World Championships. Ning Zetao was 0.11 seconds ahead of Cameron McEvoy, Pan-American Games title holder from Australia, who by the way was leading up until the final.

The competition was unexpectedly nerve-wrecking today with Nathan Adrian, the Olympic champion from the USA, missing out on podium spots and sharing seventh place with Pieter Timmers from Belgium.

*"I will remember this day forever, I was competing with the top swimmers of the world. I am unbelievably happy about claiming gold in the 100m freestyle. Winning the short course was not only my dream. I was representing the dream of Asia, the biggest part of the world which wanted a Chinese guy to be the world title holder in this very event. I guess it is going to inspire Chinese athletes before Rio 2016, it will make them more confident. It will also encourage me to show better results. I also suppose now mass media and ordinary people will pay more attention to me as an athlete, as a person,"* said happily Ning Zetao

As it turned out, Ning Zetao has a role model. It is a legendary Soviet athlete, four-time Olympic champion who dominated the sport in the 1990s.

*"I am a big fan of Alexander Popov. I try to copy his approach to training and his swimming style because he is a role model for me,"* the Chinese swimmer said.

Another country which plays a big role in Zetao's life is Australia where he has been training for some time. He has an Australian coach who gave Zetao a short course of training and the Chinese swimmer is on very good terms with him. One could clearly see it after the awarding ceremony. The swimmer hopes that they will keep up their work together in the run-up to the Rio Olympics.

*"It was my dream to claim gold. When I touched the wall, I didn't know that I won. When I looked at the time on the board, I realised I had just won the gold medal. It was an incredible feeling,"* the athlete said.

Journalists were also curious why Zetao saluted when the Chinese anthem was played during the victory ceremony.

*"I am not only an athlete, I'm also a citizen of China,"* said the world champion, who as it turns out also serves in an army back there in China.



