

Italian Paralympic Swim Team Honored by the President

Roberta Cutillo (November 14, 2019)



President Sergio Mattarella welcomes the Italian National Paralympic Swim Team to the Quirinal Palace to celebrate their achievements at the latest World Championship in London, where they totaled 50 medals. Also honored were the young Italian paralympic athletes who won 23 medals during the 2019 European Para Youth Games.

“Our country grows with you. You are sending out a great message to all of Italy, thank you for your activity and for your efforts: you are a magnificent representation of Italy.” These are the words with which Italian President Sergio Mattarella addressed the Italian National Paralympic Swim Team, after the team’s remarkable performance in the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships in London.

The Italian team came in first place, totaling 50 medals: 20 gold, 18 silver and 2 bronze. An incredible achievement, especially considering that the [Federazione Italiana Nuoto Paralimpico](#)



[\(FINP\)](#) [2] was only born in 2010 from the initiative of the [President of the Italian Paralympic Committee](#) [3], Luca Pancalli.

The strides taken by the team over the last 9 years are quite remarkable: they went from taking home 5 medals in Eindhoven in 2010 to this year's 50 under the guidance of the coach Riccardo Vernole. Today FINP counts around 900 athletes, a number that keeps growing each year.

"I still remember as if it were today the emotion I felt 50 years ago, when we still spoke of "handicapped," not paralympic sports," said the President of FINP, Roberto Valori. "My father took me to the pool to give me an opportunity. I remember the emotion, the pain, the pride in his joyful eyes when he looked at me. It's a strong feeling that has to be passed on. Seeing a disabled kid swim for me is more than a satisfaction, it's a mission."

And in fact, also present were the young athletes of the under 18 Italian paralympic swim team, who won 23 medals in the 2019 European Para Youth Games, held in Helsinki, Finland. A great sign for the future of the sport.

26-year-old paralympic swimming champion Federico Morlacchi also spoke. "Yes, it is with pride that we can say that we are world champions," he stated, adding however that "the value of our athletic endeavors goes beyond medals and records. I believe that as paralympic athletes we also bring with us a message of social inclusion to diffuse the values of equality, respect for diversity, acceptance of the other. Sports become a way of diffusing culture, helping society to understand that disability is not a negative word."

Now the athletes are already getting ready to compete in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics, where we know they will inspire us and make the country proud.

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