## **OPEN WATER**



**STOYCHEV** (BUL) 17.90%



(NED)

12.50%

Maarten van David der WEIJDEN **DAVIES** (GBR) 8.90%



Vladimir **DYATCHIN** (RUS) 8.90%

Also voted for:

Yuri Kudinov (RUS)

David Meca (ESP)

Chip Peterson (USA)

The hest of the decade:

Thomas LURZ (GER)

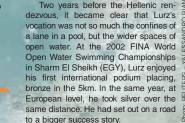
35.70%

## "The phenomenal quy"

"This guy is phenomenal. He is the best in the world in open water. Before, I could only imagine being this close to him." The words of the 2009 FINA World Championships silver medallist in the 5km, Greece's Spyridon Gianniotis, could hardly be more appropriate. The Hellenic swimmer was referring to Thomas Lurz, leading light in the 2000-09 period and now elected "Male Open Water Swimmer" of the decade in the vote organised by our magazine.



After Athens, Lurz definitively shifted to open water and then started a dominance that overwhelmed the followers of this discipline



Initially a pool swimmer, Germany's

Thomas Lurz was born on November 28, 1979 in Würzburg and was, on several

occasions, national champion in the

800m and 1500m free. In 2004, at the

Olympic Games in Athens (GRE), he

qualified for the longest pool event but

was far from making the final, finishing

22nd in 15:33.81. Open water swimming

was not part of the Olympic programme

at the time and the 1,500m result reflec-

ted the fact that Lurz had not vet gone

the distance that better suited him.

Curiously, 2003 was a kind of "transition" year for the German star, who stuck with pool swimming with a view to competing in Athens the following year and took 11th place in the 1.500m at the FINA World Championships in Barcelona, After Athens, Lurz made a definitive shift to open water and started to dominate the majority of his rivals.

Though winning a handful of medals in the years that followed Athens 2004, 2008 and 2009 are without doubt his best years: besides the world titles he won in those two years, 2008 also brought the start of a new adventure, an Olympic 10km in Beijing. Lurz could not miss this chance to show his supremacy once more, but he came away with "only" a bronze, behind an inspired Maarten van der Weijden (NED) and a surprising David Davies (GBR, silver medal by 0.5 seconds!). "The race was extremely hard as everyone is extremely fit," recognised Lurz at the end of his Olympic effort. doubtless wondering how he could have lost to a man (Davies) who in Beijing had raced only the third marathon swimming race of his life...

In 2009, at almost 30 years of age, Thomas Lurz reinforced his status as a class act at the FINA World Championships in Rome (ITA) and added a further title to his long roll of honour: the overall victory in the FINA 10km Marathon Swimming World Cup, winning nine out of the 12 races of this yearly cir-

> By Pedro ADREGA Editor-in-chief of "FINA Aquatics World

## **RESULTS. MEDALS**

Since the end of 2004, Lurz has amassed an impressive number of medals at the highest international level, namely: 2004 FINA World Open Water Swimming Championships - gold in the 10km; 2005 FINA World Championships - gold in the 5km and silver in the 10km; 2006 FINA World Open Water Swimming Championships gold in both the 5km and 10km; 2007 FINA World Championships - gold in the 5km and silver in the 10km; 2008 FINA World Open Water Swimming Championships - gold in the 5km and bronze in the 10km; 2009 FINA World Championships - gold in both the 5km and 10km. In conclusion, at world level, he won all 5km on offer since 2005 and won consecutive medals in the 10km since 2004. These achievements make him the most successful male open water swimmer in the history of the FINA World Championships.



Master of the sea. Lurz's medal collection is the largest of all

