

Another Chad of success

Pedro Adrega, Head of FINA Communications Department

Chad, swimming, South Africa. No, it's not Chad Le Clos. "Chad is a great inspiration for us. For the entire South African nation and for the youth in our country. He proved that if you work hard and you believe in yourself, you can make it! In my case, I definitively want to add some nice performances and even improve the reputation of the name 'Chad'". Who speaks like this hasn't beaten Michael Phelps at the London 2012 Olympic Games. Instead, he successfully fights against the natural elements in open water races: this is Chad Ho, world champion in 5km and one of the athletes to watch on Sunday during the FINA Marathon Swimming Olympic Games Qualification Tournament in Setúbal (POR).

Asked if there are any Michael Phelps in the discipline he loves, Ho smiles, and then replies: "I don't believe there isn't now. In the past, Thomas Lurz [from Germany] seemed to be unbeatable, but now that he retired, the field is quite open". Then, concluding the interview to FINA, he adds: "Well, I got a gold medal last year in Kazan. Could be a good start..."

Born on June 21, 1990 Chad Ho was one of the pioneers in the inaugural 10km marathon swimming race at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing (CHN). After finishing in ninth, he was naturally hoping to do better in London 2012, but he was the second South African of the field during the qualification tournament also in Portugal. Then, as in 2016, each country can send two athletes per gender to the event, but only the best one gets the Olympic ticket: four years ago, Ho finished 12th, while his teammate Troyden Prinsloo was fifth.



Chad Ho (RSA) - Photo credit: Jose Lorvao

However, since this huge disappointment, Chad Ho has collected very promising performances, with the highlight being the gold medal in the 5km event, last summer in Kazan. “It was a complete shock for me. I wasn’t expecting it at all! However, it gave me a lot of motivation going into this Olympic year”. In the 10km race, he was only 19th, and needs this second opportunity in Setúbal to get his qualification to the Games. “I am used to both distances. It doesn’t change much to me. I am pretty confident that I can make it, and if we look further, I even admit that I will be fighting for a medal in Rio. Anyway, everything can happen in the Olympics – if all the conditions suit you, if you are in a good day, you may become an Olympic champion.”

Having already trained there and knowing the Setúbal course, Chad Ho admits that the temperature of the water is not an issue. “It may be a bit cold, and we tend to like more the warmer waters. But, it really doesn’t matter to me – I can swim in both scenarios and I do it regularly in South Africa”, he says. Asked about the possible developments of the race, the South African champion considers that the field (about 70 male swimmers) is quite strong, and “that a lot of tactics will be used.”

Training about 10 sessions a week – all in pool -, combined with some gym sessions, Chad Ho (also 5km bronze medallist in the 2009 Worlds) knows that he can be in the group of the best. “After Kazan, I am conscious that I can get to the top. I am now fully concentrated in the 10km, an event in which I am also very quite experienced. In the end, I want to be sure that all the hard work I have put in during the last years has paid off.”
