

National Day's fireworks give fitting end to the best Masters ever

Gergely Csurka, FINA Media Committee Member (HUN)

Hungary can be proud of hosting the best FINA World Masters Championships ever, stated FINA Bureau member and Masters Committee Liaison Dr. Mohamed Diop in his speech at the closing ceremony of the event.

OC President Miklos Sesztak said it was time to look forward and be ready for the next great sport events in Hungary.

After two weeks spent in a brilliant atmosphere, dedicated to fun, fitness and friendship – as one of the competitors described the core of the event – the 2017 FINA World Masters Championships came to an end in Budapest.

Altogether **9,213 athletes** competed during the fortnight, all of them did that in the venues also used for the previous 'big' World Championships, ensuring a really unique experience.



Swimmers could taste the main pool of the Duna Arena where 11 world records had been bettered in July, divers tested the boards of the state-of-the-art diving facility, water polo players should feel gifted to play on the Margaret Island, in the Alfred Hajos Complex, considered the Mecca of the sport (and the lucky ones either played against the local heroes, the Sydney 2000 Olympic winner team or just watched one of those matches which draw capacity crowds to the stands, creating an exceptional occasion in the history of the Masters Worlds with games played in front of 5,000 fans).

Open water swimmers enjoyed sunny days in the wonderful Lake Balaton (organisers provided free train

ride for all entrants) and Masters synchro swimmers were just as stunned as the ‘pros’ upon arriving, then performing in the temporary pools set up in front of the Vajdahunyad Castle.



Also for the first time ever, the OC provided professional broadcast from each and every moment of the event (e. g. action could be followed through live streaming in all six competition pools in water polo and all four competition pools in swimming). This gave extra value to the championships, just as the involvement of legendary figures of aquatics, Hungary’s Olympic and world champions, like five-time Olympic gold medallist Krisztina Egerszegi or three-time world champion (including a gold from the very first FINA Worlds in 1973) Andras Hargitay, who were keen to return and hand over medals to the Masters athletes as well after they had done the same in the elite event.

Even the weather appreciated the efforts of the hosts: even if a cool wave broke in on Saturday evening, rain stopped by noon so the closing ceremony could go on outdoors, according to the plans. It was important, as the conclusion was something the attendants would never forget. But first FINA Bureau Member and Masters Committee Liaison Dr. Mohamed Diop gave thumbs-up for the Magyars.

“After the FINA World Championships, you and Hungary have organised a fantastic FINA World Masters Championships. On behalf of my colleagues, members of the Masters Committee and all athletes and participants I can safely declare that these were the best ever FINA World Masters Championships!”



As Dr. Diop, himself also a competitor here, described his impressions:

“I am not only saying this as the Masters Liaison of the FINA Bureau, but as an athlete as well: in my free time I have actually raced here in four events! I have been talking to my fellow athletes, not as a FINA official, but as a competitor among the others. They all said that the organisation has been excellent, it will be very difficult to surpass Budapest.”

Miklos Sesztak, President of the Organising Committee and Minister of National Development told the public that although he was tired like almost all members of the OC but he still felt sad to see the event finishing.

He thanked the FINA leaders to assess the connecting World Championships as the best ones ever, adding, in two years Hungary managed to do what many thought impossible.

“Do we need more? Yes” Mr. Sesztak said.

“The 17th FINA Masters World Championships has come to an end too – but there will be more and more challenges. In just a couple of days, Budapest is welcoming the Judo World Championships, then soon the world’s best wrestlers and kayakers will arrive to our country – and naturally many more swimming, water polo and other competitions are on our horizon. I hope and I believe that this fascinating series will reach even more heights!”

After declaring the event closed, the FINA flag was lowered and then handed over to the representative of the next World Championships in 2019, OC General Director Yum Bang-ryul, and the FINA Fountain, next to the Duna Arena, also ceased to be spreading water. Then, after some fine music on stage, came the big finale – that’s why it was crucial to stay outdoors.



20 August is a special day: Hungary celebrates the founding of the state and the crowning of its first king, Steven I.

It's a decades-long tradition to put on a giant firework show in the evening and the closing ceremony was designed to end at the very same time when the fireworks began.

As the ceremony was held on the Margaret Island, everyone could watch the amazing show staged nearby, on and above the Danube, combined with music, ensuring a fitting end to the World Championships, the greatest event Hungary has ever hosted in its history.
