

Champion-elect Le Clos proves a role model to next generation and Singapore fans

David Hulmes, FINA Press Correspondent in Singapore

Chad le Clos (RSA) has fond memories of Singapore, and was back in town on Friday — alongside fellow FINA/airweave Swimming World Cup champion-elect Sarah Sjostrom (SWE).

Fans queued for a press conference and meet-and-greet with their heroes in the atrium of Kallang Wave Mall before the South African headed off to announce he would be an ambassador for next October's Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires.

“I’m really excited to be back here for a seventh time now. I had my big break here in the Youth Olympic Games in 2010, which helped me go on to Olympic success two years later, so Singapore always has a special place in my heart,” said Le Clos, at the press conference.

He then expanded on his Buenos Aires 2018 role in an exclusive interview with fina.org [1] at the OCBC Aquatics Centre, venue for this weekend's eighth and final leg of the Swimming World Cup.



“Being part of the first Youth Olympics in Singapore, I guess it was only fitting to make the announcement here. They asked me a few years ago if I wanted to do it for Nanjing 2014. Obviously I jumped on it and it was great to be there — there was a bunch of life-sized Chad Le Clos posters around which was fun to see. It’s a very big honour for me, and my family, when I’m asked to do anything with the Olympic Committee and with FINA.

“In Nanjing, I was watching how much quicker they were than when I was competing in Singapore. The one guy who stood out was Kyle Chalmers. He swam the 100 free and got beat, and two years later he was Olympic champion, same as my story.

“I never won the 200m fly or the 100m fly at the Youth Olympics, I went silver and silver. I won the 200 medley. Who would have thought the Olympic champion in 2012 couldn't win the 200m fly at the Youth Olympics two years earlier? That's a very simple message: don't get disheartened by things like that. A lot can happen in a year or 18 months. You've got to put in the work and believe — that's the most important thing.



“I'm looking forward to seeing the future — hopefully South Africa can also produce some more good youngsters. Hopefully the youngsters don't get too good and beat me before Tokyo 2020 — maybe afterwards is OK!

“My role is giving the youngsters hope, sharing my career experiences having been part of a successful Youth Olympics/Olympics cycle and giving advice on what to do and what not to do.

“Some of the challenges you will face are outside of the pool, like life in general. Dealing with those things can sidetrack you a lot more than what goes on inside the pool. Starting from the Youth Olympics, it can be the media that you'll have during that Youth Olympics/Olympics cycle, the pressure that you'll have from your federation, the expectation that you'll have from people, your parents getting ill — bad things happen and you've just got to deal with that.

“It's all about learning to stay cool under pressure, because there is a lot of pressure heading into an Olympics or World Champs. You always have that expectation on your shoulders when you've delivered in the past at a Youth Olympics so that's something you have to manage and keep on top of.”



Back at the mall, Sjostrom was asked about the prospects of breaking the 50-second barrier for the 100m free, having clocked 50.58 in Eindhoven in August, a couple of weeks after the World Championships in Budapest.

“I would be very surprised if I did it in under 50 this weekend. I was in better shape straight after Budapest so I just tried to keep it going. It’s the first time I’ve done the whole World Cup circuit so I’m excited to be at the last leg in Singapore,” said Sjostrom.

Local favourite, and fellow mall panelist Amanda Lim, has appeared at each staging of the Singapore leg of the World Cup.

“It’s been a long journey. It’s been 11 years and I didn’t know that until the swimming association asked me a few days ago when my first World Cup was and I was like, ‘oh wow, it’s 11 years’. It’s always been interesting to race in the World Cup because it’s always so fast, you get to meet people from all over the world and it’s always a new learning opportunity.”

Le Clos (402 points) has a 129-point advantage over second-placed Vladimir Morozov (RUS) — last year’s series champion — who in turn is 45 points clear of third-placed compatriot Kirill Prigoda (RUS) as the eight-leg series comes to a conclusion this weekend.

The South African leads the three-leg cluster by six points from Morozov, and Daiya Seto (JPN), who broke the 400m IM World Cup record in Beijing last weekend, then lowered the mark a further 0.54 to 3:58.20 in front of his home crowd on Wednesday.

Sjostrom comes into the meet with 578 points, 132 ahead of Katinka Hosszu (HUN). Ranomi Kromowidjojo (272) and Emily Seebohm (240) sit third and fourth. The Swede has 132 points from this final cluster, following the Beijing and Tokyo meets. Kromowidjojo (90) lies second, ahead of Hosszu (87) and Seebohm (66).



The men's and women's series winners take home \$150,000 each, runners-up \$100,000, and third-place finishers \$50,000, following a prize-money increase announced by FINA in September.

That increase extends to cluster prize-money, which sees the combined Beijing-Tokyo-Singapore men's and women's winners collect \$50,000 each, with eighth place the last spot to be rewarded (\$3,000).
