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Budapest sets stage for the world's best junior artistic swimmers

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FINA Artistic Swimming World Junior Championships is about to kick off at the iconic Duna Arena in Budapest.

The 5-days event shall commence this Wednesday, on 18 July, bringing together some 300 rising artistic swimmers from 40 nations. Surprising, but the 16th edition of the tournament comes as a premiere for the Magyar capital adding to its outstanding aquatics profile. The very Duna Arena was highly successful giving floor and water to the XXVII FINA World Championships last year.



FINA Artistic Swimming Junior World Championships was first held in 1989 in Cali, Columbia, bore the name “synchronized” instead of “artistic”, and since then took floor on a regular basis, at a two years interval (with one small exception fall to the period of 2001 – 2002). Its map features 10 countries and 14 cities, including Salerno (Italy), Leeds (UK), Bonn (Germany), Moscow and St.Petersburg (both - Russia), Federal Way and Indianapolis (both - USA), Montreal (Canada), Foshan (China), Volos (Greece) and Helsinki (Finland). The previous edition travelled back to Russia for the third time, mapping Kazan, the host-city of the XXVI FINA World Championships and XXVII World Summer Universiade-2013.

Host Russians proved them “bona fide” favorites and rocked like a hurricane, grabbing all golds on offer – 5. This thing they have done already 7 times before. However, in Budapest, it seems as the trick will not work that easy. Defending champions will face a strong opposition from a significantly increased number of challengers.

SOLO

Varvara Subbotina of Russia and Marta Fiedina of Ukraine will be the most decorated athletes in Budapest.

The Russian “enormous flexibility star” comes to the Junior Worlds as a freshly crowned European Junior Solo Princess. To match her elder compatriots, Subbotina did exceedingly well at the FINA Artistic Swimming World Series. She earned 3 golds in solo routines, posting season-high 94.1509 on her technical program on Leg#5. The good overall was registered in Budapest, so this must be a good omen for the swimmer to return and prove her reigning supreme. The only competitive chaser in such a story could be Marta Fiedina.

The Ukrainian prodigy got rising in 2017. Sweeping away 4 silver medals at the European Artistic Swimming Junior Championships in Belgrade, she never ceased working hard on her skills and scores. One year later, she proved herself strong enough to enter the senior team for the FINA Artistic Swimming World Series, which earned a marvelous 4-1-1 at her presence. At the recent European Artistic Swimming Junior Championships in Finland, Fiedina closely chased Subbotina and got 2 silvers, at the scores, that never dipped below a “class” 90 points.



Some more names to follow.

Vasilina Khondoshka of Belarus finished atop of the Figures competition in Finland this June, 82.1522, however her winning record misses competitive merits. Vasilina ranked fifth on both solo routines, rallying 1 point to Irene Martinez Jimeno on the technical portion, and were over 2 points adrift her Spanish compatriot Iris Casas Tio (who landed bronze on free performance, 87.6333). Anna-Maria Taxoupoulou of Greece was a part of both solo finals in Helsinki, and her main victory of the season came on the home soil (FINA Artistic Swimming World Series, Leg#9). Swimming in Syros Islands, Taxoupoulou finished hit bronze twice which complemented her other 4 medals earned in duets.

DUETS

There are a number of strong women duets in the competition, and highly likely that the golden clash will see an old good Eastern European rivalry: Russia vs. Ukraine. Ksenia Ladnaia/Elizaveta Minaeva first faced Aleksii sisters in Helsinki as far as this June, and their artistic swimming duel was a pleasure to follow. Both programs saw Russians winning impressively, at 89.0935 and 92.5667 on tech and free portions respectively, and their Ukraine opponents were some 2 points adrift. Budapest offers a good chance for Maryna and Vladyslava to make up, and they shall take it flying. In spite of their young age (they celebrated 17th birthday on 29 May, 2018) they are very very experienced, and their bank contains 17 pieces of the 2018 FINA Artistic Swimming World Series. Two more bronze medals came for the technical routines on Legs 5 and 6, 87.1011 and 86.6773.



Apart from Ukraine and Russia, there are some 5 other medal contenders. Spain will have their own big ambitions with Jimeno & Tio. The girls are expressive, well-trained and top-motivated. Their season-best portions earned them 3 bronze-colored items: two - at the European Junior Artistic Swimming Championships in Helsinki, and one – on the free routine in Samorin, ASWS-2018 Leg#4.

American expectations are rest on Ruby Remati, who registered 2 podium ceremonies (technical and free) in Beijing on Leg#2, pairing Olympian Anita Alvarez. However, this time in Budapest she is likely to build chemistry with another partner, Yara Elian. Their first international performance saw them rising. In Los Angeles on Leg 8 they were just 5th in the free portion, 82.3667 points.

Anna Maria Taxoupoulou and Georgia Vasiloupoulou of Greece will look to make their history at the Junior World Championships-2018. They already know the taste of bronze winning, travelling to the podium once in Syros Islands after the Technical portion, however their scores were not that competitive. The same story is about Kazakhstan's Yana Degtyareva/Jennifer Russanova. Winning 2 pieces on Leg#10, they only scored 76.4281 on their golden technical, and 76.7000 – on their “bronzed” free portion. A famous Russian Anastasiya Ermakova was the one to stage programs for the duo, and Budapest is a good floor to showcase them best.

A line up of strong duos shall also come from the USA, Japan, China and Canada. They are all meant to be in hot pursuit of the podium places. There are 33 duets in the Technical program, and 35 will be vying for the merits in the Free portion.

MIXED DUETS

For the first time ever, Junior Worlds' titles will be done for the mixed duets (both free and technical routines). There are 6 pairs in the competitions. The discipline is comparatively new, so the number of juniors involved needs growing. Let's follow the rising sport and future Olympic stars. Some good chances to win are booked for the Russians and Greeks, both victorious in Helsinki. Alina Mantilenko and Mikhail Vasiliev are but a year together, but already register good chemistry and scoring, always 10 points up to their junior chasers. Their aim is to reach the level of their adult role-models Veronika Gurbanberdyeva/Aleksandr Maltsev, possessing the 2018 season's best 91.9333 on their free program, and Italian champions Giorgio Minisini/Manila Flamini, which climbed as high as 88.5930 on their technical routine in ASWS-2018. Some strong opponents shall come from always technically strong China, Japan and even Kazakhstan, which celebrated their first ever trip to the podium straight on top by the close of the ASWS-2018 season in Tashkent, 69.1749.



TEAM EVENTS

There are 20 teams entered for the Technical program, 23 – for the Free program, and 16 squads will be a part of the Free Combination Routine. All eyes are on freshly crowned European Junior champions Russia, second successful nation of

Helsinki, Ukraine, and a long queue of traditionally strong national schools, like Spain, China, Japan, Greece and Canada. There are some 10 squads, like Slovakia, Switzerland, USA, Turkey and Croatia, with junior stars in their rosters, which are well-experienced and boast participation in the World and European Championships for their national senior teams and at least 2 recent editions of the FINA Artistic Swimming World Series. 12 nations have been on top in course of the 2018 circuit, and Ukraine got more than the rest - 15 wins: 5 - in Free Combination and 4 in the Highlights, 2 – in the team technical, and 4 – in the team free portion. Aleksiiva sisters and solo-star Marta Feidina, which are in the Ukrainian junior artistic swimming team now, have been in the game most of the time.



As usual, a big cherry on the cake will come by the close of the championships at the Athletes' Gala. The Gala is a big artistic swimming celebration, showcasing out of contest the most spectacular programs to keep the mood up and draw publicity. FINA World Junior Artistic Swimming Championships will be held in Budapest Duna Arena on 18 – 22 July, 2018.

Competition schedule

Day 1- July 18, 2018

Solo Free Preliminary

Solo Technical Final

Opening Ceremony

Solo Free Final

Day 2 - July 19, 2018

Duet Free Preliminary

Duet Technical Final

Duet Free Final

Day 3 - July 20, 2018

Mixed Duet Technical Final

Team Technical Final

Day 4 - July 21, 2018

Team Free Preliminary

Team Free Final

Day 5 - July 22, 2018

Free Combination Preliminary

Mixed Duet Free Final

Free Combination Final
