

New course, compelling stories at Marathon Swim World Series #6

Aimee Berg, FINA Press Correspondent

(LAC MEGANTIC, Canada) – Once again, the carnival rides are spinning and flipping on the shores of Lac Megantic, Quebec, to provide a festive backdrop for Saturday’s 10km open water race, the sixth (of eight) on the FINA/Hosa Marathon Swim World Series circuit.

For the first time, however, the course will not be a point-to-point crossing of the lake. Instead, 44 of the world’s finest swimmers will complete a 2km loop five times – starting and finishing at the Parc de l’OTJ.

As usual, there will be several compelling storylines.

On the men’s side, **Marcel Schouten**, 25, of the Netherlands will try to claim his second 10km victory in a row, just 16 days after scoring his first World Series win in Lac St-Jean, Canada.

The second- and third-place finishers from that race, **Fernando Ponte**, 26, and **Diogo Villarinho**, 24, will be gunning for gold, too – this time, hoping to avoid the chaos of the Lac St-Jean finish where they led a four-man (all-Brazilian) crush to hit the timing pad that required video replay to determine the order of finish.

The winner of Saturday’s race will earn 4,000 US dollars in prize money and 20 valuable rankings points.

If either Schouten or Ponte prevails, he would advance to second place in the overall standings behind the 10km world champion Ferry Weertman of the Netherlands. If Villarinho wins, he would tie for third overall.

The women’s 10km offers equal prize money and equal points and could be equally dramatic because the 2017 world championship silver medalist, **Samantha Arevalo** of Ecuador, will take on the 2016 Olympic silver medalist, **Rachele Bruni** of Italy.

Arevalo, 23, placed third in Lac St-Jean last month in a crazy finish that was even closer than the men’s.

Meanwhile, Bruni, 27, skipped Lac St-Jean to train for the European Championships in Glasgow, Scotland, where she claimed bronze in 5km on Wednesday, placed fourth in 10km on Thursday, and was scheduled to arrive in Canada on Friday. Bruni, the 2015 and 2016 overall World Series champion, is currently tied for third place in the rankings. She is seeking her first win of the season.

On Thursday, Bruni revealed via Instagram that 2018 has been “one of the most complex years for me,” and referred to a physical problem that arose in January kept recurring until late May. “In every race, in every training, I got beatings but I tried to always give my best and not be destroyed by the pain,” she wrote. She credited her coach, Fabrizio Antonelli, for not letting her quit and considered Thursday’s fourth-place finish to be a positive sign. She enters Lac Megantic with an improved mindset.

Another contender may be the multi-talented **Rebecca Mann** of the United States, a 20-year-old student in

the prestigious and highly-selective screen writing program at the University of Southern California. By the time she was 16, Mann published a book that was a finalist for an Independent Author Network award. At age 17, she was a two-time US national champion in 10km open water swimming (finishing ahead of the 2012 Olympic silver medalist Haley Anderson each time. Anderson recently won the World Series race in Setubal, Portugal, in June). And, last summer, at 19, Mann earned her third top-eight finish in her third appearance at the FINA open water world championships.

The men's race will begin at 13:00, followed by the women's start at 13:15. Both races will follow the same course in front of the Parc de l'OTJ, located about three hours east of Montreal.
