

Xin cruises and Reichert scrambles to win Lac Megantic 10km

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(LAC MÉGANTIC, Quebec) – On Saturday, Xin Xin of China won the women’s 10km open water race by building a decisive lead around the 6 km mark, and Christian Reichert of Germany won a mad scramble to the men’s finish at Lac Mégantic, Quebec, the sixth stop the FINA/Hosa Marathon Swim World Series circuit.

For Xin, the victory marked the highlight of her season. The two-time Olympian’s previous best finish was eighth place in the Seychelles back in May.

For Reichert, the victory marked his first one as the father of two. In fact, the reason the 33-year-old Olympian wasn’t competing at the European Championships in Scotland this weekend was because Reichert missed the German qualifier (a.k.a. the World Series race in Setubal, Portugal) because his wife gave birth to his second daughter, Leni, on the very same day: June 9.

“After such a long break, I’m happy to do this,” Reichert said of his triumph, explaining that he took three weeks off after the baby arrived, and had only trained once a day until now – partly because the pool near his home in Wiesbaden was closed at night, and when it reopened, he said it was “too crowded.”

For the first time in its eight-year FINA World Series history, the Lac Megantic race was not a point-to-point lake crossing. Instead, it consisted of five loops that started and finished in front of Parc de l’OTJ . And, since the men’s and women’s races started just 10 minutes apart, all 44 swimmers were on course simultaneously on a wind-less day in the mid-20s C (mid-70s F) with 50% humidity.

Men’s 10km

After several lead changes, the men’s race came down to a pack finish. It almost appeared that Dario Verani of Italy touched the finish pad first, but video replay proved that the 189 cm (6-foot-2) Reichert got the edge.

“I thought I won,” Verani said of his debut at Lac Mégantic, “but I touched the wrong way. Still, I’m happy.” Verani’s only other World Series finish this season was in Setubal, Portugal, in June.

Reichert said he basically stayed in the back of the pack the whole race until the last buoy, with 250 meters to go. “It was okay,” he said, nonchalantly of his win. Later, on the beach, Reichert commiserated with Marcel Schouten of the Netherlands who was also in contention for the podium when he said, “I was dying at the end.”

“Me too,” Reichert said.

Schouten was vying for back-to-back wins after his recent triumph in Lac St-Jean, and placed fourth.



Diogo Villarinho (#42) throws shade after a tight finish. Photos © Jean-Nicolas Allaire

Women's 10km

By the end of the third lap (or 6 km mark), Xin Xin of China, a 22-year-old economics student at the University of Shanghai, opted to skip the detour to the feeding station and keep a straight line on the course. It proved to be a crucial decision and it allowed her to build an insurmountable lead.

“The first three laps were every easy,” Xin said after the race. Even though the pack wasn’t directly behind Xin for quite a while, the leaders were aware that she was leading.

“I could see her,” said Rachele Bruni, who had just flown in from the European Championships in Scotland one day earlier. “I tried to speed up at the end of lap four [of five] to catch her,” she said, but the gap was too large and Bruni finished second for the second year in a row.

Samantha Arevalo of Ecuador, who trailed both Xin and Bruni for the last two laps of the race, also said she could see Xin and tried to chase her. “But she was too far,” she said, “so I tried to swim with Rachele but she was too far in the middle.”

Arevalo finished third for the second World Series race in a row. After her podium finish in Lac St-Jean 16 days ago, Arevalo and seven other swimmers stayed in Quebec and trained at the University of Sherbrooke to prepare for Lac Mégantic. Arevalo now plans to go home to Ecuador, then on to Rome where she trains with the top Italians, before competing in the final two races of the World Series circuit: in Chun’An, China, on September 16, and the finale in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on November 24.

Bruni also plans to take a break, for 10 days, before finishing the last two races of the season. The 2016 Olympic silver medalist in the 10km said that right-shoulder problems had plagued her from January to May of this year and that even though she took bronze in the 5km and finished fourth in the 10km at the European Championships earlier this week, both of those races were contested in wetsuits and required extra strength. “My arm died,” she said. But water was warm enough in Lac Mégantic on Saturday to prohibit wetsuits. “Today I did a good job but I wanted to win,” Bruni said, “– and China is very good.”

As Saturday's runner-up, Bruni now advances to second place in the overall World Series rankings, 18 points behind Ana Marcela Cunha of Brazil.



Xin Xin for the win! Photos © Jean-Nicolas Allaire

FINA/Hosa 10km Marathon Swim World Series, Lac Mégantic (CAN)

Men

1. Christian Reichert (GER) 1:56:52.5
2. Dario Verani (ITA) 1:56:52.9
3. Fernando Ponte (BRA) 1:56:53.5
4. Marcel Schouten (NED) 1:56:54.1
5. Luiz Barros (BRA) 1:56:54.6

Women

1. Xin Xin (CHN) 2:04:40.5
 2. Rachele Bruni (ITA) 2:05:25.2
 3. Samantha Arevalo (ECU) 2:06:11.7
 4. Rebecca Mann (USA) 2:06:18.4
 5. Maria Alejandra Bramont-Arias (PER) 2:06:23.4
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