

Marathon swimmers and high divers share the stage in Abu Dhabi (UAE)

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Open water swimmers and high divers were together to mark the opening of the two-day event in Abu Dhabi (UAE), comprising on November 9 the last leg of the FINA/HOSA 10km Marathon Swim World Series and on November 9-10 the FINA High Diving World Cup. From the swimming side, Rachele Bruni, from Italy, and Ana Marcela Cunha, from Brazil, shared some of their feelings in the opening Press Conference, while Steve LoBue (USA) represented the High Diving family competing in the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Cunha, leader and virtual winner of the overall ranking of the Series in the women's category, highlighted the importance of this eighth and final stop of the 2018 circuit: "The field is quite strong, as this race works as a qualification event for many countries concerning their participation at the 2019 FINA World Championships in Gwangju (KOR). The venue is fantastic and the conditions are ideal for a great open water race". Asked about her motivation given the advantage she has in the overall ranking – the Brazilian star has 96 points, while her main challenger, 2016 Olympic champion Sharon van Rouwendaal (NED, also in Abu Dhabi) totals 66, with the race distributing a maximum of 20 points -, Ana Marcela Cunha confessed: "This has been a regular effort throughout the year. You win the series if you constantly perform well. Despite my position of virtual winner, I will do everything possible here in Abu Dhabi to be in the leading positions". Cunha was the champion of the series in 2010, 2012 and 2014. Moreover, she has collected nine medals at the FINA World Championships.

At her side, Rachele Bruni (ITA), winner of the 10km circuit in 2015 and 2016, and with the same points as Rouwendaal in the 2018 ranking, is also delighted to compete in Abu Dhabi. "It's always nice to be here. The venue is fantastic and the field is quite strong. I have trained very hard, as this is the very last race of the season and I want to perform well", considered the 2016 Olympic silver medallist.



Rachele Bruni (ITA) and Ana Marcela Cunha (BRA)

Starting at 8:00 in the morning on November 9, 2018 the 10km races include other stars in the women's category: Italy's Arianna Bridi (winner of the series in 2017), France's Aurélie Muller (four medals at the 2017 Worlds), China's Xin Xin (gold in the previous two legs of the series, in Canada and China), or Ecuador's Samantha Arevalo (third in two races in 2018).

Among men, 2018 leader and 2016 Olympic champion Ferry Weertman (NED) will swim in Abu Dhabi, and will certainly be challenged by Jack Burnell (GBR), second of the ranking, still with mathematical chances to get the title. Marc-Antoine Olivier (FRA, two gold in Budapest 2017), Allan do Carmo (BRA), Simone Ruffini (ITA) or Rob Muffels (GER) are other strong candidates for medals in the UAE.

From the High Diving side, Steve LoBue, 2017 world champion in Budapest, confessed his "excitement" to be once more in Abu Dhabi, after the organisation of the 2016 and 2017 editions of the World Cup. "The weather is nice, and the water is flat. What else can we want? These are optimal conditions for High Diving", stated the US star. "This is the end of the season for us, after competing in a very demanding Red Bull series. So, we turn the auto-pilot on and we try to do our best. We have been several times in Abu Dhabi, so we know what to expect here. The field is really strong, also with many new faces. Anybody can shine here, as several athletes have increased the Degree of Difficulty of their dives", he concluded.



Steve LoBue (USA)

With 41 entries (29 men and 12 women), the High Diving competition will comprise four rounds of dives for both categories. The male competitors will dive from a 27m-platform, while their female counterparts will compete from a 20m-board. Many of the discipline's stars will be present in Abu Dhabi, including LoBue, Gary Hunt and Blake Aldridge (GBR), Michal Navratil (CZE), Orlando Duque (COL), Alessandro De Rose (ITA), Jonathan Paredes (MEX), and Artem Silchenko (RUS). Among women, we can highlight Rhiannan Iffland (AUS), Lysanne Richard (CAN), or Ginger Huber (USA).

Also present in the Opening Press Conference, FINA Executive Director Cornel Marculescu spoke about the strong participation in both events. "As FINA is happy to be back in Abu Dhabi, many National Federations around the world sent their best athletes in open water and high diving here. This proves the attractiveness of this place", highlighted Mr Marculescu. "We must not forget that Abu Dhabi will host in 2020 the FINA World Swimming Championships (25m), so the success of these events is the best guarantee for a great achievement during the 2020 rendezvous. I take the opportunity to thank the Abu Dhabi Sports Council and the Government for their continuous support to FINA. I wish all the luck to the athletes competing here", concluded the FINA Executive Director.

