

Hangzhou, Day 1: Seto and USA establish new WR

FINA Communications Department

The 14th FINA World Swimming Championships (25m) brilliantly debuted in Hangzhou (CHN), with two World Records in the first finals' session of the competition. The individual hero of the day was Japan's Daiya Seto in the men's 200m fly, with a new global mark of 1:48.24. In the last race on the programme, the US team in the 4x100m free relay clocked 3:03.03. Another highlight of this initial day was the Championships' record of Danas Rapsys (LTU) in the men's 400m free (3:34.01).

Precisely in the first final of the day, the men's 400m free, Rapsys concluded a solitary effort with a gold medal in 3:34.01, a new Championships record – the best previous mark of the competition had been established by Peter Bernek (HUN, 3:34.32) in Doha 2014.



Danas Rapsys (LTU) - Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

Rapsys became the second men's gold medallist ever for Lithuania in the history of the Championships, after the triumph of his compatriot Simonas Bilis in the 100m free two years ago in Windsor (CAN). Before his victory in Hangzhou, Rapsys had been eighth in the 200m back at the 2017 FINA World Championships, and fifth in the same event in Windsor 2016.

The minor medals in China went to Henrik Christiansen (NOR, 3:36.64, silver) and to Gabriele Detti (ITA, 3:37.54, bronze).

In the women's 200m free, Femke Heemskerk (NED, lane 6) led until the 100m-mark, but then Mallory Comerford, from the USA, accelerated in lane 4. Shortly after, it was the turn of Ariarne Titmus (AUS) to impose her speed. In the end, the Australian's effort paid off, with a victory in 1:51.38, in front of Comerford (silver in 1:51.81) and of Heemskerk (1:52.36). The Dutch swimmer had won this event in Doha 2014, while long-course world champion Federica Pellegrini (ITA) had to content with the fourth place, in 1:53.18.



Daiya Seto (JPN) - Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

Chad Le Clos (RSA), in the men's 200m fly, fought for the fourth title in the event, after previous successes in 2010, 2014 and 2016. Swimming in lane 1, the South African (also WR holder in the distance) had in Daiya Seto, from Japan, his main contender in today's final. Seto won silver four years ago in Doha and was third in the previous edition in Windsor.

In Hangzhou, Le Clos departed very fast – he was first after the 50m -, but Seto definitively accelerated for the victory and the new World Record from that point on. In the end, the Japanese star touched home in 1:48.24, faster than the 1:48.56 established by Le Clos in November 2013. The South African arrived closely behind, still inside his global mark (1:48.32). The bronze went to China's Li Zhuhao in 1:50.39.

In the women's 400m IM, the outcome was clear from the beginning – Katinka Hosszu (HUN) was the super-favourite. The only question mark was her time: could she beat the WR (4:18.94) established in August 2017 by Mireia Belmonte (ESP, absent in China)? Until the 200m-mark, everything seemed OK for the Magyar (0.76 below the WR split), but a weaker breaststroke leg did not allow Hosszu to swim faster than 4:21.40 and revalidate her 2016 title. The silver went to Melanie Margalis (USA), in a distant 4:25.84, while the bronze was earned by France's Fantine Lesaffre in 4:27.31.



Katinka Hosszu (HUN) - Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

The crowd in Hangzhou was certainly expecting the first gold medal for the host country in the men's 200m IM, where Wang Shun was the fastest qualifier of the preliminaries in 1:53.18. The bet proved right and Wang touched first in 1:51.01, completing a very intelligent race, which he dominated all the way through. He was faster than two years ago, when he was also first in Windsor in a time of 1:51.74. Josh Prenot (USA) took the silver in 1:52.69, while the bronze went to Hiromasa Fujimori (JPN), in 1:52.73.

On relay action, USA got two gold medals at the end of the evening session, firstly winning the women's 4x100m free relay in 3:27.78, and then, even more impressively, the men's 4x100m free in a new World Record time of 3:03.03. This global mark improves the previous best performance (3:03.30) also from the North American team, achieved in December 2009 in Manchester (GBR). The new WR holders are Caeleb Dressel, Blake Pieroni, Michael Chadwick and Ryan Held). Both races were spectacular, with the silver medallists being very close from the winners – among women, the Netherlands finished in 3:28.02, while in the men's field, Russia was second in 3:03.11. Bronze medals went, respectively, to China (3:30.92) and Brazil (3:05.15).

QUOTES

Danas Rapsys (LTU), Gold, men's 400m free

"Oh my god, I don't know what to say because it's the first time I'm swimming this event and it's the world championship, and it's a championship record. I'm really happy. I just went in, all in from the start".

"Some months ago I decided I wanted to swim the 400m free because so far I was only swimming the 200m back. So I talked to my coach and here we are. Swimming in Lithuania is rising because we have a really good team of professionals. I think that swimmers are doing their job and training as much as they can but we do our work with the rest of the team, it is not only the work of the swimmer".



Ariarne Titmus (AUS) - Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

Ariarne Titmus (AUS) – Gold, women’s 200m free

"I am shocked, I didn't expect to win. I swam really fast tonight. It's my first short course world championship and it's a great start to the week. Setting an Oceania record it's definitely a bonus, I didn't necessarily come here to set records".

"I live in Brisbane (AUS) and I am 18 years old. I swim 200, 400 and 800, freestyle. This meet is very important because it is only a year and a half of the Olympics so I take it very seriously. Short-course is a bit different for me, turns and dives aren't my strengths so I am facing girls who have much more skills than me, therefore this medal and this record give me a lot confidence for the future. I still have got five more days before I can celebrate. I will have a little bit of a break over Christmas and that will be my celebration but early next year training will resume for me".

Daiya Seto (JPN) – Gold, men’s 200m fly

"I am so happy and I am so surprised that I set a world record. I wake up every day wanting to set a new record and I finally did it. It is amazing".

"I learned Chinese because my wife is Chinese and she taught me. I wanted to make a new WR, I am so happy that I could make it today. My wife and her father didn't not give me much advice before coming here but I always take my gold medals as benchmark reference for myself. My goal is always to win gold in the 200 IM and 400 IM. Today's World Championships is related to the next two major milestones, Korea next year, the FINA World Championships and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games for which I have the same goals, winning the gold in the 200 and 400 IM. I have always wanted to compete against Wang Shun".

Chad Le Clos (RSA) – Silver, men’s 200m fly

"I can't say anything bad. I did a World Record. Unfortunately, I got beat. Seto is a great guy, a great champion. It stings to lose like that. I think he had the lead the whole way if I was looking correctly underwater. The coach will shout at me for looking around way too much, but that's what I do. I broke the world record tonight and the national record, and I got silver. I don't know how that happened. I don't make excuses, It is what it is. I would have loved to have been in lane 5 next to him".

Katinka Hosszu (HUN) – Gold, women’s 400m IM

"I don't really put pressure on myself, in a way. I usually have goal times that I want to hit. I have been able to learn how to just focus on myself and try to push myself, so in that manner, I'm not worried about the place and the end. I'm always trying to stay in the moment and just race and try to do my strategy. I was pretty relaxed this afternoon, and I'm really excited about the time. The world record is obviously always something you shoot for, you want to be the best, you want to be the fastest ever. But no, that wasn't completely my goal this year".

Wang Shun (CHN) – Gold, men’s 200m IM

"Today it is a great pleasure for me that I have won the gold medal in my hometown and it is my personal best time so I am very honoured to be the champion. I hope to maintain my good performance in my next race. Daiya Seto is a very strong competitor and I am excited to compete against him in the future if the opportunity present itself. I have had about three weeks of very intense competition in three different nations so now I will also have three weeks to relax and to get physically ready for what's next".
