

## CSS, Budapest: The best of the best are back!

Pedro Adrega, FINA Communications Department

Unanimity arose among the participants in the Press Conference presenting the second leg of the “FINA Champions Swim Series”, to be staged in Budapest (HUN) on May 11-12: “the event will be spectacular!” 13 Olympic champions and 21 World Championships gold medallists are in the Magyar capital and its iconic “Duna Arena” to fight for glory in FINA’s newest competition. 68 athletes from 23 countries are present and have a total of 67 Olympic and 175 World Championships medals among them.

“This is a new competition in the FINA calendar, but after the initial meet in Guangzhou, China, we can proudly say this is already a very successful event”, considered the FINA President Dr Julio C. Maglione. “Athletes have also expressed their positive feedback about the ‘Champions Swim Series’. Today, we have some of them in this table: that proves their commitment and support to the competition”, continued Dr Maglione. “After the brilliant 2017 FINA World Championships, one of the best in FINA’s history, Hungary is ready to host another great show”, the FINA President concluded.



Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

Sandor Wladar, President of the Hungarian Swimming Association, was also a happy man: “Thank you FINA for coming back to Budapest! This weekend, we will celebrate once more the value of Swimming. I am sure everyone will enjoy it. I sincerely thank all the athletes who accepted to be present here”.

The FINA Executive Director Cornel Marculescu completed the panel of leaders in the table.

“We want to show to the world that Swimming is not only competing in the pool, but can bring additional value for spectators, TV viewers and digital fans around the world. This is the way of making Swimming more professional and better promoted on a global level. The ‘Champions Swim Series’ is meant to continue in the years to come and based on this year’s experience we will of course improve it”, underlined Mr Marculescu.



Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

It was then time for the six invited athletes to provide their feedback on the competition and their expectations for the Budapest leg of the Series.

“With 39 years old, I am the oldest competitor here, but I’ll try to swim faster than in Guangzhou”, said Nicholas Santos, from Brazil, whose highlights in China were gold in the 50m fly and silver in the 4x100m medley mixed relay. “I have very good memories from this place, and this pool is definitively one place to swim fast”, concluded the Brazilian star.

Next to him, Sarah Sjöström (SWE), recalled the very “exciting meet in Guangzhou”. “it’s very nice to see and to swim against my main challengers. In 2017, I got three gold medals and broke two World Records in the Duna Arena, so I’ll try to swim as fast as I can. Sometimes, I don’t have many expectations, but I keep surprising myself...” confessed Sjöström.

Kristof Milak, one of the Hungarian heroes swimming in Budapest, recognised that comparing to the FINA World Championships two years ago, the “flow is not the same, as there is less seating capacity, but the electrifying atmosphere will for sure be there”.

Katinka Hosszu is a real icon in Hungary and was naturally the focus of media’s attention. “I am very happy that the international Swimming community goes in the right direction, in the way of a better promotion and professionalism of our sport. Compared to Guangzhou, the programme and the order of events has changed, and I believe this is an improvement”,

confessed the Magyar champion. On the concept of the Series, the “Iron Lady” said: “For the swimmers, it’s pretty comfortable to swim only finals. Putting a show on, it changes the mentality of the sport. It has been really useful so far”.



Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

Chad Le Clos, from South Africa, also expects a positive meet. “Budapest is a kind of second home to me. I love to race here, in one of the fastest pools in the world. I am very glad to see so many things changing in our Sport – thank you Budapest, thank you FINA!” Asked about the fact of competing with many Hungarian swimmers in his events, Le Clos could not avoid a smile: “This competition is aimed at the best of the world. If some of them are Hungarian, well, I’m certainly happy to race with them”.

Finally, Emily Seebohm, the Australian ace, also provided her vision of the competition. “It’s good to be here, training and competing with the best of the world. I don’t have a lot of expectations, especially because Katinka is racing in some of my events. With the local support here at the Duna Arena, it will be hard to beat her... (smiles)”.

The 2019 “FINA Champions Swim Series” comprises three meets in Guangzhou (CHN, April 27-28), Budapest (HUN, May 11-12), and Indianapolis (USA, May 31-June 1). Each leg has a two-day competition programme, with 14 individual and one relay race per day.

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