

CSS, Budapest: Relays' lottery and strategy

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One of the main novelties of the brand-new “FINA Champions Swim Series” is the way relays are formed. Being an invitational event only, it may happen that some countries do not have enough athletes to form a four-swimmer relay. To solve that challenge, the composition of the four teams competing in the 4x100m free mixed and 4x100m medley mixed is done by draw at the end of the technical meeting.

That's what happened today in the Duna Arena, for the 4x100m free mixed race, with the following composition of the four participating teams:

Team 1

Justin Ress (USA) – M; Jeremy Desplanches (SUI) – M; Penny Oleksiak (CAN) – W; Siobhan O'Connor (GBR) - W

Team 2

Josh Prenot (USA) – M; Philip Heintz (GER) – M; Imogen Clark (GBR) – W; Georgia Davies (GBR) - W

Team 3

Laszlo Cseh (HUN) – M; Matt Grevers (USA) – M; Etienne Medeiros (BRA) – W; Holly Hibbott (GBR) - W

Team 4

Mehdy Metella (FRA) – M; Pieter Timmers (BEL) – M; Ajna Kesely (HUN) – W; Yulia Efimova (RUS) – W



The Technical Meeting at the Duna Arena

Besides the original way to compose the teams, the four swimmers in each group have now to agree in which order the swimmers are competing. By definition, a mixed relay must include two men and two women, but they can swim in whatever order they wish. It is therefore a question of strategy, and this is even more important when it comes to medley relays (the draw will be made this Saturday, the race taking place Sunday evening).

However, the first draw this Friday already provided curious combinations. In Team 1, Desplanches is comfortable as a medley expert, while Ress is entered in the individual 50m backstroke. On the ladies' side, Oleksiak is a freestyle sprinter, while O'Connor is also at ease in all strokes.

In Team 2, Prenot is an excellent breastroker and Heintz is entered for the 200m IM. The British duet – Clark and Davies – excels in breaststroke and backstroke, respectively.

In Team 3, Grevers and Medeiros are more known for their backstroke skills, while Magyar star Cseh is a medley specialist. Hibbott is more used to swim longer distances (400m), but the stroke (freestyle) is fine.

Finally, Team 4 mixes two 100m free aces, Metella and Timmers (huge advantage on the men's side), with a 400m free specialist (Kesely) and a breastroker ace (Efimova).

Just as an indication, the winner of this race in Guangzhou (CHN), the first leg of the Series, was composed by He Junyi (CHN, 50m and 100m free swimmer), Ben Proud (GBR, 50m free ace), Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED, freestyle and fly sprinter) and Georgia Davies (GBR, backstroke). For all four teams taking part in the 4x100m free relay in China, the order was the same: two men first and two ladies to conclude the race.
