

CSS, Budapest, Day 2: Innovation, memories, fun

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One of the most innovative concepts of the “FINA Champions Swim Series” is the replacement of the traditional medal ceremonies by an immediate trophy award to the winner of each race in the competition. As soon as the four athletes leave the pool, the “gold medallist” (or, if we want to be more precise, the champion among the champions) is brought to a dedicated space in the pool deck, is given a trophy and is requested to answer a couple of questions about his race/feelings.

During the initial day of competition in Budapest, this Saturday in the “Duna Arena”, it was evident that swimmers were pleased with this solution. They were visibly happy when receiving their trophy and could also not hide their satisfaction when asked about their feedback on the competition.



Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

Budapest is a very special city for most of the swimmers competing in this “Champions Swim Series”. Many of them are precisely in the Magyar capital because of their good performances at the 2017 FINA World Championships held in Hungary. The results at the last FINA showcase counting as one of the invitational criteria for the Series, many of the stars highlighted that circumstance during their post-race short interview.

Sjostrom, the Swedish ace, spoke about a “second home” for her and expressed her gratitude to the amazing crowd in the “Duna Arena”, the emblematic aquatics complex in Budapest. “They are not only cheering for the Hungarian swimmers, but also for the others”. Molly Hannis, the

US athlete, considered that she felt great “to be back to this beautiful city”, while Nicholas Santos, from Brazil, recalled the “fantastic memories from 2017” and the “very fast pool” of the competition.

Moreover, athletes taking part in this inaugural edition of the “FINA Champions Swim Series” could also share their opinion on the way the event is organised. “I think it’s really fun, really exciting, the fact that there is only one chance, one go. It’s much more friendly for the swimmers”, Pernille Blume from Denmark confessed.

With finals only contested by four swimmers, well in the middle of the pool, there is no possibility of mistake. “It’s quite exciting but also quite stressful to swim with only three other swimmers. There are only four of us there and all of them are good. So, a lot of pressure, but good pressure. This gives very close races, but I like it”, Jeremy Desplanches (SUI), winner of the men’s 200m IM considered.



Also a show outside the pool - Photo by Istvan Derencsenyi

Ben Proud, from Great Britain, the best in the men’s 50m free, didn’t have much time to think about tactics or strategy. “It felt great to race against three very fast guys. It really pushes you and you want to make sure you get all the tiny details right. I feel like I did that”, Proud admitted.

Her teammate Georgia Davies, second in the women’s 50m backstroke, and enrolled in one of the four 4x100m free mixed relays (the participants in these races are selected by draw), didn’t look very upset with her fourth and last place when swimming with Philip Heintz (GER), Josh Prenot (USA) and Imogen Clark (GBR). “It’s a very fun concept, as we have raced in an event we would have never done. In our team, we were not freestylers and we made it. It’s also very nice meeting people from other nationalities, meeting new people, making new friends. It takes a lot of the pressure off, so you can enjoy it rather than getting too nervous”.
