

## **PR 38 – Champions Swim Series: Great performances and enthusiasm in Budapest!**

FINA Communications Department

The second meet of the “FINA Champions Swim Series”, held in Budapest (HUN) on May 11-12, 2019 gathered a total of 13 Olympic and 21 World champions, and produced fine performances in the iconic aquatic complex of the Magyar capital, the “Duna Arena”. In such a location, the main venue of the 2017 FINA World Championships, many stars had the opportunity to shine and to demonstrate the excellence of FINA’s newest competition.

Sarah Sjöström (SWE), among women, was the athlete to beat, with five titles over the two-day event. The Swedish ace, already the most prolific winner at the first leg of the circuit in Guangzhou (CHN, April 27-28), won five races (50m, 100m and 200m free, and 50m and 100m fly). Two other athletes shared glory in the women’s field: local hero Katinka Hosszu was the fastest on three occasions (100m back, 200m fly and 200m IM), and Yulia Efimova, from Russia, made the treble in the breaststroke events (50m, 100m and 200m). Other winners in the women’s category included Ajna Kesely (HUN) in the 400m free, Anastasia Fesikova (RUS) in the 50m back and Margherita Panziera (ITA) in the 200m back.

In the men’s events, things were more balanced, with only two athletes winning two races: Danas Rapsys, from Lithuania, the best in the 200m and 400m free, and Evgeny Rylov, from Russia, the fastest in the 100m and 200m back. The remaining 10 successful swimmers among men were: Ben Proud (GBR, 50m free), Pieter Timmers (BEL, 100m free), Justin Ress (USA, 50m back), Joao Gomes Jr (BRA, 50m breast), Fabio Scozzoli (ITA, 100m breast), Anton Chupkov (RUS, 200m breast), Nicholas Santos (BRA, 50m fly), Chad Le Clos (RSA, 100m fly), Kristof Milak (HUN, 200m fly) and Jeremy Desplanches (SUI, 200m IM).

The competition also comprised two relay events: the 4x100m free and 4x100m mixed races.

The 68 swimmers from 23 nations present in Hungary had a total of 67 Olympic and 175 World Championships medals in their roll of honour.

Throughout the successful weekend in Budapest, many athletes and coaches praised the concept of the “FINA Champions Swim Series”, aimed at mixing sport and entertainment, thus providing an innovative experience to all Aquatic fans on site and around the world. Besides a very attractive prize money distribution, the main novelties of this circuit include the competition format (only finals with four athletes each), the participation (only by invitation to Olympic and World medallists, WR holders and the best in the swimming rankings), the relay composition (athletes are selected by draw, and different nationalities can co-exist in the same relay), the sport presentation and the entertainment programme.

The enthusiasm and interest of athletes and coaches was evident in the "Duna Arena":

*“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, and I like it”*

– Jeremy Desplanches (SUI)

*“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 (DEN)

*“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”* – Ben Proud (GBR)

*“I enjoy the idea that it’s only four people, a one-off race. I think the pressure is less, but it makes it for a more intimate competition. You are in the call room with just three other people, laughing, talking and then getting this very serious mindset for a 30-second race, or one minute. It’s nice, because then you can go home and have dinner with these people also. It’s definitively more relaxed than Worlds and Olympics”* – Emily Seebohm (AUS)

*“I think it’s a good concept. This is what the athletes have been asking for. It provides them additional financial opportunities, a kind of nice return for what they have done and contributed to the Sport. It is very meaningful for us, to continue doing the sport we love. It’s a very good start. Properly incentivised, the concept of only four swimmers per final will allow really fast races and some World Records in the future. From an aesthetic point of view, the four starting blocks in the centre of pool even look better”* – Anthony Ervin (USA)

*“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. 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”* – Katinka Hosszu (HUN)

On relays (with swimmers decided by draw): *“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”* – Georgia Davies (GBR)

*“I am very glad to see so many things changing in our Sport – thank you Budapest, thank you FINA!”* – Chad Le Clos (RSA)

*“It’s worth to invest in Swimming, to do it and present it a different way compared to the past. The venue here looks fantastic, which is an excellent way to welcome the many Olympic and World champions that are taking part in the competition. The spectators around the world will of course be very inspired by this atmosphere. It’s good to make each event a bit exclusive – that’s how we can attract the best swimmers and sell a good product”* – Arpad Petrov (coach of Katinka Hosszu)

*“It’s good to be part of something that is new and attractive for athletes and supporters. It’s nice to have the opportunity to race against great swimmers. As long as we can fit this in our demanding training schedule, it is definitively an interesting concept. It is important to have quality events in the right time”* – Dellano Pinto da Silva (assistant coach of Chad Le Clos)

*“It is a very good concept. It was time to change. The old way of presenting swimming was not so attractive. FINA took an appropriate decision and all the swimmers, coaches and spectators enjoy very much the competition. Results are good and athletes can earn some money. FINA is going in the right direction”* – Attila Selmei (coach of Kristof Milak)

### **Winners in Budapest (HUN):**

**50m free:** Men – Ben Proud (GBR), 21.52; Women – Sarah Sjöström (SWE), 23.97

**100m free**

: Men – Pieter Timmers (BEL), 48.32; Women – Sarah Sjöström (SWE), 53.03  
**200m free:** Men – Danas Rapsys (LTU), 1:46.74; Women – Sarah Sjöström (SWE), 1:56.58  
**400m free:** Men – Danas Rapsys (LTU), 3:43.36; Women – Ajna Kesely (HUN), 4:05.92  
**50m back:** Men – Justin Ress (USA), 24.68; Women – Anastasia Fesikova (RUS), 27.58  
**100m back:** Men – Evgeny Rylov (RUS), 52.81; Women – Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 59.58  
**200m back:** Men – Evgeny Rylov (RUS), 1:55.92; Women – Margherita Panziera (ITA), 2:06.41  
**50m breast:** Men – Joao Gomes Jr (BRA), 26.64; Women – Yulia Efimova (RUS), 30.26  
**100m breast:** Men – Fabio Scozzoli (ITA), 59.05; Women – Yulia Efimova (RUS), 1:05.99  
**200m breast:** Men – Anton Chupkov (RUS), 2:08.23; Women – Yulia Efimova (RUS), 2:22.52  
**50m fly:** Men – Nicholas Santos (BRA), 22.60; Women – Sarah Sjöström (SWE), 25.32  
**100m fly:** Men – Chad Le Clos (RSA), 51.25; Women – Sarah Sjöström (SWE), 56.78  
**200m fly:** Men – Kristof Milak (HUN), 1:53.64; Women – Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 2:06.62  
**200m IM:** Men – Jeremy Desplanches (SUI), 1:57.01; Women – Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 2:08.81

**4x100m free mixed:** FINA Team 1, 3:27.63 (Jeremy Desplanches, SUI; Justin Ress, USA; Siobhan O'Connor, GBR; Penny Oleksiak, CAN)

**4x50m medley mixed:** FINA Team 3, 3:47.40 (Anastasia Fesikova, RUS; Katie Meili, USA; Michael Andrew, USA; Vladimir Morozov, RUS)

### **2019 FINA Champions Swim Series calendar:**

1. *Guangzhou (CHN) – April 27-28*
2. *Budapest (HUN) – May 11-12*
3. *Indianapolis (USA) – May 31-June 1*

All three meets of the Champions Swim Series are qualifying events for both the FINA World Championships Gwangju 2019 and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

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