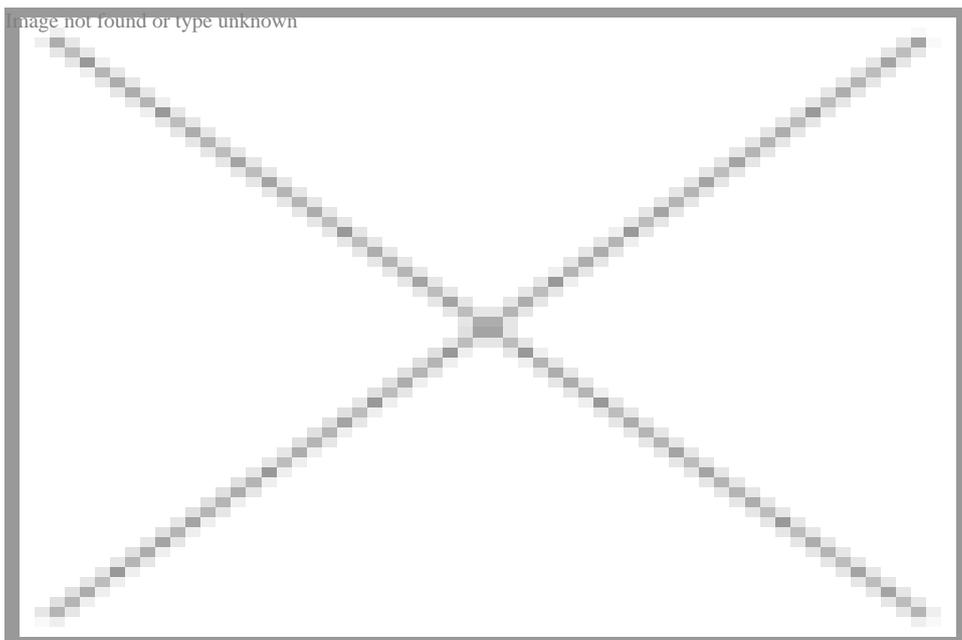


Stars are ready to rock in Duna Arena

Gergely Csurka, FINA Media Committee Member

Here we go again: swimming, Duna Arena, World Cup, the greatest stars – it won't be any better than this. At least all hope that the fourth stage of the FINA Swimming World Cup is going to be another hit in Budapest this weekend, and the star-studded line-up might be a guarantee for that – this was also revealed at the opening press conference of the event.

From time to time world-class swimming returns to Budapest, as Sandor Wladar, President of the Hungarian Swimming Association – former Olympic champion backstroker – said, it's unique if not a record that a national federation hosts four top level FINA meets in a calendar year. "Swimming World Cup a year ago, Champions Swim Series in May, junior World Championships in August and now back to the Arena again – no wonder, this is somewhat understandable that FINA has its trust in us and the swimmers love to compete here as we have great facilities and the Hungarian fans are really able to create a brilliant atmosphere. I hope this edition of the World Cup is going to be another unforgettable event."



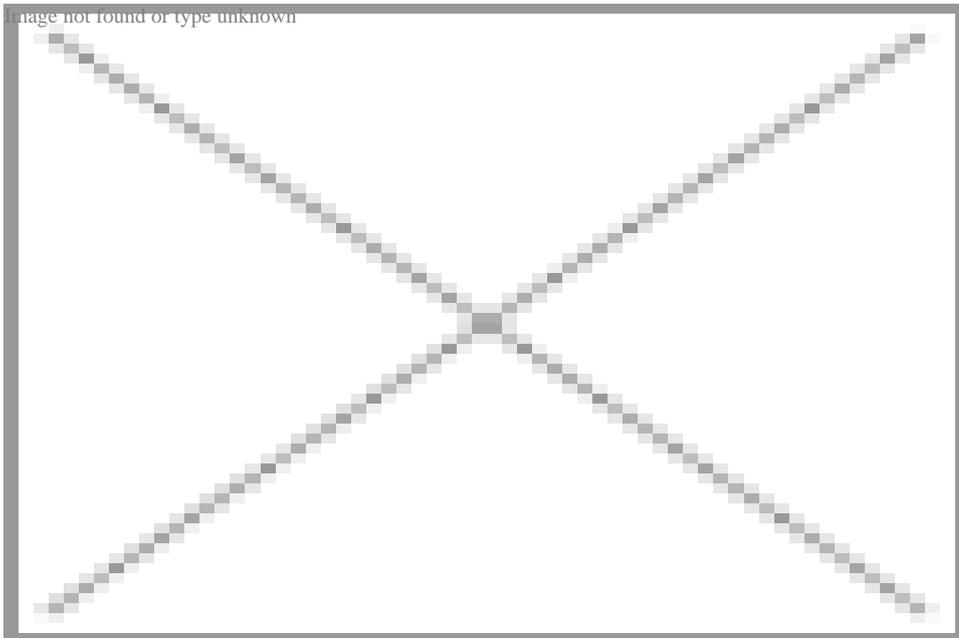
The local fans have every reason to flood the stands once more as all their heroes will be in the pool in the next three days including the nation's hero Katinka Hosszu and the new poster boy of Hungarian swimming Kristof Milak. Both were present at the opening press conference and both praised the occasion to be able to race in long-course this season.

"These meets brilliantly serve our Olympic preparations" – three-time Olympic champion Katinka Hosszu said. "I face a busy autumn, I race almost each weekend from now on, I have a good mix of long-course and short-course meets so it's good to have the World Cup in 50m pools this time."

Katinka is currently leading the overall and she said that her focus was on maintaining her No. 1 position. "I entered less events this time than usual as I face a firm challenge from my rivals but I really want to stay atop after this cluster."

Milak is back in action for the first time after his outstanding performance at the FINA World Championships in Gwangju where he brought down one of the mightiest world records of the sport, bettering Michael Phelps's 1:51.51 global mark from 2009 by clocking 1:50.73 in the 200m fly. However, there is no 200m fly this time but plenty of other events.

“As I told before, I'm a bit relaxing the 200m fly – though not on the long term, I will have a try in Berlin for example – but I'm really curious to see what I can do in the other events I've practiced a lot in the past month” he said. “I wish to see how I fare in the free events and in backstroke and might make a decision which is to be added to my programme in the coming months.”



Two of the fastest swimmers on Earth also attended the press conference – and both are contenders for the overall title too. Aussie Cate Campbell is trailing only six points to Hosszu after the first cluster and she is really keen to catch up the Hungarian World Cup specialist. “And I'm fortunate that my events are much shorter, Katinka needs to work a lot more and harder for her money and ranking points” Campbell said with a smile. Though spring events often come down to hundredths to decide the outcome at the wall, just as it happened at the Worlds when sometimes only centimetres separated the Aussie from the gold medal (she had a silver and a bronze over the 100m and 50m free respectively). “The World Cup is a brilliant occasion to race against top level athletes and help a lot to practice these events as these are really about starts and touching in, so I really love to be part of all these World Cup meets.”

Same applies to Vladimir Morozov. The Russian Rocket is ranked first in the overall after the first cluster but at major events he lacks some luck in the individual finals – though had plenty of medals in the relays.

“Yeah, perhaps I'm the athlete with the most fourth places in history” Morozov said. “Just as Cate said, these events are all about practicing and I hope I'll be luckier next year. Until then I try to win all my races, maybe I can repeat my victories from the first cluster here.”

The stars all expect some great time in the Duna Arena – Campbell is thrilled to compete in Budapest for the first time as she missed the 2017 edition of the Worlds – so it's going to be three days of magnificent swimming action here in Budapest.

Stay tuned, finals start at 18.00CET on Friday and Sunday, 17.00CET on Saturday (heats from 9.30 in each morning) – follow all events live on FINA TV!
