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SWC#6, Kazan, Day1: Home hopes dominate the field, favorites harvest gold

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FINA Swimming World Cup is back in the Tatar's capital, kicking off the second month of autumn-2019 on a high note. Kazan and its iconic Aquatics Palace serve host for the second year to go to this major event, adding to the already impressive sport profile of the city, discovered in 2015 thanks to the 16th FINA World Championships. There were 53 teams registered at the start orders, each having their share of the fame and achievements on Competition Day 1. With 10 initial sets of medals at stake, Russia largely dominated the contest, currently sitting atop on a solid 5-4-3. The gold of Romania's Daniel Martin in the men's 200m Backstroke was a surprise, whereas the day registered a number of predictable stories and win harvested by Danas Rapsys, Vladimir Morozov and Cate Campbell.



Photo: credit to the Directorate of Sport and Social Projects

Another hit by Danas and the first gold for Egorova

The first final session of the Kazan's meet started with the Women's 400m freestyle, where each awardee celebrated her first trip to the podium this year. They tried hard however could not hit the best time of the circuit, set by Australian Kiah Melverton in Leg #1, 4:06.71. The best of Kazan's meet turned out to be the 23-years old Anna Egorova, which earned gold, in a time of 4:08.93, improving both her qualification result by roughly 9 sec. and her season's best by 0.5 sec. As her win never looked in doubt after the first 100, another two participants of the FINA World Championships 2019 were up to divide minor merits. So they did, competing each other, Valeriia Salamatina and Mikkayla Sheridan of Australia, clocked down personal bests in the circuit, 4:09.32 and 4:11.35 respectively.

"I tried to swim much better than I did in the morning, - described her winning strategy Russian **Anna Egorova**. - I

am not that happy about the result though, which is not so bad on the other hand, meaning that I had a break before the World Cup in Kazan. I have just come back from the World Military Games in Wuhan, China, and due to some organizational issues could not swim for fully 5 days. This definitely had an impact on the time I clocked. I mean, I can definitely swim faster".

On the male's side, as usual, there was Danas Rapsys of Lithuania, and the rest of the world. Habitually, World Cup record holder congratulated himself on the lonely finish well ahead of the chasers, posting a solid 3:44.60. There were 3 other Russian competitors in the medals game, including Tatarstan born Aleksandr Krasnykh, who had been pushed all the way through and finally overtaken by the freshly graduated junior Anton Nikitin. Separated by a mere 0.68, they landed on silver and bronze, standing within three seconds to the mighty winner of the race.

"The time I did was really good, - commented on his sixth 400m freestyle win in the 2019 circuit **Danas Rapsys** of

Lithuania. - Of course, it is not the best in the world cups, maybe the second of my best times, and I am no way disappointed. There is still some room for me to excel and I hope I will be able to do it this year. Maybe, in Doha. The temperature of Kazan's water is quite good, - he added with a smile, - we do really like the pool and facilities as well".

"It was pretty hard to swim for me today although it was a home pool, - confessed bronze medalist **Aleksandr**

of Russia. - I am a bit sad as I could not please my home crowd with the beautiful win which I wanted. My only excuse is that the national championships kicks off a few days after the finish of the World Cup's meet here in Kazan, and the FINA event was like a dress rehearsal for it".



Photo: credit to the Directorate of Sport and Social Projects

Backstrokers showcase speed

Dutch Kira Toussaint predictably reigned supreme in the 50m Backstroke sprint, like she already did in Budapest and in Berlin earlier this year, and in what a style! She stopped the watch at 27,89 and snatched her third gold of the circuit in the shortest course of the backstroke style. Russian Maria Kameneva touched home second immediately after, 27.95, slicing the world's reigning vice-champion Etienne Medeiros of Brazil, which could not repeat her winning time of Korea, clocking down 28.12.

"The time is good, but not my personal best this year, - stated **Kira Toussaint**, the winner of 50m Backstroke. – I am

happy about the fact, that I snatched another medal in the competition, and I can say I really enjoyed the race. I definitely plan to seal the Swimming World Cup's edition of 2019 in Doha. I will swim some more races in Kazan though. I like it here in Kazan. The public is nice, the swimming-pool is warm, and the weather outside is pretty refreshing".

Russian young hope Daria Vaskina, already victorious twice at the FINA signature major forums this pre-olympic season (including the world's bronze and junior world's silver), met no problems qualifying to the final session, where she however finished disappointingly 7th. Emily Seebohm of Australia, was also a surprise in store to stop out of the podium on the sixth

in a time of 28.24.

Shortly after, it was the time for Romania to shine as Daniel Martin challenged his season's best in the Men's 200m Backstroke. The winner recorded a beautiful 1:58.42, which was definitely far from the 2019 Swimming World Cup's best of Mitchell Larkin, 1:56.39, though pretty enough to beat Keita Sunama of Japan and Grigory Tarasevich of Russia, distributing minor merits. All three did a good job, registering themselves "under 2 minutes".

Magyars reign supreme

1-2 for Hungary was another 200m Butterfly story for Katinka Hosszu and Zsuzsanna Jakabos. Following the logical script of Jinan, Singapore, Budapest and Berlin, they finished within a second to each other (2:08.23 – 76), habitually leaving other swimming nation up to the chase on the bronze. The podium chance was readily taken by Korean Sehyeon An, 2:10.69, producing a better finishing spurt against Berlin's bronze medalist Claudia Hufangl of Austria, 2:10.99.

“We are again victorious, Katinka and I, and I am again on the silver, but this is quite OK, - noted smiling on her

another second place, fifth out of six 200m Butterfly races in 2019, **Zsuzsanna Jakabos of Hungary**. – We shall work on hard to proceed winning, never stop”.

“I love swimming in Kazan, - agreed her star compatriot **Katinka Hosszu**. – The swimming pool is pretty fast. I am happy with the race, I am happy with the gold. The preparations towards the Olympics are in full swing, and swimming is the best training”.



Photo: credit to the Directorate of Sport and Social Projects

The main surprise of the day came from Mikhail Vekovichchev in the 100m fly race, which started quite predictably as Michael Andrew vs. Szabaszian Szabo duel. The last 50, or rather, 25 meters proved crucial for the winner of the morning session, who took advantage of the attack behind, rushing to the final touch in 51.56. The seconds clocked were rather solid, as all three medalists registered themselves within 40 seconds interval. Winner of 2018 Kazan's edition American Michael Andrew, second heading into the final session, had to content with the silver, in a time of 51.86. He can congratulate himself on the -0.10sec comparing to last year and local duel won against Hungarian Szabo, who stopped his watch with bronze in 51:87 after the start.

“I am grateful to my competitors for the competition, which whirled up the race and had a proper influence on timing

for every one, - explained **Mikhail Vekovichchev** of Russia. – I have managed to clock my best time ever, which is a

good omen for me before the National Championships' start. Once again, my opponents were very very strong, and I feel proud to register defeating Michael Andrew for the second time this year”.

“This is the fastest race of the year in 100 fly, so I am pretty happy to do 52 seconds finally, - emphasized **Michael Andrew**

of the USA. - It was quite in a while since I have managed to do that. I love swimming in Kazan. The goal for this leg is to hold my positions and ranking points. Right now I am third overall”.

Russian hopes proved

The best harvest of the day fall on the Russian side in the Women's 200m Breaststroke final. The eventual winner Mariia Temnikova, taking her debut in 2019 Swimming World Cup played her game smart and always kept to the top three. Seeing Alina Zmushka of Belarus and her compatriot Daria Chikunova ahead of her early at start, she made her stake on the second hundred, which proved efficient. As she improved, gaining speed and power, her challengers ran out of gas allowing her seal her well-deserved win in 2:24.10. Daria Chikunova challenged her season's best, earning silver, 2:24.56, and Vitalina Simonova fruited her 3rd piece in 2019 on her favorite event, narrowly edging out the Belarus girl, 2:28.32 to 2:28.37.

“A good start of the competition, - defined **Daria Chikunova** of Russia. – Three Russians atop, which is very impressive indeed. We shall never cease working hard and take these medals as a motivation for the coming challenges, and there will be a lot of them, I am sure, as we are entering the Olympic year”.

A close competition was seen in the Men's breaststroke 100m race. Dutch Arno Kamminga and Brazilian Felipe Lima challenged each other at start, and did not notice as Japanese Yasuhiro Koseki and Russian Anton Chupkov approached gradually and intervened the clash on the merits, so the four kept everyone in Kazan in suspense till the very end. Russian world's runner-up and last year's winner of the home-held Leg celebrated finish first, in 58.94, followed by Kamminga, recording his second silver and the third medal of the circuit, 58.98, and Koseki on his first bronze in 2019, after the silver medal he earned in Tokyo in August on the Meet#1.

“I am for the first time on the 59 seconds, so it was the result of the racing against the best of the best, Chupkov and

Koseki, - said **Arno Kamminga** of the Netherlands. - This is the first time I challenge Chupkov since the FINA Worlds in Korea, and it was really good, really close, the next time I will definitely beat him”.

“I am extremely happy I have managed to win, clocking a very good time, - agreed **Anton Chupkov**. – I am

especially happy, that I have celebrated a gold win at home, in Russia, in Kazan. I am grateful to spectators for the support, which was a great help. I am grateful to my opponents for the close competition, which kept everyone in

suspense till the very last meters. There were no special preparations towards the World Cup#6, on the contrary, I had a number of enduring flights and was to overcome the jet-leg impact, so now I feel a bit of relaxed and happy about the result. It will be a good motivation for my next wins”.



Photo: credit to the Directorate of Sport and Social Projects

The cream of a free sprint goes to Morozov and Campbell

Two impressive duels highlighted the 50m Freestyle sprint for both genders.

The women’s part was highlighted by the Campbell – Coleman competition. The two poster girls have been chasing each other all the way through 2019. Swedish beauty was a little luckier at start in Tokyo, 24:66, shaken by the Aussie stinger already on the next occasion in Jinan, which sliced some 0.20 to the winning seconds. In Singapore, the reigning bronze medalist of the FINA World Championships went as far as to register a marvelous 24.26 on her overall gold tally extending to four by the Leg#5. Kazan looked like a chance for Coleman, who worked hard in the prelims, and deservedly booked a prestigious lane 3 to neighbour her main opponent in the afternoon. However, this did not fruit for her anything serious, and she again clocked second, defeated by the touch: 24.08 to 24.28. Another World Championships' participant Maria Kameneva of Russia departed very fast, but could not keep up to the tempo of the top 2, as a result, she sealed the podium, 24.32, overtaking Bronte Campbell of Australia by 0.15 sec.

“I am very happy with my time. Cate was faster, I was not just her level today, - said **Michelle Coleman** of

Sweden. - It is not my personal best of the season. I was 0.4 better in Berlin. It would be very nice to be a little bit faster at start for the next races”.

“I am very happy to register another gold, and the field was very fast, which was a bit challenging, - noted Australian

Cate Campbell. - I always try to compete against myself, and every time I strive to do something better and improve

the result. That was a very good swim for me, to win was definitely a bonus. I have been doing a lot of races during the past 6 weeks. This is my 5th competition to go, and I think I am racing myself into a good physical condition”.

It was a different competition story between Russian Vladimir Morozov and Michael Andrew of the USA. The duo neither changed habitual parts, nor let the thirds interfere in their duel. Both swam well and secured the first two (in the lead, home hope Morozov, in 21.71, immediately after Andrew, 22.03). The bronze went to Maxim Lobanovskij of Hungary in 22.06, which was his second piece of the circuit after placing second at home at the Leg #4.

“This is my 16th win to go this year, the 6th to go in the 50m Freestyle, - noted **Vladimir Morozov** of Russia. –

However, I am always hungry for wins and I always know where and what could be improved to make it shine even more. The story of Kazan started on a high note. Tomorrow I have 2 more races, which will not be an easy task to seal in the same style”.

Summery. After the Competition Day 1 of the FINA Swimming World Cup #6in Kazan there are 11 nations registered on the podium, as the whole contest is largely dominated by Russia, which counts 5 golds, 4 silver and 3 bronze medals. The other top placing swimmers represented Hungary, Australia, the Netherland, Romania and Lithuania – one gold a piece.



Photo: credit to the Directorate of Sport and Social Projects

The three-day event is underway in the Kazan, hitting its midst tomorrow. On Saturday, November, 2, the medal offer includes 12 sets displaying all four swimming strokes and distances ranged from 50 to 1500. The cherry on the cake will be a 4x100m freestyle mixed relay, which will culminate the sport program of the evening.
