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SWC #6, Kazan, Day 3: Heavy favorites keep the bar high

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34 sets of medals, 1 world cup and 2 national records, thousands of tickets and over millions of smile-selfies at the stands in the social media of all kinds. These are the key figures of the 3 busy-packed days of the FINA Swimming World Cup #6, staged on the Tatars land in the heart of Russia. The penultimate leg, which was definitely a success, passes on the relay to Doha to hit the tape of the circuit as soon as the next week. The last swimming day in Kazan was highlighted by a number of breakthroughs with no less than 4 athletes substantially improving their records in the overall chart, however all leaders seemed to control operations, preserving their high rankings in the top 3. Kazan's Leg came to a close on a high note seeing incredible 16 nations checked-in on podium on Competition day 3.



Photo: credit to the Directorate of sport and social projects

IM: new faces for men and all familiars for women podiums

Each of the top three in the men's 400m individual medley celebrated their first tour to the podium this year. Patric Staber of Austria did an amazing job in lane 6, touching for gold in 4:16.64, slightly faster than his qualification time. Swimming in the neighbouring lane 5, world championship's runner-up Maksym Shemberev of Azerbaijan may have not seen Ilia Borodin of Russia on his right at some 150 meters left to the finish, who somehow whirled up the speed and was rewarded by the silver, 4:18.74. For the 16-year-old, it was the first ever podium presence at the international arena. For Maksym Shemberev - definitely not the first, however he had to content with the bronze in 4:19.38. There was another unhappy hero in the game as Kim Minsuk of Korea, eyeing podium for the good half of the race flow, was in the end pushed out of board, touching home in a time of 4:19.83.

"The first impression from the race is that it hurts very much, and this is the pain from the muscles, - described his

feelings immediately after the race **Patric Staber**. - Anyway, I am pretty happy, that I won. It was a good race for

me, although the last 150 were a little bit not so strong as I expected. I thought that I could win the race when I touched after 300m mark, then I pushed a lot. I am a little sad I have not posted the Olympic qualification time, which was pretty close to me. So I lay my hopes on Doha".

"It's my first ever experience of swimming at the FINA Swimming World Cup, before I only took part in junior

competitions only, - explained his inspirational look in the eyes **Ilia Borodin**. - I see now how much job remains to

be done here to aim a better timing, and I am ready to work on to aim a higher result".

A different picture was seen in the shorter course race for women, depicting all familiar faces on board for the medal's parade. As with 200m fly and 400m IM, the most victorious swimmer in the competition Katinka Hosszu swam to the finish alone, posting her 301st win in style on a high note. However, the reigning Olympic and world champion chose not to challenge her world, European and national records, stopping the watch in Kazan at 2:09.50 after the start. Zsuzsanna Jakabos lost another silver possibility of the Leg#6, which already earned her 1 silver and 2 bronze medals, 2:13.24. Australian Kaylee McKeown extended her successful last hope attack series, keeping in the shade for 160 meters to touch the wall second, ahead of the agitated crown, in 2:13.04.

"My trip to Kazan seems to come to the end on a high note, - commented **Kaylee McKeown** on her silver

appearance in 400m IM. – I am grateful to the organizers and volunteers for the job done, and to the spectators for their support. To win would be impossible without their contributions!”



Photo: credit to the Directorate of sport and social projects

Diversity on the free stroke podiums

In the second longest race of the circuit, 800 free for women, the 400 free winner of the Day 1 Anna Egorova, from Russia, was pace-setting after the first 220m. Marlene Kahler of Austria took the lead after the next section and kept right up to the 650m mark. Yukimi Moriyama of Japan was waiting for her turn to change the race flow. First heading into the last 50, the 23-years old stood still all the pressure and clocked 8:37.24. The minor medals were earned by the two occasional leaders in the reverse order – Marlene Kahler secured silver in 8:38.02, and Anna Egorova got bronze in 8:40.18. Everyone was very far from the best time of the circuit, posted by Kiah Melverton of Australia, 8:22.24, on the Tokyo Leg, at start of the 2019 World Cup.

“Gold is a very good motivation for the future, - confessed **Yukimi Moriyama**, the winner. – I don’t know what to say else. The time is not great, I can swim much better”.

“It’s personal best plus 2 seconds, - said **Marlene Kahler** of Austria. - It is not so bad, because I was not in my best

shape. I hope, in Doha I will get better. My initial plan here was to go next to Egorova, and I also knew that Japanese girls would be pretty good, so tried to swim well enough to be competitive against them all. I am no way disappointed with the color of the medal I earned. Everyone wants to be the first, but silver is also a good achievement".

In the women's 100m Freestyle, the big game, not unexpectedly, involved Michelle Coleman of Sweden and Australian Cate Campbell, who didn't find special difficulties in overtaking their challengers. The reigning world vice-champion had evidently more substantial arguments claiming gold. She played them well, although did not hit her season's best of 52.34 set on Leg#2 in China. (Her 5th gold came in a time of 52.76). As for Michelle Coleman, her silver also never looked in danger, as she significantly brushed her season's best of Berlin, 53.04. The bronze finally decorated Bronte Campbell, who edged out the Russian Mariia Kameneva, finishing disappointingly fourth for the second time during the recent two World Cup's weeks, 53.08 – 53.52.

"It was a really good race against very fast opponents. I did not think I would have gone that fast as I did, and such a good time is owing to the girls, who have been pushing me all the way through to the final buzzer", - stated

Cate Campbell.

"I felt a lot of pressure coming into the race, I was really nervous, it was a strong feeling to have a lot of fast Russian

girls in the final as well, - added **Michelle Coleman**. – We have been competing with Cate all the season long, and

it's been all good. She pulls me out and makes me go faster. We will see the same duel in Doha, which will be very interesting for all of us indeed".



Photo: credit to the Directorate of sport and social projects

Danas Rapsys comfortably won 200 Freestyle, 1:46.32, leading the race from the very first metres. The Lithuanian collected his sixth medal in the current World Cup circuit, which was also the third piece of Kazan, after being first in 400m freestyle, and earning silver in the 200m IM. Danas was and is also the fastest swimmer in the competition, setting the bar as high as 1:44.38 in Singapore.

“I am satisfied with my sixth gold to go, - reported after the race **Danas Rapsys**. – I knew I could do that, and I am

glad that my first trip to the city of Kazan brought good fruits. Now I am looking forward to Doha, which will finally complete the overall ranking in all events”

The minor medals in the Tatars capital were between Russia and Russia, and after a number of "castlings" the silver went to Mikhail Vekovishchev, who tried to push hard in the end but could not catch the time lost, 1:46.61. Aleksandr Krasnykh landed in third, which was his second freestyle bronze in the home swimming-pool, after the piece he earned on the initial day of the Kazan's Leg on the shorter course. 1:47.96.

"I am sorry to say, I am still in a poor condition, - noted **Aleksandr Krasnykh**. - I am neither disappointed with the result, not looking for excuses why I did so. I could have been much faster. Therefore, the bronze is a good sign, a promise for the future. It is always a pleasure for me to compete in the FINA World Cups and be a part of the celebration parades".

No surprises on the fly action

In the women's 100m fly, the two fastest of the morning session, Arina Surkova of Russia and Jeanette Ottesen of Denmark (swimming in lanes 4 and 5) confirmed their credentials, making 1-3 for their countries in the final race. Already on one medal each, earned in sprint of the same stroke, there was a good duel, where the Russian turned to be faster, touching home in 57.78. The more experienced Danish had to content with bronze in 58.66. Her problem appeared in the face of Sehyeon An of Korea, who squeezed in between the two favorites early and never gave up.

The big disappointment of the evening came from Hungarian Zsuzsanna Jakabos, who missed her medal chance at the "dashboard finish". Another yesterday resident of the podium in 400m Free Mikkayla Sheridan, finished lowly eighth in a time of 59.86.

“I enjoyed swimming today, as much as I did yesterday on the shorter course in the same stroke, - noted **Arina**

of Russia. – I could not imagine, that I would be able to cut so much off the morning session. This result is my personal best ever, and I am asking myself now why I did not do so well at the FINA World Championships this July”.

Kazan’s 50m fly race did not seem too fast for Michael Andrew. Producing a power start, he just clinched his teeth and worked on till he touched home for gold in 23.14 after departure. The seconds were no way the best for him in the circuit, though pretty enough to beat his challengers in the final. One of them was Szabazstian Szabo of Hungary, who had a certain point, where he could press on, seeing himself occasionally out of board. In the very last metres, he almost caught Russian Andrey Zhilkin, but the stamina seemed to refuse and he was to land on the third in 23.33. Russians could have hoped for more glory in the event, but for Mikhail Vekovichchev looked very tired indeed and stopped at a hand to the podium on the fourth, at 0.02 to the bronze.

“I was concentrated on the start, - said **Andrey Zhilkin** of Russia. – And I think, I have managed to succeed in it,

which was crucially important for the race. I did not take special preparations towards the World Cup, and now I regret it, as I could have posted a better win”.

“Finally I won gold, - shared **Michael Andrew** of the USA. – That was the goal. Overall I am happy about the

Kazan’s leg of the Swimming World Cup. I clocked rather solid times, which is a good sign before Doha, which will be a very important match-up for all”.



Photo: credit to the Directorate of sport and social projects

The milk is spilt on the mill of the backstroke favorites

In the absence of the last year's winner Katinka Hosszu in the women's 200m backstroke, the gold was predictably left up to the mighty Aussie sharks. The luck favored Kaylee McKeown, who had been victorious at the Korea-held-worlds-2019, although she was far from her heydays time of 2:06.26. McKeown had a good start, but was not the shade of her distinguished compatriot for a while, then, she regripped control of the operations on her third 50, never to give it back, 2:07.92. Her teammate Emily Seebohm locked silver, 2:08.45, seeing Daria Ustinova of Russia arriving home almost 1.5 seconds adrift.

"I am out of breath, but happy, - confessed **Kaylee McKeown** of Australia. – The competition was really close. I

swam next to Emily Seebohm, who is a great master, and there were a number of other strong competitors in the final race. I could not expect I would clock the better time though. It's pretty good, as it's my first appearance in the World Cup-2019".

"I can definitely swim faster, - noted **Emily Seebohm**. – I have just switched the coach. I have been with my new

coach since June. It's really just about building the races and the back-up. I am going for my next Olympics, and the fourth Olympics will be a challenge for me indeed".

The biggest surprise of the day came from American Michael Andrew, who was pushed out of the medal's game in the Men's 100m Backstroke. It was the time for the Russian – Romanian duel have their share in the competition. First heading into the final round, Grigory Tarasevich took initiative from at start and overcame his physical pains to make his first gold win in the World Cup happen in Kazan in a time of 53.76. A mere 0.17 seconds separated him from the second best Daniel Martin, 53.90, as Juho Lee of Korea overtook Michael Andrew on the touch for the bronze, 54.31 – 54.42.

“I am a bit upset, because I felt like I was the first, but it was not true, - stated **Daniel Martin**. - I feel a little bit tired.

It is not my best time, I am a bit worried. I will have to train more and be the first next time”.

Breaststroke titles go to Brazil and Russia



Photo: credit to the Directorate of sport and social projects

Jhennifer Conceicao of Brasil did not miss her point in Kazan. She stormed her breaststroke spint's goal, and did not seem surprised with what happened in the end. It was her plan to dig out deep and rout all the rest field in the first 25m, earning as much beneficial seconds as possible. It proved out well, as 0.42 were pretty difficult to overtake for the final layout. Touching first, 30.68, she did not miss watching who came next. As she might well expected, the chase on silver was between Italy and Belarus, where Arianna Castiglioni happened to be a little faster than Alina Zmushka again, 31.10 – 31.18.

“I am happy about the speed, but I hoped to clock under 31 seconds”, - said **Arianna Castiglioni** of Italy.

“The time is not that great, - agreed the winner of the race **Jhennifer Conceicao** of Brasil. – Now I feel better than the day before, maybe I am overcoming the jet-leg, which had some impact on my conditions. I had a long way to Kazan. 3 weeks ago I was in China. I am happy I could stay competitive in this great event”.

Like on the women’s part, provided the leader in the contest, the intrigue in the 200m Breaststroke for men was restrained to the time of the reigning world champion Anton Chupkov’s eventual win. Of course, there were Dutch Arno Kamminga, winner of Budapest and Berlin Legs, Yasuhiro Koseki and Andrius Sidlauskas, who could stay competitive in such a strong race. The favorite did not have a deep start, and were not a good lead after the first half. Habitually, he switched on to the up gear some 80 meters to the finish, step by step constructing the winning gap of 1.55 seconds.

Silver went to Arno Kamminga, 2:09.26, who could not jump just over his head to claim gold but at the same time did well enough to overtake Koseki, who in his turn had to content with bronze in 2:09.40.

“The silver is good, - said **Arno Kamminga**. – I knew Chupkov would take his share in the game. The race was

pretty tough, but I enjoyed. I never watch opponents racing, trying to be as much as possible concentrated on myself, especially in the last 50m. I will swim 200m Breaststroke in Doha, and hope to improve the time and be on the podium as well”.

“There are a lot of competitions this season, so there is not much time left for training to get concentrated on such particular races like 200m Breaststroke, - shared his take on beating another World record Anton Chupkov. - It’s really a pity, because I like the race a lot. Hope, later I will be able to work on it more, because there is always much room to improve”.

Mixed medley relay as a cherry on the cake

In the relay action, the chase on gold was between Korea and Russia. Grigory Tarasevich was not the fastest at start, but then Anton Chupkov did his breaststroke's leg well enough to regrip the lead. Anna Surkova and Mariia Kameneva did not spoil the honey, and the finish registered a comfortable 3.54 seconds ahead of Koreans (Juho Lee, Jaekwon Moon, Sehyeon An and Soeun Jeong), 3:44.38 - 3:47.92. Aussie sharks, with Emily Seebohm, Sam Williamson, Nicholas Luke Bibby and Bronte Campbell, earned bronze in a time of 3:50.15, leaving the four of Belarus out of podium, thanks to the strong will of the free stroke leg swimmer Bronte Campbell, 3:56.43.



Photo: credit to the Directorate of sport and social projects

SUMMARY of the Leg#6. Host Russia set pace, but could not fully dominate in Kazan in all events, where they appeared.

They left the door open for Australia and Hungary, and 9 other countries claiming their shares of gold. Consequently, the most successful swimmers in Kazan were Mariia Kameneva and Mikhail Vekovichchev of Russia, conquering 2 champions titles, alongside 4 and 3 medals of the minor colors respectively, American Michael Andrew, who hit 4 pieces, including one gold medal, as well as Korean Sehyeon An, who travelled to the podium 4 times in a row. Kazan's points did not change much the overall ranking story. Vladimir Morozov, the most successful swimmer in the event so far, proceeds residing comfortably on top, on a vast collection on 17 gold and 1 silver. Katinka Hosszu is definitely the most successful woman in the competition, registering 18-2-2 in 2019.

The ultimate stop of the FINA Swimming World Cup will take place in Doha, the capital of Qatar, on 7 – 10 November, 2019, to officially complete the overall standing for teams and individual charts for swimmers.
