

OWS GP 2008, Overview of Race 8 (Lac Memphrémagog, CAN)

FINA Communication Department

The eighth leg of FINA's Open Water Swimming Grand Prix 2008 series took place on August 2, 2008 on the occasion of the 30th edition of the famous Traversée Internationale du Lac Memphrémagog. This 34km challenge in the fresh water glacial lake located between Newport, Vermont (USA) and Magog, Québec (CAN) welcomed the participation of 21 swimmers (11 men and 10 women) whose collective times ranged from 7:27:25 to 9:16:45.

Under sunny skies, the air temperature on race day was 17°C and water temperature was 21°C. As reported by FINA Technical Delegate Dr. Mohie Farid, the race started at 8am and for the first half of the race swimmers stayed in pack formation. In the middle of the race, a pack of seven of the leading men's swimmers broke away from the group and swam together until the last 3km, at which point Petar Stoychev (BUL) broke away individually. He proceeded to lead by about 30m until the completion of the race, and earned himself a clean win. He was followed by Mazen Aziz (EGY) and Brendan Capell (AUS), who raced for the top remaining podium position. Aziz was able to finish second, but only in the final metre.

The women's race followed a similar pattern. They too swam the first half of the race in a pack until the two German swimmers Stefanie Biller and Britta Kamrau-Corestein broke away to race for the gold, which was secured by Biller in the end.

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Stefanie Biller (GER)

Many spectators turned out for the start, and as many as 4,000 fans were on-hand to cheer the swimmers home. There was excellent support from local, regional and national media. The victory ceremony was held on-stage at the Traversée at 8pm, where trophies, medals, and \$30,000 were distributed to the swimmers along with fireworks and dancing music.

All the swimmers who climbed the podium at Lac Memphrémagog are either established or up-and-coming international open water swimming competitors. Stoychev is a legend in his own right. In the 2008 Grand Prix series alone, he has already won six races. Capell is also having a solid season, having won three Grand Prix silver medals before the bronze he earned on August 2. Only Aziz, with his silver medal finish, was a newcomer to the 2008 FINA Grand Prix podium.

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Natalya Pankina (RUS)

Each winner in the women's field has posted noteworthy results this year. Accompanying her bronze medal finish in Magog, the third-place finisher Natalya Pankina (RUS) already has three golds from the first three legs of the 2008 Grand Prix series, as well as silver from the 4th race held on July 5. The winner of that 4th race was none other than Kamrau-Corestein, who would proceed to win bronze in race 5 on July 13, before taking her silver on August 2. Lastly, in addition to winning the latest leg, Biller also won bronze in race 4, gold in the 6th race on July 19, and then another bronze in race 7 on July 26, also in Canada on Lac St. Jean.
