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Open Water, Day 4: Thomas Lurz powers his German teammates to gold in Team 5km event

Greg Eggert, FINA Press Commission Member

The team from Germany fueled by 33 year old Thomas Lurz captured the 5km Team event today. Isabelle Harle and Christian Reichert were part of the gold medal winning German team finishing in 52:54.9. Lurz now has a complete set of medals after having previously place second in the 5km on Saturday and third in the 10km on Monday. In the 2011 Shanghai edition the German team, which include Lurz and Harle, placed third. Spyridon Gianniotis led the Greek team to their silver medal performance posting a time of 54:03.3, more than a minute slower than the German champions. Gianniotis won the Olympic gold medal in the 10km at the London Olympic Games and was the winner of Monday's 10km in Barcelona. Kalliopi Araouzou who finished fourth in both the women's 5km and 10km and Antonios Fokaidis joined in his team's efforts.

Just two tenths of a second back was the team of Brazil which has been swimming extraordinarily well in this harbour. Poliana Okimoto Cintra, the winner of Tuesday's women's 10km race was teamed with Allan Do Carmo and Samuel De Bona and the trio swam well enough to earn a bronze medal. Australia was fourth, Italy finished fifth and the USA, the reigning champions from Shanghai placed sixth.

The Team 5km is perhaps the most interesting open water swimming event at Moll de la Fusta Harbour and is the newest and perhaps least familiar. The 5km team event is one in which each country has three swimmers, a mix from each gender, but usually one female and two men.

In the case of the team from Hungary which finished ninth, they were powered by Olympic 10km gold medallist Eva Ristov and Anna Olasz, who finished fifth in the women's 10km race. Mark Papp is the sole male on his squad where all other teams included a second male athlete.

Teammates start, swim and finish together with each team set off in separate staggered starts at one minute intervals. The athletes of each nation swim closely together applying strategies and working together to achieve the fastest time of the third swimmer of the group. An element of teamwork is integral to each team's success as each squad determines their positioning and pacing. The leader of each team encourages his or her teammates to draft alongside to pull them along. The closer and straighter the swimmers swim together, the faster their time will generally be.

{youtube}94tpwIWSA0g{/youtube}

QUOTES:

Gold medal team: Germany

Thomas Lurz: "We had a good race today and our pool swimmers were here to support. I am happy that they were here to see us win. We knew that we were swimming fast, our coaches were signaling to us from outside that we were on a fast pace. It really was a perfect race. I think our goal was maybe to win a medal, but to win the gold medal was absolutely unexpected. I was shocked."

"Since I have 10 to 15 years of hard, hard training as my base, I am able to race a total 20km (individual 5km, 10km and 5km Team event) over just five days. This 5km was hard today, but since there were three of us I think of it as only 1.7km each, and that made it easier."

Isabelle Harle: "For me the only job I had to do was to follow Thomas and Christian. It was really nice to see our entire team on the course here to support us."

Christian Reichert: "I was in the leading position and I was looking for the right way (on the course). When I was watching the swimmers ahead of us in the first lap I knew that they were swimming very fast now. I am totally happy with first place."

Silver medal team: Greece

Spyridon Gianniotis: "We arrived here believing that we could be in one of the top-5 positions, perhaps with a thought towards a medal. We realised that this event was going to be quite fast and we knew that we had to be a bit faster and a bit lucky as a team today."

Kalliopi Araousou: "This medal means a lot to me. I finished in fourth place in both of the 5km and 10km events here so I want to thank my teammates for this medal."

Antonios Fokaidis: "First I want to congratulate the teams from Germany and Brazil for their great races today. We swam fast from the beginning and we had a good chemistry."

Bronze medal team: Brazil

Allan Do Carmo: "I felt very well pulling the group all the time. Our strategy was that Samuel and I would set the pace for Poliana and she would swim strong and stay with us. This medal was important because we are fighting for the first place in the open water competition. I am very happy because we train a lot to compete very well here in Barcelona and our team worked so hard. The Brazilian team is having a wonderful time in this Championships and I'm very happy because I'm part of it."

Poliana Okimoto Cintra: "I also think we are having a memorable World Championship. These results are entering in history of the Brazilian team and in my personal history as a very special moment. The boys deserved this medal, especially because Allan has experienced ups and downs and he has struggled in the past. I feel fulfilled to be participating in this moment with them. This is a difficult event because we do not know how others are and so we have to swim very strong from the beginning. We missed the silver medal by just two hundredths of a second. It was our first time in this kind of race and it is everything all right."

Samuel De Bona: "It was very nice taking part in this swim with Allan and Poliana, who is world champion. We passed very close to the silver medal but we did not know where we stood in relation to other teams. I became a little tired at the end. I looked at Poliana and felt encouraged by her presence in the race. It was very exciting and really an unforgettable moment."
