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Xu Jiayu (CHN): “It’s great to have the best of the world in one place”

Zhou Xin, FINA Media Committee Member

A couple of hours before starting to compete in the 2020 edition of the FINA Champions Swim Series, two-time world champion Xu Jiayu considers his battlefield – the men's 100m backstroke – a "tangled war" with seven/eight close rivals in the world and he is always anxious and excited to meet the strongest swimmers in the competition.

As the 2020 FINA Champions Swim Series kicks off in Shenzhen, Xu will test himself ahead of the Olympic rendezvous, next summer in Tokyo (JPN). "I seldom have competitions in January, at this early stage of the year. Only when I was young. I guess most of the swimmers are in their winter training period and leave the best form to the Tokyo Olympic Games. So, we may not smash the world records, but we will surely try to make a good start of the year," said Xu, who will compete in men's 50 and 100m back.



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Comparing with the World Championships' competition format, Xu thinks the Series make him relaxed, with the colourful entertainment show during the event. "I enjoy the competition format with the best swimmers in the world! It is great to have them in one race except the World Championships and Olympic Games."

"I call the men's 100m backstroke a 'tangled war' with seven-eight close rivals, because we have Olympic and world champions, world record holders, and short-course world champions. I am used to it since 2015. All of us have the chance to win the title. It is not only a physical battle, but mainly a psychological one. I hope I can be better prepared and improve myself in every aspect with this competition."



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In the FINA Champions Swim Series in Shenzhen, Xu will face Americans Matt Grevers and Jacob Pebley and Canadian Markus Thormeyer in the 100m back, and Robert Glinta of Romania, Apostolos Christou of Greece and Michael Andrew of the United States in 50m back. The only regret for Xu is that he cannot communicate with the English speakers while the others don't speak Chinese. "I expect to have a translation machine and help people talk to each other without barriers," said the 24-year-old backstroker.

Xu is always nervous before the competition, cannot eat and sleep well. "It is a good sign for me. I guess everyone is the same. The one who can overcome the nerves and perform the best is the champion. I want to be the champion."

Facing Tokyo Olympic Games, Xu thinks he is now a more experienced and confident person. "It is my second Olympics, I am tougher and stronger than before. My goal is to complete a grand-slam feat, with gold at the World Championships, short-course worlds and Olympic Games. I need two more steps to go".
