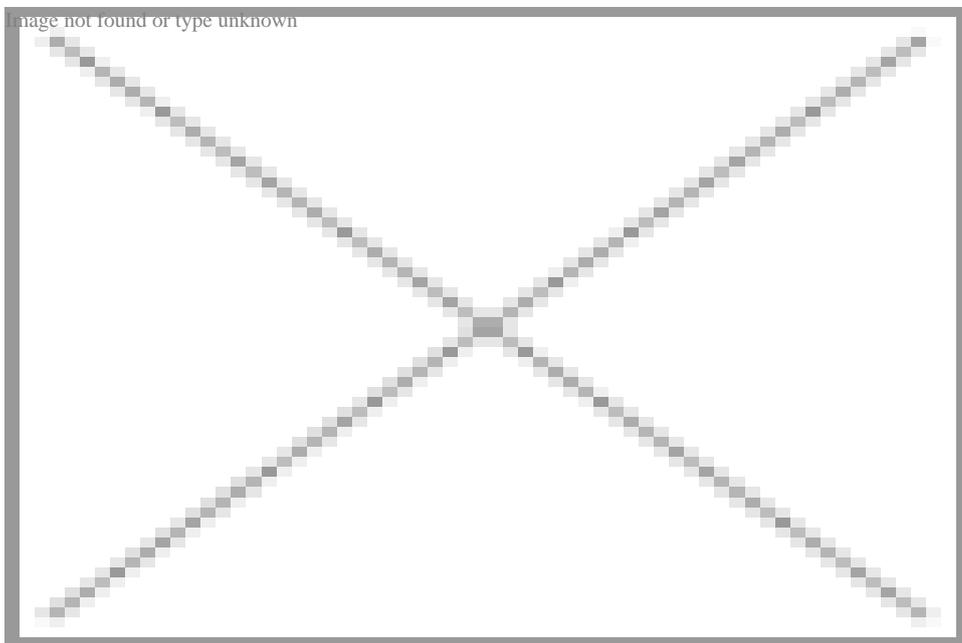


## Shenzhen (CHN), Day 1: China delights fans with five gold

Pedro Adrega, FINA Communications Department

The first day of the inaugural leg of the 2020 FINA Champions Swim Series in Shenzhen (CHN) provided thrilling battles in the pool, with China largely dominating operations with five gold medals. Hungary and Italy were also quite solid, with two titles apiece, in a session that saw swimmers from 18 countries to get at least one medal.

The local fans could enjoy the performances of several Chinese stars, who did not disappoint them. In the women's 200m backstroke, Liu Yaxin, the third best ranked athlete going into the direct final (and only 16<sup>th</sup> at the Worlds in 2019), controlled operations from the 100m-mark on, touching home in 2:10.34, in front of 2016 Olympic runner-up in this event, Katinka Hosszu (HUN, silver in 2.12.12). The Chinese saga then proceeded in the women's 200m breaststroke, where the duel between Yu Jingyao and Ye Shiwen ended up in Yu's favour – gold in 2:24.64, against 2:26.03 for Ye (2012 Olympic winner in the 200m and 400m IM). In the men's 100m backstroke, Xu Jiayu (2017 and 2019 world champion) also proved his credentials, keeping his main contenders at bay – in the end, the gold medal in 53.01 and a very solid final leg, where US Matt Grevers tried to catch the Chinese, without success (silver for the North American, 2012 Olympic champion, in 53.54). Wang Shun (third at the 2016 Olympics in this event) was the fourth Chinese winner of the session, with a comfortable victory in the men's 200m IM, in 1:57.76, leading all the way since the start. Michael Andrew (USA) had to content with the silver in 2:01.78. Finally, in the women's 50m backstroke, WR holder Liu Xiang confirmed her favourite status, winning a fifth gold for her country in 27.36.

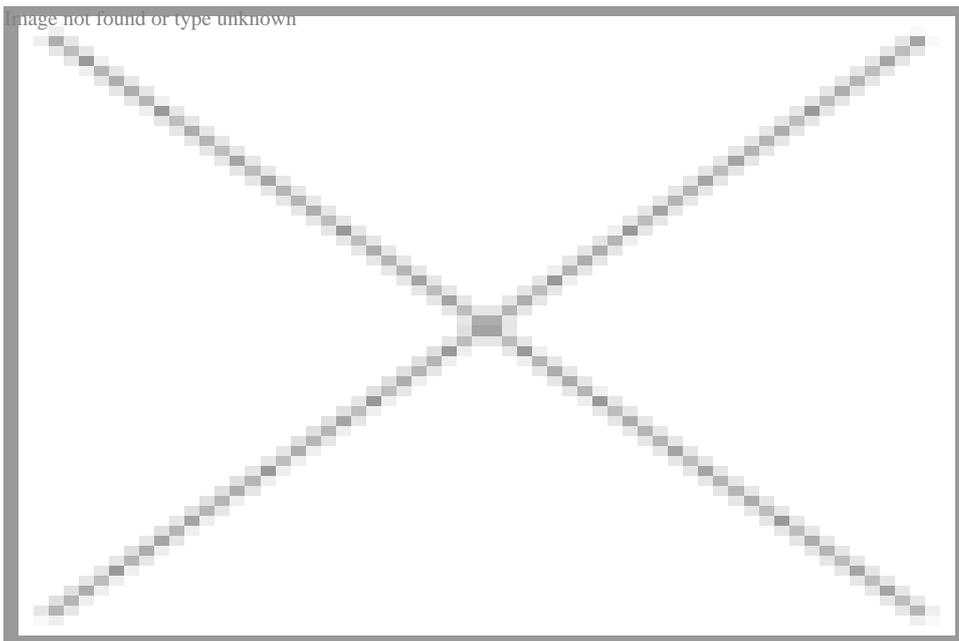


Nicholas Santos (BRA)

In the most expected race of the day in the Shenzhen Universiade Natatorium, the men's 200m free, local superstar Sun Yang (reigning Olympic and world champion in the distance) seemed to have the gold around his neck with 50m to go, but a final and successful attack from Lithuania's Danas Rapsys gave the European the victory in 1:46.50, with Sun arriving 0.03 later.

Hungary had in Tamas Kenderesi and Ajna Kesely the two winners of the evening. In the men's 200m butterfly, Kenderesi (third in Rio 2016) did a very solid race, leading throughout the final and concluding in 1:55.17, while Kesely (fourth at the 2019 Worlds) also controlled (4:09.05) her main opponents in the 400m free, where she beat her teammate Boglarka Kapas (4:09.64).

Italy had in Elena di Liddo (fourth in Gwangju 2019) its strongest asset in the 100m butterfly, where she earned gold in 58.37, beating Danish star Jeanette Ottesen (58.75). In the women's 50m breaststroke, the second win for the Italians came through Martina Carraro (bronze in the 100m breaststroke at the last edition of the FINA World Championships in Korea), touching home in 30.38.



Vladimir Morozov, winner of the 2019 FINA Swimming World Cup, gave Russia the sole gold of this first session, after a convincing win in the 50m free, in 21.70. Greece's Kristian Gkolomeev (silver last July in Gwangju) touched for silver in a "distant" 22.03. At almost 40 (in precisely one-month time, on February 14), Nicholas Santos, from Brazil, impressed in the 50m butterfly (an event in which he has three World Championships' medals), beating the rest of the field in 23.28. He was closely followed by Ukrainian Andrii Govorov in 23.30. From Hong Kong, China, Siobhan Haughey came and won the women's 100m free in 53.47, beating the Dutch duet Femke Heemskerk (second) and Ranomi Kromowidjojo (fourth). The moment of glory for the Netherlands would come shortly after, during the men's 100m breaststroke final. Swimming in lane 3, China's Yan Zibei (third at the 2019 Worlds) appeared in a good position to win after the 50m-turn, but in lane 1 Arno Kamminga, third in the overall ranking of the 2019 FINA Swimming World Cup, swam quite fast the second half of the race and surprised the local star in the end, getting the gold in 58.61. Yan was second in 59.02.

In the relay closing this first day, Team Pebley was the fastest in the 4x100m free mixed event. Formed by Jacob Pebley (USA), Andrii Govorov (UKR), Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED) and Siobhan Haughey (HKG), the quartet closed the session with a winning time of 3:28.40.

**QUOTES\***

**Ajna Kesely (HUN), gold, women's 400m free:**

“Everything was very good. This is the first and very important first step before Olympics. And I think this timing in January is really good. So, I also hope performances will be good”.

**Elena di Liddo (ITA), gold, women's 100m butterfly:**

“I didn't expect to win over Katinka. She is so strong but maybe because of the jetlag she is not in form. I like the one-final competition format, even if I am quite used to the preliminary, semi-final and final programme”.

**Xu Jiayu (CHN), gold, men's 100m backstroke:**

“It is a decisive test of my current training form. I am satisfied with the result. I take the home advantages compared to other foreign swimmers after their long journey. In the next leg in Beijing, the competition will be much closer”.

**Martina Carraro (ITA), gold, women's 50m breaststroke:**

“The result is quite OK for me as it is my second best time in the event. It's cool to have four swimmers in the final because it's a different type of competition. It is new and I'm happy about it. Tomorrow, I swim the 100m, my strongest event. I just started training in December, before the Christmas holiday”.

**Siobhan Haughey (HKG), gold, women's 100m free and part of the winning 4x100m free mixed relay:**

“I did not expect to swim this fast at the beginning of the season. It is very funny to swim in the relay with swimmers from different countries, and being able to work together. We had fun and enjoyed the race”.

**Michael Andrew (USA), bronze, men's 50m free:**

“It is a very fun format, where we are able to swim with the fastest four swimmers in the world and get closer to the Tokyo Olympic Games”.

*\*Quotes collected by Zhou Xin, FINA Media Committee Member*

FULL RESULTS: <http://bit.ly/380wd1C> [1]

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