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SWC 2014, Hong Kong Day 1: Hosszu (HUN) continues to impress

Michael Hoare, FINA Press Correspondent in Hong Kong

Top-flight international competition returned to Hong Kong at the Victoria Park Swimming Pool on Monday night, with the star power provided by the Iron Lady. Katinka Hosszu (HUN) proved every bit as tough as her nickname suggests at the FINA/MASTBANK Swimming World Cup 2014 tonight, but it does her a disservice – she's a golden girl. Katinka Hosszu (HUN) in action

She claimed five gold medals and a silver from her six events tonight starting with three straight gold from three events – including a gruelling 800m freestyle to open.

The unbeaten run looked set to continue into the women's 50m freestyle.

The race was set up beautifully in the morning heats, with Hosszu, Inge Dekker (NED), and Alia Atkinson (JAM) the three fastest qualifiers. The trio are at the top of overall World Cup standings.

Dekker looked a real threat during the morning's swim. She claims a height advantage of about 12cm over Hosszu and has a long, fluid stroke.

And, just as she did in the heats, Dekker repeated the dose, punctuating Hosszu's domination in clocking a 24.02. Hosszu took silver with 24.58 and Atkinson the bronze.

Super star in top gear

In Hong Kong, Hosszu slipped right into the type of form that has caused World Records to tumble in the first two rounds of the World Cup.

She hit top speed tonight first up by winning the women's 800m freestyle in 8:09.36, shading World record holder Mireia Belmonte (ESP) by just over 4 seconds.

She was desperately unlucky not to set another World Record in the women's 200m freestyle. Her splits were under record pace, before fading over the last 50 metres.

She touched at 1:51.44, 0.27 seconds outside the record that has stood since 2009. Veronika Popova (RUS) collected silver in 1:55.33, and Evelyn Verraszto (HUN), bronze, in 1:58.95.

For that effort she took 992 FINA points.

"I was out for a World Record today. I was really close (to a world record) in the 200m freestyle this morning," Hosszu said after tonight's programme. "I'll keep training and keep trying. It's really fun for me to keep trying."

She added gold in the 50m backstroke with a time of 26.24 and again in the 200m backstroke for an evening's tally of five gold and one silver. That eclipsed her efforts in Dubai, where she took four golds each day of the meet.

With her heroics in Hong Kong, she is on track to set a new Swimming World Cup meet record for wins in a single stage.

"The secret is a lot of training. I am really enjoying working hard," she said of her fast times tonight.

An awesome foursome

After the morning heats, the men's 100m freestyle was framed as one of the tightest races this evening, with just .03 separating Australian Thomas Fraser-Holmes, with a 48.42, and the overall men's competition leader, Chad Le Clos (RSA).



The men's 100m free medallists

Le Clos led them out hard in the final, no doubt a tactic to neutralise any threat and brought them home in a time of 46.35. Thomas Shields (USA) placed second with a time of 47.80 and Leith Shankland (RSA) was third.

Fraser-Holmes (AUS) has continued his strong start to the season by taking the field out and never looking back in the men's 400m Individual Medley. He had an awkward schedule tonight, completing the 400m IM and backing up immediately for the 100m freestyle.

He came back later in the evening to claim the gold podium in the 400m freestyle in 3:41.01 from Li Yongwel (CHN) and Gergely Gyurta (HUN).

Shields, Le Clos, Fraser-Holmes and Marco Koch (GER) shared the glory on Day 1, claiming eight gold medals between them – two each. Ashley Delaney (AUS) the only other male to taste victory.

Shields out on top

The 200m butterfly saw a dominant swim from Shields (USA), who claimed gold with a time of 1:50.56. Sakai Masato (JPN) was second in 1:54.55 and Velimir Stjepanovic (SRB) third.

Over the abbreviated 50m distance, Le Clos had his measure, clocking a 22.35 to Shields' 22.69. There was a bronze here for Hong Kong local Geoffrey Cheah too.

Shields would also go on to claim a gold in the 100m IM, with a 52.51. He touched out Hiromasa Fujimori (JPN), 52.65, for the major medal.

Koch claimed a brace of breaststroke medals – the 50m and the 200m – in a successful night, after morning heats where he looked the one to beat.

He beat Daniel Gyurta (HUN) by 0.01 in the 200m breaststroke, and claimed the 50m, in 26.69, from Kirill Prigoda (RUS),

with a 26.85, and Hungarian Daniel Gyurta.

Delaney won the 100m backstroke for men, continuing his dominant form in the event so far this year. Christian Diener (GER) and Cheah took the minor medals.



Opening Press Conference of the competition

Happy spectators

A small but enthusiastic crowd had more to cheer earlier on in the evening when Hang Yu Sze (HKG) took what must have been one of the most popular silvers of the evening in the 100m butterfly for women, with a 58.41, and Popova, bronze in 58.75.

The crowd finally had their golden moment in the programme's last race, the 4 x 50m Mixed Medley, anchored by Cheah.

But the day – and night – belonged to Hosszu. She was fast in qualifying and fast in the finals.

She looks supremely comfortable in the water and her shot at yet another piece of history tomorrow, when she looks to eclipse eight gold medals in a meet.
