

SWC 2014, Hong Kong Day 2: Hosszu (HUN) finishes show with five gold medals

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Katinka Hosszu confirmed her place among swimming's all-time elite with a two day performance that was the best ever at a FINA/MASTBANK Swimming World Cup in Hong Kong tonight. After claiming five wins from six finals on day one of the third leg of world cup, Hungarian Hosszu repeated the dose with another five gold and a silver from six events. There weren't the world records of Doha and Dubai, but there was controlled power and almost total dominance. She has lost just six World Cup races this season, three each against Mireia Belmonte (ESP) and Inge Dekker (NED). The medallists in the women's 400m free

"I think that it's ten (gold), but who's counting? I've racked up some points here over the last couple of days," she joked after the final medal presentation for the evening.

"I am really happy with my races here. The 100m was a European record. I'm really happy with that. And the 50m fly was a Hungarian national record".

Adding more gloss to an outstanding achievement, Hosszu now has 96 total gold medals at the short course World Cup. This evening she passed Swede Therese Alshammar (93) and is now nine medals behind Martina Moravcova (SVK).

Strategy pays off

In the morning heats, coach Shane Tusup nursed her through. Motioning from the stands to his charge that some slower times were right on strategy. She has had a testing programme in Hong Kong, racing 12 of the 17 individual women's events here.

But this evening, it was back to the typically scorching times.

In the women's 400m individual medley, Hosszu turned in a sub-world record butterfly leg, and very quickly established a 10 metre lead over Evelyn Verraszto (HUN) and Belmonte.

At the 200m mark, Hosszu was just outside the record time she set in Doha just a few weeks earlier. She touched at 4:26.42, with Belmonte behind her with a 4:33.83, and Verraszto, 4:39.70.

Gold rush

Hosszu's second gold for the night, came in typically blistering fashion in the women's 100m backstroke. With a 55.34, she is closing on the 2009 record from Berlin. Zevina (UKR) was second in 57.74.

In the 200m butterfly (2:05.12) she was out by three body lengths at the midway point but tired in the final 100m against the challenge from Belmonte, who finished in 2:06.33.

Then to the 400m freestyle, where she, Belmonte and Evelyn Verraszto (HUN) left at a relatively sedate pace. At the 200m turn, world record holder Belmonte was on her shoulder and the two travelled the length together with Hosszu kicking away at the 350m mark, finishing in 4:01.02.

Belmonte took silver in 4:02.73, with Verraszto third in 4:16.51.

In the 100m IM, it was Hosszu from start to finish in 58.12. Atkinson was the second fastest qualifier but couldn't shut down the Iron Lady.

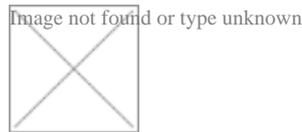
In her final race of the programme, the 50m butterfly, Hosszu was again denied by Dekker. Dekker had Hosszu's measure in the heats and again this evening, coming home in 25.24.

"It's my first competitive swim at any level since Dubai and Doha. I have swum four races here and won four times. So I'm pretty happy with how I've swum here," Dekker said before the medal presentation.

Dekker also claimed the women's 100m freestyle from surprise-packet 16-year-old Siobhan Haughey (HKG). Dekker led from the start, but it was Haughey who surprised, keeping out Veronika Popova (RUS) for the silver.

The tussle between breaststrokers Alia Atkinson (JAM) and Rie Kaneto (JPN) was a highlight of the night. Atkinson (JAM) was the fastest qualifier in the women's 50m breaststroke by more than 4 seconds, and she smashed the field in the final with a slick 29.35, ahead of Kaneto, 31.11. Atkinson was just .55 second outside a world record.

In qualifying for the 50m, Atkinson was fastest, but Kaneto easily the quickest over the 200m distance and she beat the Jamaican home in 2.19.55 tonight. Keep an eye on these two.



Chad Le Clos (RSA)

The duel in the pool

The glamour match-up of the evening in the men's competition saw Chad Le Clos (RSA) 48.56 beat Tom Shields (USA), 49.02, in the 100m butterfly. Le Clos was desperately unlucky not to take the world record, touching less than a tenth of a second outside the mark set by Evgeny Korotyshkin (RUS) back in 2009.

It was his sixth consecutive win in the event, and Le Clos had to beat a man who has been on fire here. Shields had claimed the 200 fly the evening before, taking a half-second off his US record, and the pair have shared honours in 100m fly over the past 12 months.

Le Clos' second gold of the night was an extreme performance – he looked focused before and strong throughout the men's 50m freestyle. Pumped with his 21.17, he thrashed at the water after checking the time.

Russian Oleg Tikhobaev was second in 21.74. Geoffrey Cheah (HKG) finished third.

"I've never done the event (50m freestyle) before. The first time I competed in the event was this morning and, obviously, tonight," he said afterwards.

Le Clos became the first man to win 62 gold medals in World Cup competition on Monday, and he now has 11 medals in this edition of the World Cup – claiming four in Hong Kong. He is tied for golds with Australian Thomas Fraser-Holmes (AUS).

An Aussie looms large

The Aussie claimed the 200m Individual Medley from lane 6. He led them out, leaving Kirill Prigoda (RUS) and David Verraszto (HUN) in his wake. The Australian has had a red hot meet here, and when he turned for home, only eventual silver medallist Hiromasa Fujimori (JPN) posed a threat. Marco Koch (GER) finished third in 1:55.10.

His other gold came in the 200m freestyle for men. Fraser-Holmes touched in at 1:43.59, Stjepanovic took silver, 1:45.44, and third-placed was Hong Jinlong (CHN).

After pocketing US\$5,000 and 42 competition points for his efforts on day one, Shields claimed his third gold of the meet in the 200m backstroke, beating Ashley Delaney (AUS) by a second with a 1:51.88.

Delaney has enjoyed a great meet, claiming a second gold medal tonight in the men's 50m backstroke. "I came into this meet not expecting much. We were actually up here testing a new suit," he said after tonight's programme.

"I have just been going out there and having a bit of fun. I came into this after a couple of weeks of non-competition. I was just having a bit of a break. It hasn't been a bad sort of a holiday."

Earlier in the evening, the three fastest qualifiers for the 1500m freestyle, 60-lapper - Gergely Gyurta (HUN), Velimir Stjepanovic (SRB) and Verraszto - asserted their dominance over the field early.

Gyurta was two lengths in front by the 300m mark and went on to finish in a respectable 14:38.72, ahead of Verraszto, 14:51.36, and Li, with a 15:05.04, who beat Stjepanovic for third.

Another Gyurta, Daniel, continued in his rich vein of form, claiming gold in 57.35 in a blanket finish in the men's 100m breaststroke from Koch, 57.47, and fastest qualifier Koseki, 57.95.

With Hong Kong wrapped, we're now halfway through the second World Cup cluster and the focus now switches to Moscow. It's a one-sided race for the US\$50,000 bonus for the women, but two days of high-octane swimming in Russia will reveal a men's champion worthy of the cash bonus. It looks like it's down to three: Le Clos, Shields or Fraser-Holmes.
