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Beijing, Day 1: Stars swim faster in Olympic venue

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The inaugural day of the second meet of the 2020 FINA Champions Swim Series in Beijing (CHN) was highlighted by thrilling races and, in the majority of the 15 races on the programme, by faster times than the ones established in the first leg of the competition, in Shenzhen. In fact, the only exceptions to this trend were the women's 400m free, the men's 100m breast, the women's 50m back, and the 4x100m free mixed relay. And, as in Shenzhen, the race of the day was the men's 200m free, with the duel between Lithuania's Danas Rapsys and China's local hero Sun Yang. After narrowly beating Sun in Shenzhen, Rapsys could not replicate the feat at the Ying Dong Swimming Natatorium (venue of the Water Polo tournaments at the 2008 Olympics), losing the race – 1:45.55 for the Chinese ace, 1:45.74 for the European swimmer.

The day however started with the women's 200m back, where Katinka Hosszu (HUN) got the first title of the session, in 2:09.95. In Shenzhen, she had been second in 2:12.12, while Liu Yaxin had won in 2:10.34. In Beijing, the Chinese star had to content with silver, finishing slower in 2:11.46. Shortly after, in the 100m fly, the Hungarian great appeared tired and could not do better than fourth (1:00.20, against 1:02.32 four days ago), in a race won by Italy's Elena Di Liddo – 58.09, again better than her winning time in the first leg (58.37).



Sun Yang (CHN) - Photo by gettyimages

Not competing in the initial meet of the Series, Japan's Daiya Seto earned the first victory in the men's category, touching home in 1:52.53 in the 200m fly. Tamas Kenderesi (HUN), who had triumphed in Shenzhen (1:55.17), was this time second in 1:55.87. In the end of the session, Seto was again the strongest of the field in the 200m IM, earning gold in 1:55.55. Wang Shun (CHN), the best on January 14, was second in 1:56.81. Seto's teammate Ryosuke Irie also made his first appearance in Beijing and this somehow also changed things in the men's 100m back. While in Shenzhen, China's Xi Jiayu had no problems in touching first in 53.01, this time he had to share the gold with the Japanese, in a time of 52.97.

In the men's 100m free, it was again an interesting duel between Russia's Vladimir Morozov and Greece's Kristian Gkolomeev, but as in Shenzhen, the gold went to the 2019 FINA Swimming World Cup winner – 21.55 for Morozov, 21.86 for Gkolomeev (they had clocked respectively 21.70 and 22.03 four days ago).

In the women's 200m breaststroke, Yu Jingyao, from China, also kept her Shenzhen title, swimming this time also a bit faster – 2:24.52, against 2:24.64 in the first leg. A quicker victory was also experienced by Siobhan Haughey (HKG) in the women's 100m free – today, she swam for gold in 53.33, while four days ago, she was first in 53.57. It didn't happen the same with Hungary's Ajna Kesely, also winner in the Chinese capital of the women's 400m free, but in a slightly slower time (4:09.10, against 4:09.05 on January 14). Liu Xiang (CHN) was also not so fast in the 50m backstroke, despite replicating the victory in Beijing (27.58 this afternoon, 27.36 in Shenzhen).



Daiya Seto (JPN) - Photo by gettyimages

Nicholas Santos, from Brazil, continues to impress at almost 40, repeating Shenzhen's success, in a better time in the men's 50m fly – win in 22.95 (in Shenzhen, he clocked 23.28). In the women's 50m breast, Martina Carraro, from Italy, couldn't shine as in Shenzhen, losing this time to US Molly Hannis, winner in 30.34. A change also occurred in the men's 100m breaststroke – after beating his opponents in Shenzhen, Arno Kamminga (NED) could not overcome an inspired Yan Zibei (CHN), who touched home in 58.83 (the Dutch was faster in the first leg, in 58.61).

The session concluded with the victory of the Team Andrew in the 4x100m free mixed relay – time of 3:29.72, for a quartet formed by Michael Andrew (USA), Andrei Minakov (RUS), Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED) and Wang Jianjiahe (CHN).

QUOTES*

Elena Di Liddo (ITA), gold, women's 100m fly:

“It was easier this time because we don't have jet lag anymore. I like the venue and audience. I am having a great time. I hope I can compete here next year”.

Vladimir Morozov (RUS), gold, men's 50m free:

“The time is almost ideal. It's always good to swim faster while my rivals remain very strong. Now I look forward to the 100m freestyle as it will be a good race to watch”.

Nicholas Santos (BRA), gold, men's 50m fly:

“I enjoy the drums' dance show very much. It is amazing. This is my second time here in Beijing. My first time was at the 2008 Olympic Games in the 50m freestyle. But now I changed to butterfly. It is an amazing busy city and pool. I am happy that there are many people here watching us and we are trying to give it back. Considering Brazil has a 11-hour difference with China, and I overcame the jet lag, it is really good result”.

Daiya Seto (JPN), gold, men's 200m fly:

“I am surprised with my 200m fly: I broke the Japanese national record! I was not in my best form but the time boosts my confidence. I swam a good result in 400IM in a world record time. But after that, I took a vacation and the Beijing leg is my first competition of the year. It is a great start for me. I will try to take care of myself and realise my

dream to become the Olympic champion, in 200m fly and IM”.

Sun Yang (CHN), gold, men’s 200m free:

“A good swim, thanks to the supportive audience and my arch-rival and friend Danas Rapsys. It will be a tough battle in the Tokyo Olympic Games since all the finalists will have the chance to win. I still need to improve my start and turns”.

Xu Jiayu (CHN), gold, men’s 100m back:

“Ryosuke Irie is my idol. It is a great honour to tie for the gold with him. It is very rare that you can tie the first place with your idol. I feel a little bit tired. It is like a competition in the Asian Games. I am a little bit faster than I did in Shenzhen. It is a just a test of my winter training.

Yan Zibei (CHN), gold, men’s 100m breast:

“I swam better than in Shenzhen and I felt more relaxed in the race. It is exciting to compete with the best swimmers in the world in front of the local fans”.

Liu Xiang (CHN), gold, women’s 50m back:

“Second win after Shenzhen. I had a cold and I did not feel good, but the time was OK”.

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