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Beijing, Day 2: China and Japan impress ahead of Tokyo Olympics

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The second and last meet of the 2020 FINA Champions Swim Series concluded today in Beijing (CHN), with the last 15 events on the programme, and, once more, with a solid performance from the host country. In this final session, the Chinese team got four more gold medals (on Day 1, they had five titles), replicating the successful performance of the first meet of the competition, held in Shenzhen on January 14-15. Also giving good indications for this summer Olympics in Tokyo, the Japanese swimmers (mainly present in Beijing) had in Daiya Seto, Ryosuke Irie and Ippei Watanabe very strong assets in the pool of the Ying Dong Natatorium venue.

Today's afternoon started in the best possible way for Japan, with Irie comfortably triumphing in the men's 200m back in 1:55.55. Not present in Shenzhen, the Japanese ace significantly improved the winning time of Markus Thormeyer (CAN, 1:59.02) from Shenzhen. Irie was already the best in the 100m back in the Chinese capital, sharing the title with China's Xi Jiayu on Day 1.

Japan continued its saga in the men's 200m breast, with Ippei Watanabe, former WR holder in the distance and also not present in the initial leg, confirming his credentials and largely dominating the race. He earned gold in 2:08.40, having turned at the halfway race under the World Record – the best global mark belongs to Anton Chupkov (RUS), in 2:06.12. Arno Kamminga (NED), winner (2:09.00) on January 15, slightly improved his time (2:08.95) in Beijing, but that was only enough for silver. In the end of the Beijing meet, Japan earned five gold and two bronze medals.



Ipppei Watanabe (JPN) - Photo by gettyimages

In the women's 200m fly, Katinka Hosszu (HUN) could not replicate her Shenzhen success, losing the race in Beijing in the last 50m, in favour of her teammate Liliana Szilagyi. The Magyar touched home in 2:08.37, slower than Hosszu's performance (2:07.68) in the first leg of the Series. In the Ying Dong Natatorium, the silver was won in 2:08.56. In the 100m back, Kira Toussaint (NED) won the second 2020 gold in this event, touching the wall in 59.64, slightly worse than her Shenzhen result (59.52). Hosszu finished fourth, in 1:01.24. In her third final of the session, Hosszu also "lost" her Shenzhen gold in the 200m IM, after being defeated by an inspired Sydney Pickrem (CAN) in the Chinese capital. The gold was won in 2:09.26, while Hosszu improved her time (2:09.93, against 2:10.42 four days ago) for the silver.

In the men's 100m fly, Michael Andrew (USA) started very strong, but couldn't keep the pace in the second half of the race, when Matthew Temple (AUS) and Andrei Minakov (RUS, winner in Shenzhen, in 51.73) fought hard for the title. In the end, the Australian touched home for gold (first for his country in the Series) in 51.71, while the Russian had this time to content with silver (51.81). Minakov's fate was also less successful in the 100m free. After narrowly losing in Shenzhen, Vladimir Morozov (RUS) was this time quite solid in Beijing, winning the two-lap race in 48.32, a much faster time than the winning performance (48.94) from Minakov on January 15. The Russian was silver medallist today, in 48.78.

In the women's 50m free, Liu Xiang gave the first gold for China in this second day, by confirming her Shenzhen win – this time, the 23-year-old clocked 24.03 (new Asian record), improving by 0.01 her performance from January 15. Ranomi Kromowidjojo, from the Netherlands, also slightly improved her result (24.38, against 24.42), but again left the pool with the silver. In the men's 400m free, Sun Yang had this time no problems in imposing his supremacy in this event, easily touching for gold in 3:44.98, slower than his winning time in Shenzhen (3:44.07). On January 15, his strongest opponent had been Danas Rapsys (second in 3:46.62), but the Lithuanian appeared to be tired in Beijing, concluding third (3:49.62), behind the second Chinese of the final, Ji Xinjie (silver in 3:47.04).



Ryosuke Irie (JPN) - Photo by gettyimages

Yu Jingyao gave the third gold for China with a thrilling victory in the women's 100m breast. In the end, the 20-year-old clocked 1:07.18, while the winner in Shenzhen, Italy's Martina Carraro had to content this time with the silver (1:07.25). Shortly after, Yang Junxuan had to fight in order to revalidate her Shenzhen title in the women's 200m free, winning faster this time, in 1:54.98 (against 1:55.52 on January 15). Siobhan Haughey (HKG) was not far, earning silver in 1:55.21. In a training mode, Hosszu was fourth, in 2:06.89.

The only US title of the day went to Michael Andrew in the men's 50m back, in a winning time of 24.92. Xu Jiayu, from China, victorious in Shenzhen (in 24.63), was much worse this time, touching for the bronze in 25.05, still behind Robert Glinta, from Romania (second in 24.99).

In the men's 50m breast, the situation also changed from Shenzhen, with Joao Gones Jr from Brazil beating the other three swimmers of the final and getting the title in 27.08. Ilya Shymanovich (BLR) winner of the first leg, was second in 27.22, slightly better than his previous time in the Series (27.28).

A thrilling duel between Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED) and Jeanette Ottesen (DEN) dictated the second win in this event for the Dutch ace, in 25.91 – she had clocked 25.78 in Shenzhen. Ottesen finished second in 25.92, while Elena Di Liddo (ITA) was a “distant” third in 26.69.

Finally, in relay action, Team Liu won the 4x100m medley mixed race, in a time of 3:49.19 – the quartet included Liu Yaxin (CHN, W), Yan Zibei (CHN, M), Andrei Minakov (RUS, M) and Wang Jianjiahe (CHN, W).

