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Japanese stars “boosted” for home Games

Zhou Xin, FINA Media Committee Member

After winning all their races at the FINA Champions Swim Series' Beijing leg, the Japanese trio Daiya Seto, Ryosuke Irie and Ippei Watanabe boosted their confidence and look forward to achieving the best results at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

The 25-year-old Daiya Seto broke a Japanese national record in the 200m fly (1:52.53) and later snatched the gold in the 200IM, in a time of 1:55.55.

"I am surprised with my 200m fly, where I broke the Japanese national record. I was not in my best form since it is the beginning of the year. But the time boosts my confidence. I had a 400m IM world record time last December and then I took a short vacation. The Beijing leg is my first and only international competition before the Olympic Games as I take the competition as training. It is the best beginning and good sign for me".

"I will take good care of myself, and avoid injuries and illness in the training. My goal for the Olympic Games it to be the champion, in 200m fly and 200m IM. I still need to swim the 200m IM one second faster", Seto said.

Ryosuke Irie skipped the Shenzhen leg but made his first appearance in Beijing. He tied for gold with local favourite Xu Jiayu in the 100m back (53.98) and won the 200m back in 1:55.55, the same time as Seto in the 200m IM.

"I am surprised that I entered the 54-second barrier in the 100 back since I did not do that during last year. I broke my bones last year and did have good time in Gwangju, but now I am fully recovered. I will try my best in the Japanese qualification in April and try to win both backstroke events".

Irie admitted that, as the host athletes, they have more pressure than ever before. "But we are more excited to face the challenges. My rivals are very strong, having world and Olympic titles. I will do some altitude training and then prepare for the Olympic Games", said the 30-year-old.

For former world record holder Ippei Watanabe, he was also happy with the sweet taste of victory in the 200m breast (2:08.40). "I very much liked the atmosphere, since it is the only international meet I have before the Olympic Games. I feel excited to race and happy with the time. I train very hard and I will try to achieve a good result at our national qualification. I want to leave the pressure to my rivals. My Olympic dream? To be the champion and better with a new world record of my own!" confessed the 22-year-old breaststroker.

