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PR 5 - MSWS: Strong field ready to start 2020 season in Doha (QAT)

FINA Communications Department

Doha, the capital of Qatar, is ready to host the first leg of the 2020 FINA/CNSG Marathon Swim World Series, on February 15, with the participation of no less than 137 swimmers from 34 nations. The 10km races will be held at the shore of Katara Beach, with the swimmers performing five times a loop of 2km. The women's competition will commence at 11h00 and the men's race will start at 13h30 (both local time).

The biggest open water stars will be present in Doha, namely the reigning Olympic champions, Ferry Weertman and Sharon Van Rouwendaal, both from the Netherlands, in the men's and women's category respectively. The 2019 "Best Athletes of the Year", Kristof Rasovszky (HUN) and Ana Marcela Cunha (BRA) will also be present in the Qatari rendezvous. The Magyar great won the 2019 World Championships' gold medal in 5km and last year's overall title in the FINA Marathon World Swim Series. The Brazilian star was the winner of the 5km and 25km event in Gwangju 2019 and the second-best athlete in the Marathon Swim Series (triumphing in the Doha leg).

Many other national teams will also bring their best representatives to this first leg of the circuit, with France presenting David Aubry, Marc-Antoine Olivier (silver medallist in the 10km at the 2019 Worlds) and Lara Grangeon (third in the 25km in Gwangju, last July), among others, and Italy also displaying its strongest assets – Rachele Bruni (two medals in Korea, last year – bronze in the 10km and silver in the mixed 5km; winner of the 2019 overall Series) and Arianna Bridi, among women, and Simone Ruffini and Gregorio Paltrinieri (winner of the 2019 world title in the 800m free, and sixth in the 10km) in the men's field.

Jack Burnell will shine for Great-Britain, while Rob Muffels, Florian Wellbrock (gold medal in the 1500m free and 10km in Gwangju 2019) and Andreas Waschburger are strong names for Germany.

South American aces Cecilia Biagioli (ARG) and Samantha Arevalo (ECU) will also try to start the season in the best possible way. Haley Anderson (2019 world silver medallist in the 10km) leads the US delegation, Igor Chervynskiy is the Ukrainian hope and veteran Evgenij Pop Acev is the proud representative of North Macedonia.

In the Press Conference opening the event today in Doha, Florian Wellbrock declared: "I won the race last here and I am very happy to be back. In 2019, we had water temperature of around 20 degrees and this time we have 16 or 17 degrees, so it could be harder to defend the title," he said. "Doha is a special venue for me because we can see buildings around the venue; we don't have something like that in Germany," Wellbrock concluded.

On the women's side Haley Anderson was also optimistic: "We have a tough field in the women's race but I am very

excited to start the Olympic year in Qatar. The venue is different from last year but it looks really nice out there,” said the US star.

After the action in Doha, the marathon swim aces will proceed to the paradisiac waters of Victoria (SEY, May 3). The circuit will then stop in Europe, with legs in Budapest (HUN, June 6), and in Setubal (POR, June 13). Canada will then organise two traditional legs, in Lac St-Jean (July 19) and Lac Megantic (August 1). After a last stop in the Old Continent - Ohrid (MKD, August 30) – the annual series will come to an end in Asia, with Nantou (TPE, September 19), Chun’An (CHN, October 15) and Hong Kong, China (HKG, October 24) staging the last three legs of the competition.

China National Sport Group (CNSG) is the Title Sponsor of the competition until 2021. CNSG is a state-owned sports industrial business organisation whose major shareholder is the Chinese Olympic Committee. CNSG business scope covers sports venue construction, sports venue management, sports event organisation, sport lottery services, sports real estate services, sports investment management and business incubation, and after years of development the CNSG has become a valuable brand with a strong market influence in the Chinese sports industry.

2020 FINA/CNSG Marathon Swim World Series:

1. February 15 – Doha (QAT)
 2. May 3 – Victoria (SEY)
 3. June 6 – Budapest (HUN)
 4. June 13 – Setubal (POR)
 5. July 19 – Lac St-Jean (CAN)
 6. August 1 – Lac Megantic (CAN)
 7. August 30 – Ohrid (MKD)
 8. September 19 – Nantou (TPE)
 9. October 15 – Chun’An (CHN)
 10. October 24 – Hong Kong, China (HKG)
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