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## OWS GP 2008, Overview of Race 7 (Lac St. Jean, CAN)

FINA Communication Department

This race, the seventh leg of the FINA Open Water Swimming Grand Prix 2008, doubled as the famous Traversée Internationale du Lac St-Jean (annual competition since 1955). The challenge facing participants was a 32km crossing of the fresh water Lake St. Jean from Péribonka to Roberval. Twenty-six swimmers took part (14 women and 12 men). There was one start for all swimmers, at 8am. The water on competition day had waves of up to 1m, with winds gusting up to 50km per hour. Air temperature was 19°C and water temperature was between 18 and 21°C.

As described by FINA delegate Dr. Mohie Farid, this was “a truly fantastic open water race that tested not only the swimmers, but also their coaches, the boat drivers, the security, the medical staff and the organisers.” Despite the early start, the race commenced with plenty of spectators in a festive mood looking on. After the first hour of swimming, the lead pack was composed of Mazen Aziz (EGY), Simon Tobin (CAN), Damian Blaum (ARG), Petar Stoychev (BUL), and Yury Kudinov (RUS). Leading the women were Esther Nunez Morera (ESP), Shelley Clark (AUS), Natalya Pankina (RUS), and Stephanie Biller (GER). After three hours, the group in front had changed slightly to include Aziz, Stoychev, Tobin and Kudinov as before, but also included David Brown (AUS) and Brendan Capell (AUS). The dominant swimmers in the women’s field stayed the same. Two hours later (after five hours of swimming) the lead group had been reduced to Capell, Aziz, Stoychev, and a little further back, Brown. The female pace-setters meanwhile, were still unchanged. When six-and-a-half hours of swimming had passed, Stoychev made his move by abandoning the pack and pulling ahead by 100m, followed by Capell and Aziz. The top women at that point still maintained their positions, although Pankina had moved ahead by about 100m. After seven hours, Stoychev was ahead by an incredible 500m. He was subsequently followed all the way to the end, which he touched first in 7h39m13s by Capell (7h44m35s), Tobin (7h49m11s), and Brown (8h03m50s). The winners among women, predictably, were Pankina (8h36m35s), Clark (8h37m37s) and Biller (8h40m53s), in that order.

Around 5,000 spectators were at the finish to cheer the swimmers home. There was also excellent coverage and support from local and national media. Prize money amounted to US\$40,000. Essentially, say Dr. Farid, “it was a beautiful and safe

race.” For full results, please visit the Grand Prix webpage on [www.fina.org](http://www.fina.org) [1].

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