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10km World Cup: Double gold for France in Abu Dhabi

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“La Marseillaise”, the French anthem, echoed twice at the conclusion of the second leg of the FINA/HOSA 10km Marathon Swimming World Cup, taking place today in Abu Dhabi, after the victories of Marc Antoine Olivier and Aurélie Muller respectively in the men’s and women’s race. Olivier touched home in 1h47m39s6, while Muller needed 1h58m05s0 to get the gold. Both athletes are already qualified for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and considered this race in the United Arab Emirates as an excellent step in their preparation for the major rendezvous of the year.

“The goal today was to finish among the top-10, given the quantity of athletes and nationalities present here. I managed to win, which is a very encouraging sign for the Games in Rio”, considered Marc Antoine Olivier, who ranked sixth at last year’s 10km event at the FINA World Championships in Kazan. “It’s undeniable that this qualification facilitates my life in 2016 as we can reduce the number of events we will attend in order to be fresher in Rio”, added Olivier, who managed his first victory at the World Cup circuit.

In a race attended by 81 athletes, the turns at the buoys in each of the 2km-loops were not easy. “I had to protect myself from the pack and keep some reserve for the end. This tactics worked well, but it doesn’t mean that I’ll use the same during the Olympics. My goal there? To be Olympic champion, as with all the athletes qualified for the Games”, concluded the French athlete.

Aurélie Muller, 2015 world champion in this distance, was also very satisfied with the conditions encountered in Abu Dhabi. “The water was perfect, not warm, nor cold. The French team was present in Abu Dhabi with 17 swimmers, so we knew that we had a strong group. The level of the field was outstanding, it was almost like being in a World Championships’ event”, recalled Muller about the race, with 49 participants. “This level of competition is part of the game and this win was an important step towards Rio. Until then, I will participate at the US Championships in April and in another FINA World Cup leg, in Balatonfüred (HUN)”, considered the French champion.



The women

In the men's race, the minor medals went to Jack Burnell (GBR, silver) and to Simone Ruffini (ITA, bronze). The Italian had been in the headlines in Kazan 2015, after winning the 25km event and asking his girlfriend to marry him during the award ceremony. The winner of the 2015 series, Germany's Christian Reichert was sixth in Abu Dhabi, Greek star Spyridon Gianniotis was 12th and 5km world champion in 2015, South Africa's Chad Ho, only concluded in 19th.

Among women, the Brazilians Poliana Okimoto and Ana Marcela Cunha proved their strength with silver and bronze, respectively. They were closely followed by Keri-Anne Payne (GBR, fourth), silver medallist at the Beijing 2008 Games and by Rachele Bruni (ITA, fifth), winner of the 2015 World Cup. 2012 Olympic champion Eva Risztov (HUN) was seventh, veteran Angela Maurer (GER, 40 years old) was 10th, while pool star Mireia Belmonte (ESP) finished in a modest 31st place.

It is worth noting that for the women's event, from the 10 first ranked athletes at the FINA World Championships Kazan 2015 – the ones getting an automatic qualification for the Games – eight were present in Abu Dhabi and seven of them finished also in the top-10 in the Persian Gulf waters. Among men, things were not very different, with also eight out of 10 and five placings in the first 10 of this World Cup leg.

The next stop of the FINA/HOSA 10km Marathon Swimming World Cup will be held in Lake Balaton, in Hungary on June 18.
