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Kylie Masse wins historic victory for Canada

By Jolene Latimer

Kylie Masse has been on a steady 45-degree angle to the top of swimming and, with a world record-setting victory Tuesday in the 100-meter backstroke at the newly constructed Duna Arena, she arrived.

Her victory is historic.

She is the first female Canadian swimmer to earn a world title.

The 21-year-old Canadian finished her gold-medal race in 58.10 seconds, breaking the previous world record, 58.12, set at the FINA World Championships in Rome in 2009.

“Leading into years to come, it’s momentum for swimming in Canada in general,” said Masse.

She has hardly been an overnight success. Just two years ago, Masse missed the chance to represent Canada in front of what would have been a hometown crowd at the 2015 Pan Am games in Toronto, Ontario.

“*Definitely missing the Pan Am team was a disappointment,*” Masse said.



After that she focused on *“learning about racing more,”* as she put it. That meant getting to know herself better as a swimmer, and continuing to assess her body’s idiosyncrasies each race. With that attitude, she diligently battled back, and by the 2016 Rio Olympic Games had improved enough to make the Canadian team, where she tied for a bronze medal.

“The Olympics were my dream come true,” she said.

“To be on the podium was an incredible moment and a moment I’ll remember for the rest of my life.”

In the time between Rio and the 2017 FINA World Championships, she focused on maturing as a swimmer. With the international experience that the Olympics provided under her belt she was able to better understand the rhythm of success at a large meet.



“I learned a lot about myself,” said Masse, “and about trusting the whole process and my coaches. I continued that after

Rio, leading into this year and into these championships.”

It was an improvement that has made her a formidable opponent.

“It’s so amazing,” said her coach Linda Kiefer.

“Our goal at the beginning of the year was to win the world championships and break the world record. She did it.”
