

## Swimming Day 6 – Manuel confirms Olympic title; triple gold for Russia

Pedro Adrega & Camille Chappelet, FINA Communications Department

The sixth finals' session of the swimming competition at the 17<sup>th</sup> FINA World Championships in Budapest (HUN) was an historic day for Russia, with three gold medals out of the five at offer. In the 200m breaststroke, both men and women, Russian swimmers ruled the pool, with Anton Chupkov triumphing with a new Championships Record (2:06.96) among men, and Yulia Efimova being the best in the women's field. To complete this successful harvest, Evgeny Rylov is the new world champion in the men's 200m backstroke, namely beating the Olympic champion, US Ryan Murphy.

We also had a thrilling women's 100m free final at the packed Duna Arena, with Simone Manuel (USA) confirming her Olympic title, and defeating favourite Sarah Sjöström (SWE), who had established a new World Record of the distance, when swimming the 4x100m free for Sweden. In the fifth final of the day, Great Britain managed to revalidate their world crown in the 4x200m free, with an imperial James Guy anchoring the British quartet in a time of 1:43.80.

### Women's 100m free

In a thrilling first final of the day, the women's 100m free, Sarah Sjöström (SWE) seemed to be in control of the race in lane 4, but next to her Simone Manuel (USA), the 2016 Olympic champion arrived better and got the gold in 52.27, against 52.31 for the Swedish star. Sjöström had established the new World Record (51.71) of the distance as lead-off of the 4x100m free relay, but could not approach that performance in the individual final, despite her first 50m (0.08 under WR pace). Already silver medallist in 2013 and 2015, Sjöström had one gold here in Budapest, in the 100m fly. For Manuel, who had shared the Olympic gold with Penny Oleksiak from Canada (only sixth in the Duna Arena, in a time of 52.94), this is her first individual success at the Worlds, after the gold in the 4x100m free relay. The bronze in Budapest went to Pernille Blume, from Denmark, the 2016 Rio champion in the 50m free. Bronte Campbell, the defending 2015 world champion was only seventh in 53.18, while Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED), third in 2011 and 2013, and Olympic champion in 2012, was fifth in 52.78.

### MANUEL Simone (USA), gold

"I just wanted to follow my race plan, a comfortable, fast first 50m. My back(swim) was really good at the relay and in the semi, so I had a lot of confident in the last 50m. I feel really good, I had lots of pressure after the Olympic gold, but I can manage to do it, so I'm happy. The last 2-3 metres was tough, my leg was burning, but I had to dig really deep and trying to get my hand on the wall first."

### SJOSTROM Sarah (SWE), silver

*"I am sorry about missing out on victory. I expected that Manuel would do a very fast sprint at the end, but her performance was superhuman, really. On the other hand, I didn't expect my final sprint would be so weak. I am angry with myself, I did it wrong, I am rather disappointed. At least my performance in the 50m butterfly semi-final is promising."*



Evgeny Rylov (RUS) - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepbluemia

### **Men's 200m back**

After the elimination of Mitch Larkin (AUS) in the semis – the Australian was the 2015 world champion – Xu Jiayu (CHN) was the fastest going to the finals. Fourth in Kazan, two years ago, and winner of the 100m back in Budapest, the Chinese was not so strong in the decisive race, concluding in fifth (1:55.26). The gold went to Russia's Evgeny Rylov, who took an early control of the race and never left the lead, clocking 1:53.61. Third at the 2015 Worlds in Russia and also bronze medallist at the Rio Olympics, this is Rylov's main success at this level. His achievement is outstanding if we consider that he managed to "comfortably" beat the 100m and 200m back Games champion in Brazil, US Ryan Murphy. The North American got the silver in the Duna Arena, in a time of 1:54.21, and was followed by his teammate Jacob Pebley (bronze in 1:55.06). Ryosuke Irie, from Japan, silver medallist in 2009 and 2011, and also runner-up at the 2012 Olympics in London, had to content with the seventh place (1:56.35).

### **RYLOV Evgeny (RUS), gold**

"Right after the race I feel rather bad. I am terribly exhausted; I gave it all really. I planned to

have a strong start off and aim at keeping my advantage all throughout. I managed to do so, yet the last 20 metres were extremely hard. I saw others were following me closely and I was afraid they would be faster than me. This is my first world title; I am absolutely happy about it. In fact I made it to the final with the third best time only, but I did my best to pull myself together, luckily I could do so. I would like to clinch some more medals, but we will see, off for a rest now for sure."

**MURPHY Ryan (USA), silver**

"I'm a competitor, so yes, I wanted to win. We were really close to each other, he is pretty young, he is just keep on getting better, year over year. I hope I will be able to stay with him. Definitely it is a big disappointment. I want to be a guy who win the race, I don't want to be the guy who has the best time in the world. It's a long way to 2020, and I want to make sure that I will be on the top."



Yulia Efimova (RUS) - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepbluemia

**Women's 200m breast**

After a strange outcome in Kazan 2015 – for the first time in history, three swimmers shared the bronze medal -, the Budapest 2017 race produced only three swimmers on the podium, each with one medal of a different colour. The gold went to Yulia Efimova (RUS), after using her usual tactics – defensive race in the first 100m, and then acceleration in the second half of the final. The Russian great touched home in 2:19.64 and repeated her 2013 success, when she also won in Barcelona (ESP). At the Rio 2016 Olympics, she was the runner-up in both the 100m and 200m races, while in Budapest she had been third in the 100m breast. The silver went to Bethany Galat, from the United States, in 2:21.77 – her first international feat at this level. Shi Jinglin (CHN) earned bronze in 2:21.93 – the 24-year-old Chinese was precisely one of the three bronze medallists in 2015. Jessica Vall (ESP), also third two years ago in Russia, was not so strong this time, finishing eighth and last in 2:23.29. Lilly King (USA), 2017 world champion and 2016 Olympic gold medallist in the 100m breast, could not reach the podium, finishing fourth in 2:22.11.

### **EFIMOVA Yulia (RUS), gold**

"My strategy has not changed. As usual, I started off relaxed, I accelerated in the third leg and I gave it all in the fourth one. I paid attention from the beginning not to get behind too much. I didn't know I was doing such a good time and I didn't really care about it, my only focus was the race. I didn't prepare specifically for any of the rivals and I didn't even see the others. Things changed after the relay yesterday. If I don't win, it is my own mistake, no-one to be blamed. I am really happy about this medal and the world title, but I wasn't stressed about it before the race. The field was rather tough, I shall keep on working hard to keep my position. Many thanks to my coach, this gold is for him, as well."

### **GALAT Bethany (USA), silver**

"I was enjoying every second. Representing America is very special. I'm on fire and contagious. To be honest everything was happening so fast, I can't dismiss any second, I'm enjoying the rest of my time with my family. The pain doesn't really matter, I was always worried about the pain. It was exciting. I tried to calm my nerves and just focus on race. The crowd was incredible. I could hear them and I could use their energy."



Anton Chupkov (RUS) - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepbluemia

### **Men's 200m breast**

The fourth final of the day was already meaningful before the decisive race: in the heats, Daniel Gyurta, from Hungary, and the winner in 2009, 2011 and 2013, was 17<sup>th</sup> and missed the next stage of the competition; precisely in the semis, Marco Koch, gold medallist in 2015 and runner-up in 2013, was also not qualified for the final, concluding in 11<sup>th</sup>. Arrived then to the decisive race, it was firstly – until the 150m-mark – a Japanese affair with Yasuhiro Koneki and Ippei Watanabe in the leading positions. In the last length of the pool, Anton Chupkov, from Russia, accelerated and touched for gold in 2:06.96, a new Championships Record. He improved his own performance from the semis, when he had clocked 2:07.14. The Russian – born in 1997 – had been bronze medallist at the Rio Olympics, and was seventh in this event in Kazan 2015. The minor medals went to the two Japanese representatives: Koseki (silver, in 2:07.29 – his first medal at the Worlds), and Watanabe (bronze in 2:07.47). The latter is the World Record holder in this event, after a 2:06.67 effort last January in Tokyo. He was sixth of the Olympic final last summer in Rio de Janeiro.

### **CHUPKOV Anton (RUS), gold**

*"I am really happy. I worked very hard, many thanks to my coach. I wanted to do a good time, I wasn't expecting such a great one. Watanabe and Koseki are my friends, they are *really strong rivals*. *Girls have claimed a medal already, now at last Russian men have one, too, and this time it is a gold.*"*

### **KOSEKI Yasuhiro (JPN), silver**

"In this heat today I managed to do my best. I am particularly happy that both of us could stand on the podium. I started speeding at 125m so that I would be in a good position for the final 25m sprint. Compared to Rio I believe the standard has increased significantly, which is underlined by the fact that the Russian winner could go below 2:07. No question, the pace has become much faster. Watanabe and I entered the final hoping to stand on the podium together. Obviously, we would have been happier with the two shiniest medals but I feel we could meet

our own expectations."



The winning relay of Great Britain - Photo by Giorgio Scala/Deepblumedia

### **Men's 4x200m free relay**

In the last final of the day, the team of Great Britain revalidated its 2015 title in the men's 4x200m free relay, thanks to a decisive last leg from James Guy (also involved in the gold two years ago in Kazan). The British quartet – formed by Stephen Milne, Nicholas Grainger, Duncan Scott and Guy – touched for gold in 7:01.70. The Russian squad got the silver in 7:02.68, repeating the ranking already achieved in 2009 and 2013. The United States – second in Kazan – got this time the bronze in 7:03.18. Before the British “era”, the North American domination in this event had been overwhelming before 2005 and 2013, with five consecutive world titles. Australia, bronze in 2015, couldn't get into the podium this time, finishing in fourth (7:05.98).

### **TEAM GREAT BRITAIN, MILNE Stephen, gold**

"This is my first gold at the World Championships, it is fantastic that we could beat team US and Russia as well. We are grateful for James Guy, he did an excellent final sprint and I am happy about my contribution to victory, as well."

In **semi-final action**, Emily Seebohm (AUS), the defending 2015 world champion, qualified with the fastest time for the final of the women's 200m back, in 2:05.81. The winner of the 100m back in Budapest, Canada's Kylie Masse is the second best so far (2:05.97), while the silver medallist at the Rio Games, local

hero Katinka Hosszu is seventh in 2:07.51. In the men's 50m free, Caeleb Dressel, from the United States, continues to impress in the Duna Arena. After winning the 100m free title, he was the best of the 50m semis, touching the wall in 21.29. His teammate Nathan Adrian, bronze medallist at the Rio 2016 Games, was only 10<sup>th</sup>, while the World Record holder, Brazil's Cesar Cielo is the eighth and last qualifier, in a time of 21.77. In the men's 100m fly, the elimination of the 2016 Olympics' silver medallist Chad Le Clos – the South African was 12<sup>th</sup>, in 51.48 – was the surprise of the semis. Caeleb Dressel (USA) swam very close to the WR of the distance, clocking 50.07 – the global mark (49.82) was established by Michael Phelps, in 2009 -, while Joseph Schooling (SGP, the winner at the Rio Olympics) is fourth so far, in 50.78. Laszlo Cseh (HUN), also runner-up last year in Brazil, qualified for the final with the sixth best time (51.16). Finally, in the women's 50m fly, Sarah Sjoström seemed recovered from the defeat in the 100m free, and was clearly the best qualifier for the decisive race in 25.30 – the Swedish is the World Record holder in this race, in 24.43. The second best at this stage was Kelsi Worrell, from the United States, in 25.57.

---