

SWC 2017: Le Clos and Sjostrom confirm excellence in Doha

Pedro Adrega, Head of FINA Communications Department

The fifth leg of the 2017 FINA/airweave Swimming World Cup kicked-off today in Doha, with the protagonists of the series so far confirming their excellent shape also in the Qatari capital. Sarah Sjostrom, from Sweden, the provisional leader of the overall ranking so far, made a perfect evening session, with three victories out of three finals contested (50m and 200m free, and 100m fly). Chad Le Clos (RSA), the best among men, also confirmed his credentials, earning two additional gold medals, in the 50m and 200m fly.

The winner of the World Cup since 2012, Hungary's Katinka Hosszu was also in evidence, triumphing in the 200m backstroke and 200m IM. Finally, Vladimir Morozov (RUS) also had a successful session, with two victories in the 100m free and 100m IM.

The best performers of the day were Sjostrom among women (994 points for her 50m free win in 23.28), and Kirill Prigoda in the men's field – the Russian got the gold in the 200m breast in a time of 2:01.24 (980 points).



Photo by OC Doha 2017

After this initial day in Doha, Chad Le Clos continues in the lead of the World Cup men's ranking with 258 points, while Sjostrom also consolidated her first position among men, with 389 points.

Race reports

In the first final of the day, Vladimir Morozov (RUS) got his third win of the season in the men's 100m free (out of four races contested), after previous successes in Berlin and Hong Kong. Touching in 46.87, this was however the slowest time of the 2017 World Cup – the Russian star had established a new competition

record in the German capital, in a time of 45.23.

Sarah Sjöström got in the water some minutes later to earn her first gold in Doha, in the women's 200m free. The Swedish star has now won all the four races held so far in the circuit, with her best performance naturally being the World Record set in Eindhoven (NED), in 1:50.43. In the Qatari capital, she touched home in 1:52.00. This achievement represented Sjöström's 28th gold medal in the World Cup – she is now the third best Swedish female swimmer in the history of the competition, after the 93 victories of Therese Alshammar and 35 triumphs from Johanna Sjöberg.

In the men's 50m breast, also a complete winning series for Cameron van der Burgh (RSA), who earned gold in 25.70. His best season effort dates back from August, when in Berlin, he touched for victory in 25.49. This is the 58th golden achievement for the South African great in the World Cup – he is the third overall best, after his compatriots Chad Le Clos (127) and Roland Schoeman (64, and already retired). “I built good momentum and I am delighted to win this event. It was a tough one. I am now focusing on my next races”, admitted the South African winner

Alia Atkinson, from Jamaica, was also determined to keep her good statistics in the women's 100m breaststroke. After her previous three wins in the 2017 World Cup, Atkinson was once more the best, this time triumphing in Doha in 1:04.21 – her best performance so far was a 1:02.67 victory in Eindhoven (NED).

“I wanted to go a little faster but overall I am satisfied because I clinched the gold. Doha has been my favorite venue and I love to compete here”, Atkinson said.

Sjöström got the second gold of the day in the women's 100m butterfly, where she had also the best qualifying time. Touching in 55.55, she gets the third success of the season – Katinka Hosszu (HUN) was the best in this event in Berlin. However, the Swedish star couldn't improve her best result so far – a 55.32 effort in Hong Kong.

The men's 100m back had provided a wider variety this year, with three different winners before Doha's rendezvous. Christian Diener (GER), recent winner in Hong Kong (51.44) was also the man to beat in Qatar and he didn't disappoint, touching for victory in 51.00. The fastest winning performance so far in the circuit belongs to Masaki Kaneko (JPN), with a 49.65 performance in Eindhoven.

In the women's 50m back, the much-awaited duel between Hosszu and Emily Seebohm (AUS) was won by the Australian great in 26.29. The Magyar great arrived 0.01 later, for the silver medal in 26.30. Out of the four races contested in 2017, Seebohm now leads 3-1, with Hosszu having won in Hong Kong. The best time of the season belongs to the Australian in 26.15 (in Berlin).

“I loved the crowd support for me, which gave me motivation. It was a good win as I competed against top swimmers and this victory will give me good confidence in the next races”, conceded Seebohm.

Chad Le Clos' moment of glory arrived in the men's 200m fly, where he had a difficult duel with US Tom Shields. The North American was the best in this event in Hong Kong (1:49.62) and managed to be in the lead of the race in Doha, but a great final effort from Le Clos was decisive for the gold in 1:49.59 (slower than the 1:48.67 time achieved in Eindhoven). Shields concluded in 1:49.86 for the silver.

“I am very happy to beat Tom (Shields). He won the last race (in Hong Kong) so it's good to

win this title. I am tired but there will be no excuses as I look forward to more races”, considered Le Clos.



Photo by OC Doha 2017

Katinka Hosszu naturally dominated operations in the women’s 200m IM, touching home for gold in 2:05.29. The Magyar great achieved the fourth success of the season, curiously touching with the same time than in Hong Kong – her best in 2017 is her winning time in the inaugural leg of the series in Moscow (2:04.76). Moreover, this is the 241st gold for Hosszu in the World Cup!

In the men’s 400m free, Gabriele Detti (ITA) confirmed his favourite status, touching for victory in 3:42.57. The Italian champion was also the best in Hong Kong, while the fastest race of the season was won by Aleksandr Krasnykh (RUS) in Eindhoven, in a time of 3:38.35.

In another thrilling duel, Sarah Sjöström did the perfect race in the women’s 50m free, to get her third gold medal of the day, touching in 23.28. Her main contender was Dutch Ranomi Kromowidjojo (silver in 23.82), who could never really threaten the Swedish star. Over the course of this year’s World Cup, there has been an interesting fight between these two swimmers in this race, with Sjöström firstly establishing a new record of this distance in 23.10 in Moscow and the Dutch great improving that standard in Berlin, in a time of 22.93.

On her three gold medals, Sjöström said: “I was fast and my performances were good. I am very happy on winning three gold medals. It’s always fun to be in Doha and I am enjoying the competition”.

In the men’s 200m breast, Kirill Prigoda (RUS) also completed a perfect four-time victory so far, performing the best time of the season – 2:01.24. This constitutes a new Russian record and was also the best male performance of the day – 980 points. Prigoda did a solitary race, turning at the 100m-mark under (-0.07) the World Record pace – the best global standard (2:00.44) in this event belongs to Marco Koch (GER) since November 2016.

Vladimir Morozov earned the second gold of the day in the men’s 100m IM, after a comfortable win in 51.38. It was his fourth consecutive success so far in the season, with the highlight going to his Eindhoven performance in 50.70. “I was in good shape and I am happy the way I competed. I am looking forward to

more wins as I have two more races tomorrow”, Morozov confessed.

The second Seebohm-Hosszu battle of the day happened in the women’s 200m backstroke. But, unlike the shorter distance, this time the gold went to the Hungarian champion. Hosszu touched in 2:02.06, while the Australian ace was silver medallist in 2:04.15. The Magyar athlete established her fourth success of the season, but could not improve her best result so far in the circuit – 2:00.05 in Eindhoven.

Le Clos was again dominant in the men’s 50m fly, with his fourth success of the season, this time in 22.45 – the South African seems unbeatable in this event and confessed after his victory that this was his 26th consecutive victory in this event. Le Clos’ fastest time so far in 2017 was his 22.31 win in Moscow (RUS).

In the women’s 800m free, the gold went to China’s Wang Jianjiahe in 8:15.35. She was better than her teammate Li Binglie (silver in 8:18.14), who had won in Hong Kong. Before this Chinese dominance, Mireia Belmonte (ESP) had won the first two races of the season, and had also established the best time so far – 8:07.10 in Moscow.

Maksym Shemberev got the first-ever gold medal in the history of the World Cup for Azerbaijan, after being the best in the men’s 400m IM. Shemberev touched home in 4:06.72, and was better than the winner in Hong Kong, Ayrton Sweeney (RSA, silver in 4:07.04), and of experienced Gergely Gyurta (HUN, bronze in 4:09.58). The best time of the season belongs to Philip Heintz, from Germany, in 4:04.49.

In the last final of the day, the team of Netherlands won the 4x50m medley relay in 1:40.92, followed by China (1:42.77) and Germany (1:43.75).

Top-3 of the Overall Ranking (after Day 1 in Doha):

MEN

1. Chad Le Clos (RSA), 258 points
2. Vladimir Morozov (RUS), 168 pts
3. Tom Shields (USA), 168 pts

WOMEN

1. Sarah Sjöström (SWE), 389 points
2. Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 305 pts
3. Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED), 164 pts

Top-3 of the Cluster 2 Ranking (after Day 1 in Doha):

MEN

1. Chad Le Clos (RSA), 99 points
2. Tom Shields (USA), 96 pts
3. Vladimir Morozov (RUS), 75 pts

WOMEN

1. Katinka Hosszu (HUN), 129 points
 2. Sarah Sjöström (SWE), 123 pts
 3. Emily Seebohm (AUS), 72 pts
-