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SWC champions Le Clos and Sjostrom enjoy crowning glory in Singapore

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Chad le Clos (RSA) and Sarah Sjostrom (SWE) collected winners' cheques for \$150,000 as they were crowned series champions at the FINA/airweave Swimming World Cup in Singapore, on Sunday.

Sjostrom's winnings were topped up by \$50,000 as she additionally won the final cluster, which also called at Beijing and Tokyo.

Both entered Sunday's finals session at OCBC Aquatic Centre as champions, after their closest pursuers — and deposed title-holders — Vladimir Morozov (RUS) and Katinka Hosszu (HUN) were unable to gain enough points in the morning's heats to extend the battle into the evening.

The runners-up were, however, \$100,000 richer after their season's efforts, while third-placed duo Kirill Prigoda (RUS) and Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED) picked up \$50,000. Morozov collected \$50,000 as men's cluster winner.



In last year's overall series standings, only the winners were rewarded, getting \$100,000.

However, FINA announced a prize-money increase in September to cover the top three. This was also extended to the clusters, where financial rewards now go all the way down to \$3,000 for eighth spot.

The Chad 'n' Vlad show got the night under way in the 100m free, the Russian winning the duel in 45.56, and Le Clos touching home second in 46 dead.

When Morozov (23.85) finished sixth and 1.03 sec behind Pavel Sankovich (BLR), it left Le Clos needing to swim 48.25 in the individual finale, the 100m fly, to win the cluster.

However, he only just held on for victory in 49.49, as runner-up Zhuhao Li (CHN) set a world junior best of 49.53.

“This year was the best World Cup, not just because I won but because it gave everyone a fair chance with the rule change to the number of races, and some of the things FINA laid on for fans. If they can just keep on improving it and making it more exciting, that’s the key,” said Le Clos.

“The money’s great — I’d be lying if i said it wasn’t a motivation — but also coming here and racing top guys, that’s what it’s about. This year’s been important to me, mentally, and with the hard training. I’m excited for the Commonwealth Games in April — I start work tomorrow. I leave midnight tonight and tomorrow I’ll be in the gym, have an easy swim session — and I definitely need some physio. It’s been a great season because take it back a year and a lot of people doubted me after the Olympic Games.”

Sjostrom celebrated her coronation in style, landing double gold in the 50m fly and 200m free, but doesn’t have any big spending plans for the \$200,000.

“It’s quite expensive to live in Stockholm, so when you buy an apartment that’s where all the money goes, so you have to save money — and you never know when you’ve earned your last prize money. You could get a shoulder injury or anything, so you have to take care of the money you win,” said Sjostrom.

“It feels great to win it. It’s the first time I’ve done the World Cup and it’s the first time I’ve won the World Cup so it’s been amazing, but very tough. I’m very impressed with the swimmers who do this year after year, but I’m excited to maybe do the World Cup more times. Racing at the highest level against Ranomi and Cate Campbell (AUS) is the best form of training for me. Of course I get tired, but it’s a lot of fun.”

“My next big competition is the European short-course championships in Copenhagen in three weeks so I’m excited to be going there. Then I go to South Africa for four weeks, two weeks’ vacation and two weeks’ training camp. I rented a house with my agent and my family, and I’ll see Chad and Cameron van der Burgh (RSA) and all those guys.”

Morozov was delighted with his year’s work and welcomed some rumoured potential changes to the 2018 format.

“It’s been a very successful World Cup, thank you to FINA for such an opportunity. I heard that next year we’ll be able to do six events, but only four of them will count, which I think is better. With that rule you give an opportunity to Katinka Hosszu and those others who swim a lot of events, so it’s more of an even competition for those kind of athletes,” said Morozov.

“I can’t plan too far ahead, in sport anything can happen, but next year I’ll probably be focusing first of all on the long-course European Championships in Glasgow. Hopefully I’ll do well there, and if I’m in good form then maybe I’ll come back to do the World Cup series again.”



Emily Seebohm (AUS) chased home Alia Atkinson (JAM) in the 50m breast as she started her pursuit of third-placed Kromowidjojo in the overall standings, but not even victory in the 100m back, (52.23) just 0.10 ahead of Regan Smith (USA), was enough to overhaul the Dutch speedster, who also denied her third place in the cluster. Hosszu was runner-up.

Like Sjostrom, Kromowidjojo doesn't have any grand spending plans just yet.

"I'm afraid 50 percent goes to the Dutch tax authorities so, for now, maybe I'll just buy some nice Christmas presents for my family. Maybe I will come back on the World Cup circuit next year. To do a variety of races, and in the short-course pool, is a good way of training, and I really like the pre-qualifying rule — not having to swim the prelims."
