

Six medals, six nationalities in Doha for 10km first race of the year

Colin Hill, FINA Correspondent

Today was the first race of the FINA Marathon Swim World Series (MSWS) 2019 in Doha.

In two separate races, 52 women and 84 men competed over a 10km open water race in Doha Bay by swimming four laps of 2.5kms with the water temperature at 20 degrees C.

Spectators looked on from the waterfront promenade (the 'Corniche') set against the stunning backdrop of Doha's city skyline.

With less than five months to go before the 18th FINA World Championships in Gwangju, South Korea, this event was a number of races within the main race as individual teams used this as their World Championship qualifying event.

Apart from the French Team, this was an extremely competitive event with 23 countries represented.

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WOMEN'S RACE

A windy day greeted the women athletes, with a 9:00am start, this time from the water due to the pontoon stability with the waves.

The choppy water was going to play a factor to which swimmers enjoyed the rougher conditions and it was Campbell (USA) who took an early lead alongside Beck (GER) with a long 800m start straight.

At the turning buoys the swimmers kept stretching out as the more experienced in the pack would surge forward to get a good position and then the pack would reform on the long straight sections in between.

The decisive move was early on in lap two when Ana Marcela came out of the feed in first place, something she did after all three feed stops.

It was USA's Ashley Twichell who then took on the pace, but Ana Marcela was always tracking anyone who tried to lead.

It was lap three when the wind picked up on the back straight towards the feed station which then put Ana Marcela back in front, but all the swimmers knew that going into the last lap it was important to get a good position, so the whole pack seemed to surge up behind the lead three swimmers of Wunram (GER), Ruiz (ESP) and Cunha (BRA).

The last 2.5km was fast and furious with Cunha holding off some strong competition in a finish time of 2h3m1s from Australia's Kareena Lee with Rachel Bruni (ITA) hitting the finish board in third.

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Ana Marcela Cunha (BRA), gold

“I was very happy with the windy conditions, I spent a lot of time near the front, as last year I spend a lot of the race at the back. But this year I decided to go to the front more often and push the pace. In the finish line I imagined Thomas Lurz [former German OWS World champion and Olympic medallist] and how he would swam the finish straights in similar conditions.”

Kareena Lee (AUS), silver

“It was a tough race, very choppy, but I kind of like that. I was trying to stay up the front, especially up at the feeding pontoon. At the finish, I knew that I could work the chop (waves), I'm used to lots of different conditions and I'm used to that from Australia.”

Rachele Bruni (ITA), bronze

“There was big waves and the race was hard because of the high standard of athletes, I felt strong and was happy to medal in this race.”

false

MEN'S RACE

With a large field of 82 swimmers, this was never going to be an easy race and, from the start, a group of Kristof Rasovszky (HUN) and Florian Wellbrock (GER), switched the lead and stretched the pack out on the first 2km.

The lead pack was soon around 50m from the first swimmer to the last.

In the second lap it was Wellbrock who took to the front and used his long arms and stroke rate to keep the pace moving along and at times it looked like he might break free of the pack.

Gregorio Paltrinieri (ITA) seemed to sense the danger and worked his way up the pack to cover Kristof and Wellbrock. Jack Burnell (GBR) took up a good position in second and third for most of the second and third laps.

Wellbrock had led for most of the race and went on to win at Abu Dhabi FINA Marathon Swim World Series in November 2018, but near the end of the second lap, he slipped back into the main pack and gained a yellow flag after getting tangled up with another swimmer.

Lap three once again was Rasovszky at the front with Wellbrock, Paltrinieri and Burnell in the top group.

Nearing the end of the third lap and onto the final 2.5km it looked like the whole pack wanted to be in the front. But Rasovszky swam bravely at the front with then Burnell falling back into the pack.

The finish straight was nail-biting with Wellbrock getting the inside line and overhauling Rasovszky in the last few meters to finish in 1h52m21s. Jordan Wilimovsky (USA), who had kept out of trouble the whole

race, took passed Paltrinieri into third.

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Wellbrock (GER), gold

“The race was a little difficult, I’ve never been in a race with so many waves, so I had to change my tactics through the race. It was a great finish to the race and I love racing with Kristof”

Kristof (HUN), silver

“I enjoy going to the front when I can to get the clear water and for me the waves make open water swimming more enjoyable. Florian took me in the last few meters, but I was happy with the race”

Wilimovsky (USA), bronze

“It was fun, the water was good and a fun race, the finish was good to move up the pack and I knew the guys would be really quick, so I had to push hard.”

[MEN](#) [1] 1. Florian Wellbrock (GER) 1h52m21s6; 2. Kristof Rasovsky (HUN) 1h52m22s8; 3. Jordan Wilimovsky (USA) 1h52m24s4

[WOMEN](#) [2] 1. Ana Marcela Cunha (BRA) 2h03m52s5; 2. Kareena Lee (AUS) 2h03m52s0; 3. Rachele Bruni (ITA) 2h03m53s0
