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Published on *fina.org* - Official FINA website (<https://www.fina.org>)

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## CSS, Indianapolis, Day 1: "All Great Racers Come to Indy."

Greg Eggert, FINA Media Committee Honorary Secretary and FINA Communications

The third and final leg of the inaugural 2019 FINA Champions Series included 50 of the fastest swimmers on the planet, representing their national federations across all five continents. Athletes from 15 nations arrived in Indianapolis to race at "The Nat", which is one of the best swimming pools in the United States. Indianapolis is known as the Amateur Sports Capital of the USA and proudly claims that "All Great Racers Come to Indy."

To that point, the athletes racing in here, include 21 from the USA are the owners of 54 Olympic medals and the legion includes 5 world record holders and 17 Olympic Gold Medalists. Headlining the USA edition is Sweden's Sarah Sjostrom, who has won 9 individual FINA Champions Series (FCS) titles from the two previous editions held in Guangzhou, China and Budapest, Hungary.

The final edition of the FCS is hosted by USA Swimming and the meet was officially opened by Bob Vincent, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the host federation. In 2004 the FINA World Championships 25m were hosted in the NBA arena where the Indiana Pacers play basketball in this city.

FINA Vice President Dale Neuburger who hails from Indianapolis welcomed the athletes and coaches just moments before the first race of the evening. In his opening remarks he paid tribute to FINA Vice President Dennis Miller of Fiji, who earlier today lost "his valiant battle against cancer." Miller was a member of the FINA Executive and during his sporting career, served as a member and also as the FINA Bureau liaison to the FINA Open Water Technical Swimming Committee. He was also the Secretary General of the Oceania Association of Olympic Committees.

**Women's 200m Backstroke**

Margherita Panziera (ITA), the world's fastest ranked swimmer in this event in 2019 won the first event of the FCS3 edging out Katinka Hosszu (HUN) by a slim margin of .30 second. The Italian national record holder was more than a second slower than her time in the Budapest edition, but she claimed her second title of the series. The Italian winner split 1:02.59 at the 100m mark trailing Kylie Masse (CAN) and Hosszu but her powerful finish allowed her to claim the first gold medal of the FCS-3 in a time of 2:06.64. Hosszu's time of 2:06.94 earned her second place and she was followed by Masse in third.

“At warm up today I felt really tired today but I am really happy about my time and how well I managed to race. In this time of the year it makes me feel so happy. I hope to improve more.”

On beating Hosszu: “Katinka has always been my role model so it is really exciting to have the opportunity to compete beside her outside the World Championships and the European’s. I am really glad that FINA managed to set up such a big event for us.”

### **Men's 200m Butterfly**

Chase Kalisz (USA), the Olympic silver medalist in the 200m IM from 2016 Rio led from start to finish in this event, arriving at 1:56.91, a little more than a second ahead of teammate Justin Wright (USA) and almost two seconds faster than Zach Harting (USA) who finished in third place. Kalisz was also the winner of the 200m and 400m IM events at the 2017 FINA World Championships, but tonight's time was slower than FCS-2 champion Kristof Milak (HUN) who won this event on home soil last month in Budapest, 1:53.64.



### **Women's 100m Butterfly**

Sarah Sjoestroem (SWE) won her first event of the FCS-3 and made a clean sweep of the three meet series in this event with

a convincing victory over Kelsi Dahlia (USA). Her 56.42 was the fastest swim of her three series FCS campaign. In her 10th FCS title, Sjoestroem split 26.29 at the half way point of the race, .70 of a second ahead of Dahlia, to capture the fastest time in the world this year 56.42. Penny Oleksiak (CAN) finished third just over 2 seconds behind the winner.

### **Men's 50m Freestyle**

Vladimir Morozov (RUS) delivered the 5th fastest time of the year in the sprint freestyle event tonight. Morozov edged Michael Andrew (USA) by .21 arriving at 21.65, his second fastest swim of the year and the 5th fastest time in 2019. Brazil's Bruno Fratus finished third, .37 behind the Russian champion.

“It feels good, I didn’t expect to win. It is my first win in the whole Series so it feels nice. Beating the Olympic champion feels nice for sure. We still have a month to get ready for the World Championships so we will see. I didn’t believe I had won. I saw the guys catching up on the last few meters. The finish was very exciting.”

### **Women's 200m Breaststroke**

The match up of Lily King (USA) and Yuliya Efimova (RUS) made waves in The Nat and excited swimming fans world-wide. The well known and intense rivalry between the world's superpowers was on display tonight. King, just two months into her professional career, has been swimming at The Nat since she was 10 years old. She drove less than an hour from her training pool at the legendary Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. King is the reigning Olympic champion in the 100m breaststroke and won the 50m and the 100m breaststroke titles at the 2017 FINA World Championships. King was leading at the midpoint of the race by almost a second but Efimova third leg split time of 35.88 allowed her to close the gap on her American rival. King, a fan favorite in this city won the event in a time of 2:21.39, a margin of .20 over Efimova. Efimova won the 50m, 100m and 200m breaststroke events in Budapest at the FCS-2. King's time tonight was the fastest across the three editions of the FCS. Michal Sumrall (USA) arrived at the wall in third place, 2.49 seconds behind King.



“It was the best time and I felt good in the water. I was just really pleased to see this best time, really excited. I was looking at the lane next to me to see what my competitors were up to. I needed to peak over. The crowd was awesome and cheering for us.”

### **Men's 100m Backstroke**

Reigning Olympic Champion Ryan Murphy (USA) won this event in a time of 52.99, edging teammate Matt Grevers (USA) by .38. Murphy, the current world record holder in this event posted the fourth fastest time in the world this year. Grevers had a slight lead at the 50m mark, but Murphy overtook him in the final lap. Jacob Pebley (USA) placed third.

“It was a good race. I wasn’t expecting to clock that time. It is really good for me to go under 53 seconds. That’s a tough barrier. I am really happy with that. This new Series coming to the U.S. is awesome. It is really cool for swimming to do something a little bit different. Anything we add to make swimming more entertaining is great for the sport.”

“It was great beating Matt. He is one of the best in the world so when you face a guy like that you take it seriously. He is an awesome competitor.”

### **Women's 400m Freestyle**

Leah Smith (USA) led from start to finish, delivering the fifth fastest time of 2019. Smith was 2:00.66, less than a second ahead of Melanie Margalis (USA) at the 200m and 250m points in the race. Smith began to build her lead in the final 150m

of the race, eclipsing Margalis by 2.49 seconds. Margalis finished second and Hali Flickinger (USA) was third.

“I heard my time before I saw the screen. Sometimes you touch the wall and think you have a good time and then it is not so I was really happy that my score matched my impression.”

“The Champions Swim Series is really cool. We were saying earlier with Melanie Margalis (teammate) that we were kind of nervous but getting out of your comfort zone and doing things in a different format is just really good for preparing yourself to different stages. The sport presentation is really cool. I swam in Indianapolis numerous of times but I have never seen it look like this. The jumbo lights and everything is definitely exciting.”

### **Men's 50m Butterfly**

Nicholas Santos (BRA), the world record holder in this event in the short course pool narrowly defeated Michael Andrew (USA). Santos's winning time of 22.94 is now the fourth fastest in the world this year. Santos has now won three consecutive titles in this event across the FCS. His fastest time was 22.60 in Budapest, and his slowest was 23.02 in the FCS-1 edition in China. Andrii Govorov (UKR) placed fourth.

### **Women's 100m free**

Sarah Sjoestroem (SWE) continued her unbeaten streak by winning the event in a time of 52.97. It was her 11th FCS title and completed a full sweep in the 100m fly and 100m free events. Pernille Blume (DEN) touched second in 53.68, .71 behind the champion. Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED) was third posting a time of 53.72



“It is good prize money here so it is a good motivation to swim fast. The pressure is a little bit less because you know you are going to get a nice prize money no matter the outcome. I can risk it and go out really slow and win my race by making a really quick come back. I am happy with my two really good swims tonight.”

Looking at tomorrow’s three races she said: “I am expecting to feel a little bit better tomorrow. Mostly because the jet lag might be a little bit less tomorrow. I came here quite late and didn’t spend too much time here in advance to get accustomed because I had to stay home to do the hard work and prepare for the World Championships in South Korea.”

### **Men's 200m Individual Medley**

Twenty five year old Chase Kalisz (USA) won his second event of the night, stopping the clock at 1:58.41. Kalisz won this event at the 2017 FINA World Championships but recorded the slowest time of the three winners of the FCS editions. All four swimmers in the event were from the USA. Michael Andrew (USA) finished second at 2:00.08 and Josh Prenot (USA) was third.

“My times weren’t great tonight but it was a tough double. It is not as easy as it was when I was 18, I miss those days. Being 25 hurts a lot more. I think it is still a great race experience and a good training day for me.”

“The new format of the Champions Swim Series is awesome and fun. A lot of the top swimmers of the world are coming together to spend time together and we all get to race. The relays are fun and I wished I entered them. I just assumed the relays would be formed with the winners of the individual races. There has been some funny match up and I want to watch those.”

“If next year’s Champions Swim Series fits in my preparation for the Olympics, I would love to take part again.”

### **Women's 50m Breaststroke**

Indiana native Lily King (USA) beat Yuliya Efimova (RUS) for the second time tonight. King's 29.63 was the top time in the world this year, a margin of .30 over her Russian rival. Efimova's winning time in the FCS-2 from Budapest was 30.26. Molly Hannis (USA) placed third.

“I was close to an American record. I think it was pretty good, I wasn’t really expecting it. I have actually only been 2.21 in this pool so it is a little fun factor.”

## Men's 100m Breaststroke

Cody Miller (USA), another Indiana University graduate swam a 27.90 first half split, to easily win the event in a 59.26 to the delight of Indiana Hoosier fans. Miller won a bronze medal in this event at the 2016 RIO Olympic Games. Arno Kamminga (NED) swam .46 slower, stopping the watch at 59.72. Anton Chupkov (RUS) was the only other athlete to swim under the minute mark, posting a 59.90.



“It feels good to win. The trophy is kind of heavy. It was very nice. It was nice swimming in this pool because it is my favourite pool. I have had some great swims here and some bad ones too.”

“The new format of the competition makes it a little more exciting and more intense because fewer guys – greater opportunities to win, right? And I think it is a big step in the right direction for the sport. We are moving into the right direction so that’s good.”

## Women's 50m Backstroke

Kylie Masse (CAN) winner and Anastasia Fesikova (RUS) tied for first place at 28.20. Ranomi Kromovidjojo (NED) finished third in a time of 28.71. Masse opened the night with a third-place finish in the 200-m backstroke in 2:07.59.

Masse: “It is awesome to get this tie. In the 50’s it is always down to the last little bit. I didn’t know we had a tie until a couple of minutes after. It is always exciting. 50’s are always a fun race.”

“The new competition is awesome. When you look at other sports at this level they are always competing at events like this so to be able to have this for swimming now is really exciting and I am happy to be a part of it right now.”

### **Men's 200m Freestyle**

Danas Rapsys (LTU) was impressive, delivering his second FCS title in this event. In his first ever performance in the USA he swam the second fastest time of the year. His time of 1:45.56 tonight was more than a second faster than his title in Budapest earlier this month. Rapsys led this event from start to finish splitting 24.57, 26.88, 27.18 and 26.93; he was 51.45 at the 100m mark. Townley Haas (USA) finished in second place and Gabriele Detti (ITA) arrived in third.

“Today has been pretty good after coming to the USA. After a long flight. I am not sure I was expecting this time today but my coach was so I am happy. It was not my best time though. My best time is 25.12.”

“This new four-lane style is really good. All swimmers like it. Hopefully next year it will be the same.”

### **Mixed 4x100m Freestyle Relay**

The four relay teams were randomly drawn yesterday from a "pool" of all interested athletes, allowing stroke specialists like Lily King and Yuliya Efimova to be selected for a freestyle relay team. In a remarkable coincidence, the American and Russian breaststroke rivals were chosen for the same relay team, with King swimming the third leg and Efimova anchoring the team racing in Lane 1. As the breaststroke is the slowest of the four strokes, it wasn't a surprise but perhaps a mild disappointment that the Lane 1 relay finished last, almost 11 seconds behind the winning squad from Lane 4.



Jack Conger's speedy sprint ( 23.80 at the turn ) put his Lane 3 team in the lead ( 49.82) by the slimmest of margins (.05) ahead of Michael Andrew's Lane 4 Team. The first two legs were swum by men and the final two legs of each relay were powered by the women. None of the men swam under 49 second, and none of the women swam faster than 54 seconds.

All four of the lead-off swimmers were Americans, as were 3 of the 4 men racing in the second leg. The lone exception was 39 year old Nick Santos (BRA) who covered two laps of the pool in 49.77 to bring his Lane 2 squad from 3rd to second, a position they would hold throughout the finish of the race. Lane 4's Jacob Pebley (USA) followed Andrew's lead-off leg, nailing a 49.41 for the fastest leg across all 16 swimmers.

Kelsi Dahlia (USA) was the next in the water following Pebley; she covered her 100m leg in 54.18, the fastest women in the event to maintain Lane 4's advantage. Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED) split 54.81, the second fastest women and the anchor for the Lane 4 squad. Their 3:28.27 final time was second fastest of the three event FINA Champions Series, but slower than the winners from Budapest who swam 3:27.63 (Jeremy Desplanches, SUI; Justin Ress, USA; Siobhan O'Connor, GBR; Penny Oleksiak, CAN)?

Kelsi Dahlia (USA): "This is my second win with Ranomi so it was fun. I am really happy with my time. It felt really amazing."

Ranomi Kromowidjojo (NED): "It was really fun. Winning such ahead of the others is really amazing. I feel really lucky to swim with these guys. I enjoyed a lot today, it could have been worse. Usually we swim against each other so it is good to switch roles."

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