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## Sun, Masse, Xu and King all retain titles

Gergely Csurka, FINA Media Committee

**Four out of five finals staged on Day 3 saw title-defences, three of those were rather convincing as Kyle Masse (CAN)**

**and Xu Jiaju (CHN - top picture) both repeated their 2017 wins in the 100m back just as Lilly King in the 100m**

**breast. Sun Yang's win in the 200m free came after the disqualification of Danis Rapsys (LTU) who had touched**

**first. Another repetition was in sight in the women's 1500m free but Katie Ledecky had to halt her quest in Gwangju**

The evening session just barely kicked off when high drama unfolded – as it turned out, the crucial moment came right before the first race started. Standing on the starting block, Lithuania’s Danas Rapsys made an incidental move after the “Take your marks” signal which equalled a false start. Rapsys ended up winning the race with a brilliant swim, ahead of Sun Yang (CHN), but soon after he had hit the wall, the ‘DSQ’ mark appeared next to his name. In fact, his faith had long been decided, some 1:45 minutes earlier when he made that wicked move. Sun was declared the winner (thus he made the 200-400m double again after 2017), ahead of Yasuhito Matsumoto (JPN) who earned his nation’s very first medal in this event, while Duncan Scott (GBR) and Martin Malyutin (RUS) shared the bronze.



*The first moment at the wall as Rapsys sees he came 1st...*



*...but soon it turned out that it's a DSQ...*



*...and Sun could start celebrating his victory - Credits: Istvan Derencsenyi*

The next event offered much more calm – a bit sadly, though, as the queen was missing from the race. USA's Katie Ledecky was battling with illness and she was on the losing side this time – first she withdrew from the 200m free heats in the morning, then she had to take the tough decision to abruptly finish her campaign here. Without her, the 1500m free crown was up for grabs and Simone Quadarella was quick enough to take it. The Italian added the world title to her European crown, she became the 4<sup>th</sup> best performer of all time and Italy's second winner in this event – 10 years after Alessia Filippi. It was somewhat stylish that she brought down her predecessor's NR set in Rome 2009 (15:40.89 – though Ledecky's best ten times are still better than this). Germany's Sarah Kohler was a distant second while China's Wang Jianjiahe grabbed the bronze.



*Simone Quadarella and the ever-emotional Italian joy*

The backstrokers' show followed, both 100m finals saw thrilling contests. Canada's Kyle Masse, who won in Budapest with a new WR, turned 4<sup>th</sup> at the halfway mark but produced an amazing homecoming leg to retain her title. The fight for the minor spoils was absolutely tight, three swimmers hit the wall in a span of 0.11sec, Aussie Minna Atherton just out-touched USA's Olivia Smoliga and the other Canadian Taylor Ruck. Interestingly, Kathleen Baker, who broke Masse's WR last August and was silver medallist in 2017, could only finish tied 6<sup>th</sup>.



*Kyle Masse was sharp again*

The men's race didn't bring any less excitement as four were heading towards the wall forming an almost straight line. Title-holder Xu Jiaju of China found the necessary extra gear to touch home first, 0.24sec ahead of Russia's Evgeny Rylov (who showed his class in the shorter distance as he was king of the 200m in recent years). Tiny margins decided the bronze, three stormed in within 0.05sec, 2015 world champion Mitch Larkin (AUS) was the fastest, ahead of the two US Olympic champs (and the medallists in 2017) Ryan Murphy and Matt Grevers.

Another title defence closed the session: USA's Lilly King led all the way in the 100m breast and won with the only sub-1:05 effort of the field, ahead of Yuliya Efimova (RUS). Martina Carraro came third, claiming Italy's first ever medal in female breaststroke events at the Worlds.



*Lilly King, the undisputed queen of the 100m breaststroke*

In the semis, not quite surprisingly, GB's Adam Peaty got close to his WR in the 50m breast (26.11, just 0.16sec shy). The women's 200m free promises an outstanding battle in the final as five swimmers already posted 1:55s, Federica Pellegrini (ITA), winner in 2017 was the fastest but Sarah Sjostrom (SWE) also looks for some fine consolation after her 100m fly defeat. The last of this elite circle, 5<sup>th</sup> placed Yang Junxuan from China set a new Junior World Record (1:55.99). Hungary's Youth Olympic Champion Kristof Milak sent a strong message to his rivals in the 200m fly by clocking 1:52.96 – this is his third 1:52 effort in two years, while no majors were won with sub-1:53 times since the 2012 London Olympics...

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