

Singapore 2019 SWC opens with four three-peats and a record

Aimee Berg, FINA Press Correspondent

(SINGAPORE) – Opening day of the 2019 Singapore Swimming World Cup ended with a bang.

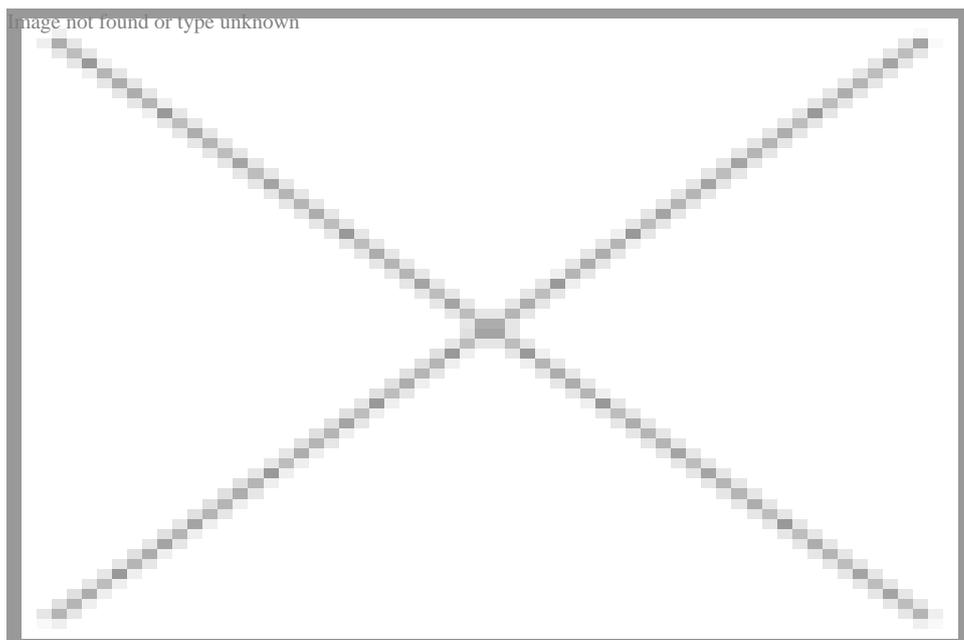
Vladimir Morozov of Russia set a World Cup record on Thursday night, blazing to victory in the men’s 50-meter freestyle in 21.27 seconds, his best time in six years.

Morozov now remains undefeated in the event, winning three for three races in the 2019 World Cup Series. Three other athletes three-peated on Thursday night as well: Danas Rapsys of Lithuania extended his winning streak in the men’s 400m freestyle, Mitch Larkin of Australia claimed his third title in the 200m backstroke, and Katinka Hosszu of Hungary won the women’s 200m butterfly for the third time this season.

Here’s how the night unfolded:

In the women’s 400-meter freestyle Maddy Gough of Australia earned her first career World Cup victory and prevented the runner-up, Erica Sullivan of the U.S., from winning back-to-back races. Moesha Johnson of Australia placed third.

In the men’s 400m free, Danas Rapsys of Lithuania, as mentioned, went three for three in the distance, but unlike at the previous stops in Tokyo, Japan, and Jinan, China, Rapsys failed to lower his own World Cup record in Singapore. Afterwards, he admitted to having a new tactic, which was to intentionally start slower and try to speed up towards the end. “It didn’t work,” he said of his 3:45.59 time. “I have to talk to my coach.” His coach, Ina Paipeliene, has been in a Singapore hospital for two days with what Rapsys described as “pain in her heart.” Henning Muhlleitner of Germany finished second (more than six seconds behind Rapsys) and Ben Roberts of Australia placed third.

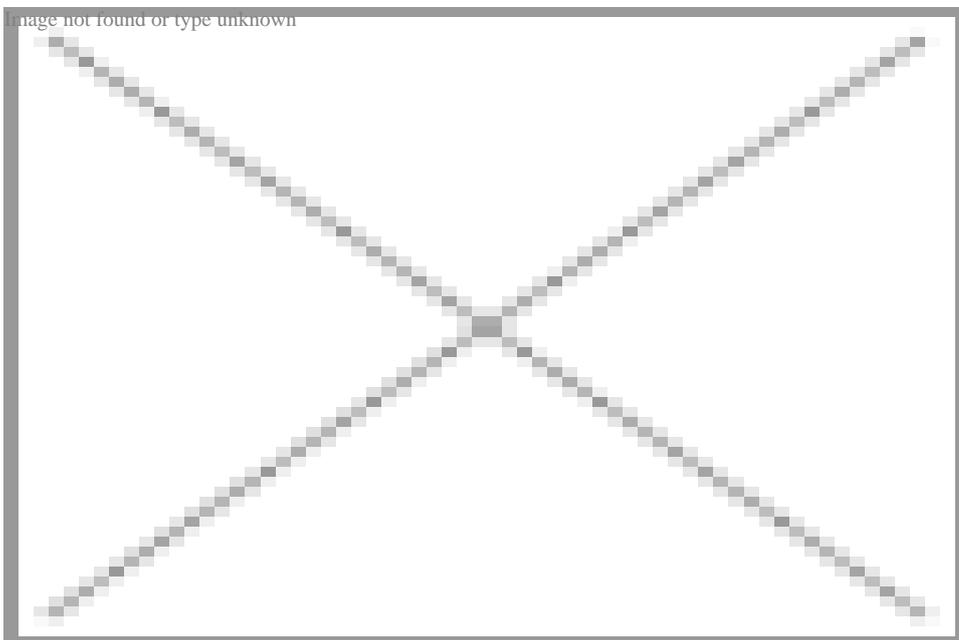


Danas Rapsys (LTU) wins his third 400m free of the 2019 SWC. Photo by Simone Castrovillari

In the women's 50m backstroke, Holly Barratt of Australia won with a time of 27.95 seconds, followed by Hong Kong's Au Hoi Shun Stephanie and Emily Seebohm of Australia who were separated by .02 seconds to take second and third, respectively. (Seebohm had won this event at the first series stop, in Tokyo.)

In the men's 200m backstroke, Mitch Larkin of Australia made his third victory in a row look easy. And, he said, "it was," explaining that he had a lot of "easy speed" at the 100 meter mark, "probably because I didn't go out quick enough." Three of Larkin's countrymen finished right behind him, as Australians comprised half the field in the final.

In the women's 200m butterfly, Katinka Hosszu prevailed over countrywoman Zsuzsanna Jakabos by .41 seconds. "It's really good for me to have one gold already, on the first day," said Hosszu, who will be competing in four more events. Singapore teenager Quah Jing Wen placed third with a personal best of 2:10.26.



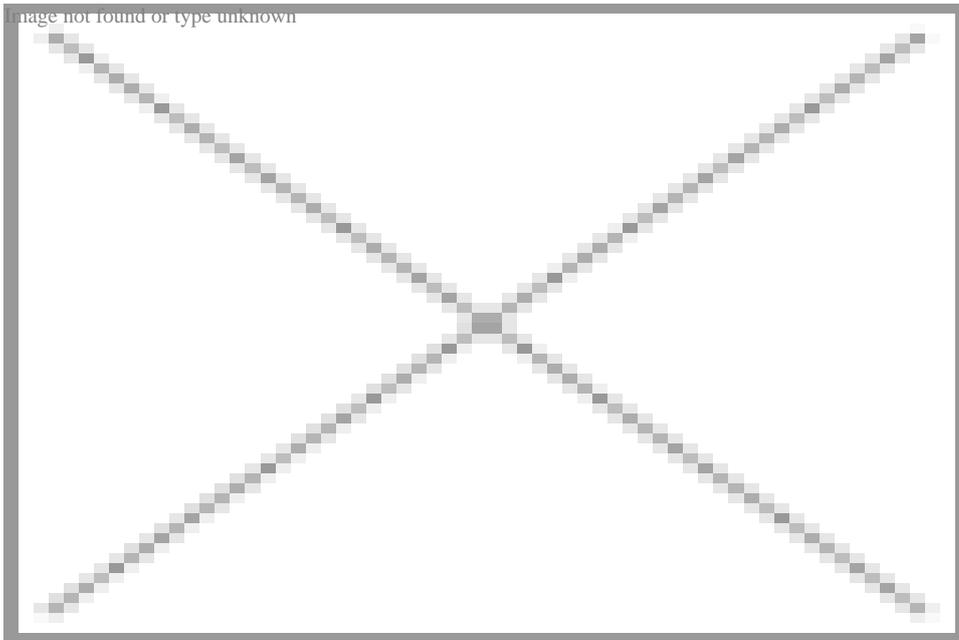
Katinka Hosszu (HUN) wins a third 200m butterfly WC title. Photo by Simone Castrovillari

In the men's 100m butterfly, Australia's Grant Irvine (51:26) edged the runner-up Szebaszian Szabo by .02 seconds, to prevent the Hungarian from winning his second consecutive race at the distance. Irvine was pleased to have swum 51 seconds for the first time in two years in a time that he said was very close to his personal best. It was especially satisfying, he added, because he had been injured earlier with a subscapular inflammation in his right shoulder blade.

In the women's 200m breaststroke, Vitalina Simonova of Russia won her second World Cup race in a row, this time in 2:25.65. Remarkably, Simonova trains alone with a coach in Novosibirsk, Siberia, where she said there is only one pool for the whole region and it is a 25-meter facility.

In the men's 100m breaststroke, Andrew Wilson of the U.S. swam a lifetime best (58.93 seconds) bettering his time from the semifinals of the 2019 World Championships by two hundredths of a second. He is only the fourth American ever to swim sub-59, so it was gratifying to do it twice in one summer. Nicolo Martinenghi of Italy finished second and was the only other man to finish under one minute on Thursday night (in 59.58 seconds).

In the women's 50m freestyle, Cate Campbell of Australia put together back-to-back victories, winning at the OCBC Aquatic Centre in 24.02 seconds. "In the 50, sometimes you try a little too hard and sometimes it doesn't work out," she said, "so I tried to be relaxed and strong – which can be a tough combination, but I'm pleased." Michelle Coleman of Sweden was second, in 24.65.



Vladimir Morozov (RUS) lowers his own WC record in his third 50 free victory of 2019 World Cup. Photo by Simone Castrovillari

Morozov capped the night by lowering his own 50 freestyle World Cup record by .22 seconds. Asked how he managed to get his best time in six years (of 21.27 seconds), Morozov said, "I have no idea." He also denied being nervous on the starting block next to American rival Michael Andrew, who finished second in 21.78. "No, I was just pumped up," said Morozov who is now 3-for-3 in this event in the 2019 World Cup.

Competition resumes Friday, August 16 with 12 events, including the men's 200m individual medley which will feature Singapore's only Olympic gold medalist, Joseph Schooling, in his lone event in his home pool.
