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Those beautiful days of Balatonfüred or this is how the World Championships open water swimming went

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It has been a few days that the 17th FINA World Championships open water swimming events have been over in Balatonfüred. Many of the competitors have travelled home, others still compete at Duna Arena. Buildings by the lake are emptied out. Those who were at the competition for six days could go home with a lot of unforgettable memories and it is not an exaggeration to say that the audience couldn't have seen a more up to par open water race than this one.

This is one of the most prestigious sports events of all times in Hungary, and Lake Balaton also took its share from it between July 15 and 21, where it gave a home to the 17th FINA Worlds Championships open water swimming events. The venue was Balatonfüred, more specifically, the area in front of Tagore. We can say that the event was a huge draw for the audience as for all six days (July 17 was a day of rest) there was a full house. Day by day more than 100 people tried to gain tickets desperately but in vain. They could be consoled with the projector set up at the Kisfaludy stage, where they could watch the events and cheer for their favourites.

Open water swimmers could compete in 5km, 10km and 25 km (both men and women at all distances), and it was the first time that at an adult world championships, medley competitions took place.

Altogether, seven nation's representatives gained medals, among them the French were outstanding, who could obtain 4 golds, 1 silver and 1 bronze medal, the only event they didn't manage to stand on the podium was 25km women event.

Despite this, the Team Trophy for the most successful swimmers was won by the Italian, who couldn't gain any gold medals; however, besides their 2 silvers and 1 bronze, they could obtain so many points, that lead them to the first place.

Among the gold winners were the Americans, Brazilians, and the Dutch (1-1 first place) except this Ecuador gained a silver, Great-Britain and Russia obtained 1-1 silver.

If we should highlight the greatest characters of the World Championships, two French should be put on the top: Aurélie Muller and Marc-Antoine Olivier. The first one for 10 km and medley golds, plus for the 5km silver. The other one for the 5km and medley golds, plus the 10km bronze.

We shouldn't forget about the experienced Brazilian competitor, Ana Marcela Cunha, who could stand on the podium after all three individual events: after the 5km and 10km bronze, and she also defended her first place in 25km, which she gained in Kazan, too.

Regarding the Hungarian performance, the secret dream of the home crowd was 1 medal, which wasn't achieved; however, Gábor Gellért head coach evaluated what he saw positively.

'I have a small discomfort in me because of the lack of the medal, but I can't be dissatisfied as we have never participated in a world championships with such a populous team. Altogether we had 8 competitors - said the expert. It is also a fact that we are over one of the most successful world championships with two fifths places, one sixth place, two seventh places and one eighth place. There are the emerging young talents too, who didn't cause disappointment.'

To be able to organise competitions on such a high level, we needed the previous years' experiences, World and European Cup races, and the Junior World Championships, as the line of the lane was given, only little modifications were needed.

'Feedback from the Hungarian sportsmen, coaches and leaders are definitely positive, many of them evaluated the organisation with grade 5 - said Szabolcs Fodor competition director. The truth is that we raised the bar too high, so it will be almost impossible to outdo it. I have been to many competition venues before, and I can say that this is one of the bests.'

Fodor added that the weather was kind to the participants too, as before and after the World Championships there were storms at Balatonfüred, on the days of the competitions there was no problem with the weather and the temperature of the water was ideal, between 22 and 25 degrees.

There were some innovations compared to the previous world events. For example, the jacuzzi, against which the participants had a kick, then it became more and more popular among them.

Péter Kővári added his own bit greatly to the success of the organisation: the venue manager of the open water swimming events worked day and night with his colleagues to set everything into its place.

'A lot of people put his work and effort into this World Championships, both by water and by land - said Kővári. I have heard from many places that practically a new event has been born at Balatonfüred, as never ever before could anyone follow the events so well as here. We built the viewing area appropriate for 2500 people into the water. We put 3 led lines into the lake opposite from the audience so that they can orientate themselves about the events. Building started at the beginning of June and the breakdown will finish after the Masters'

World Championships, in the second half of August.'

'It's a proof again that Balatonfüred is a perfect venue and host for the open water swimming competition - summed it up Eszter Rudas event manager, who led the preparations for long months before and commanded the competition period, connecting the most differing areas. The experienced organising team from previous years, completed with the experts from different fields and the enthusiastic, smart and helpful volunteers did everything they could so that the participating teams, the representatives of the FINA, plus the fantastic fans could go home with unforgettable memories. I hope that participants of the Masters World Championships will compete in a similarly great atmosphere and will be happy to return, even as a tourist.'

About the Balatonfüred competitions more than a hundred journalists, photographers, TV and radio operators broadcasted daily. They left Lake Balaton with positive memories, too.

I have been talking to many experienced colleagues who have been dealing with water sports for decades and they have been amazed as well seeing the circumstances. It's not an everyday scenario that while making a report, you can see the Tihany Abbey in its full beauty in the background - said Tamás Ambrus, the press manager of the open water swimming events. We placed the media centre into the tarnished Kisfaludy Gallery; however, there was a media office at the lake as well in a container, where representatives of the media could gain information immediately. After Füred I could meet many of these people at Duna Arena and they said when they think back to their days at Lake Balaton, it's an unbelievably good feeling.

The 17th FINA World Championships open water swimming medallists

Women:

5 km: 1. Ashley Twichell (American), 2. Aurélie Muller (French), 3. Ana Marcela Cunha (Brazilian),...27. Janka Juhász (Hungarian), 28. Melinda Novoszáth (Hungarian)

10 km: 1. Aurélie Muller, 2. Samantha Arévalo (), 3. Ana Marcela Cunha and Arianna Bridi (Italian),...8. Anna Olasz (Hungarian),...27. Sömenek Onon Kata (Hungarian)

25 km: 1. Ana Marcela Cunha, 2. Sharon van Rouwendaal (Dutch), 3. Arianna Bridi,...5. Anna Olasz (Hungarian),...12. Kata Sömenek Onon (Hungarian)

Men:

5 km: 1. Marc-Antoine Olivier (French), 2. Mario Sanzullo (Italian), 3. Timothy Shuttleworth (British),...7. Kristóf Rasovszky (Hungarian) ...31. Márk Papp (Hungarian)

10 km: 1. Ferry Weertman (Dutch), 2. Jordan Wilimovsky (American), 3. Marc-Antoine Olivier (French) ... 5. Kristóf Rasovszky,...21. Dániel Székelyi

25 km: 1. Axel Reymond (French), 2. Matteo Furlan (Italian), 3. Jevgenyij Draccl (Russian),...6. Gyurta Gergely (Hungarian). Kristóf Rasovszky gave up the competition.

Medley: 1. France 2. USA 3. Italy ... 7. Hungary

Medal table

1. France (4 gold, 1 silver, 1 bronze)
2. USA (1 gold, 2 silver, 1 bronze)
3. The Netherlands (1 gold, 1 silver)
4. Brazil (1 gold, 2 bronze)
5. Italy (2 silver, 3 bronze)
6. Ecuador (1 silver)
7. Great Britain and Russia (1-1 bronze)