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13th FINA World Championships: hosted by Rome for the second time

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FINA World Championships hosted by the Italian capital again between 17 July and 2 August, 2009 after 15 years. Due to the special swimsuits launched before (making waves before, during and after the 13th World Championships) several records were breached in the pool. The medal table was again topped by the USA.

In the history of FINA World Championships the event hosted by Rome in 2009 has been the most highly attended so far. A total of 2438 athletes entered and this record has not been breached ever since. The Italian capital was granted the right to host the event again at the FINA Bureau meeting in Montreal in 2005 ahead of Athens, Moscow, Dubai and Yokohama. The real rival of Rome was the Japanese city with a close result of the votes at 11:9.



Except from open water events taking place at Ostia in the Tyrrhenian Sea all other events were staged in the Olympic Stadium (in the Foro Italico sports complex north of Rome)

established for the 1960 Olympics.

Thanks to TV broadcasting the event was followed in 197 countries and courtesy of the Italian TV channel in charge, RAI, HD broadcast was available for the first time in the history of World Championships. In the course of the three-week period the total number of views was approximately 1.5 billion in Europe.

The medal table was again topped by the USA clinching 11 gold, 11 silver and 7 bronze medals, runner-up, China claimed 11 gold, 7 silver and 11 bronze while Russia was placed third with 8 gold, 8 silver and 4 bronze. Altogether 197 medals were claimed by athletes of 30 countries.



After a less outstanding performance in Melbourne the Hungarian squad did a great job in Rome. Katinka Hosszú claimed a gold and 2 bronze medals, Dániel Gyurta clinched a gold, László Cseh collected a silver and a bronze this time.

Swimming: Abundance of records and shark-skin suit

The swimming tournament did not even start yet there were huge fights - around the negotiating table. Special swimsuits made of polyurethane were launched in 2008 resulting in heated debates between supporters and opponents. 5 weeks prior to the World Champs, on 19 May FINA published the list of swimsuits allowed at the tournament from then on. World records (altogether 6) achieved in swimsuits not listed there were eliminated. Shark-skin suits contributed greatly to breaching more world records than ever before. A total of 43 world, 105 World Champs and 57 European Champs records were breached in Rome. Swimmers were allowed to wear such special swimsuits at the 2009 European Short Course Championships in Istanbul for the last time.

As for men, German swimmer Paul Biedermann caused huge debates. First he excelled in 400m freestyle breaking the famous 3:40.08 record of Ian Thorpe set in 2002 by one

hundredth. Then he beat top swimmer Michael Phelps in 200m breaking Phelps' previous world record and striking his coach, Bob Bowman. The swimming suit made entirely of polyurethane worn by the German swimmer raised huge disputes and this incident contributed to its prohibition greatly. Still, Michael Phelps clinched a couple of medals as he won both 100m and 200m butterfly and finished first with all three men's relay collecting 5 gold altogether in addition to his silver as the runner up for Biedermann.

Michael Phelps in the final of 100m butterfly:

Fellow swimmer, Ryan Lochte won two solo events, also. He finished first in 200m and 400m medley and participated in 2 freestyle relays, so altogether he had to settle with 4 gold and a bronze medal in 200m backstroke. László Cseh finished behind Lochte in both events, in 200m he was the runner-up while in 400m he was placed third.

Brazilian César Cielo claimed two solo gold at this tournament, as well. He clinched gold in 100m and 50m freestyle writing sport history by the latter one. He was the first to swim this course within 47 seconds. Like everyone else, he achieved the dream result of 46.91 wearing the special swimming suit.

A 20-year-old Hungarian swimmer, Dániel Gyurta achieved his first outstanding result in Rome. By winning 200m breaststroke (2:07.64, new European record) a highly successful series of events kicked off as he proved to be unbeatable at the next two tournaments, in Shanghai, 2011 and in Barcelona, 2013 and he became Olympic champion in London, 2012 in this course. The final was quite exciting as runner-up American Eric Shanteau finished only one hundredth second later (2:07.65).

Concerning women, two swimmers, German Britta Steffen and Italian Federica Pellegrini could double this time. Both of them are freestyle swimmers. The German swimmer clinched gold in 500m and 100m whereas the Italian finished first in 200m and 400m.

Katinka Hosszú's gold medal in 400m IM:

Katinka Hosszú claimed her first long course world champion title this time, in 400m medley she did her personal best of 4:30.31 and similarly to Gyurta, she repeated it two more times, in Barcelona, 2013 and Kazan, 2015 and she claimed gold in Rio last year. She claimed bronze in 200m butterfly and 200m medley, as well.

Open water swimming: Germans in defiance of the weather

Due to unfavourable weather conditions open water events taking place by the shore 15 kilometres from Rome were delayed by 2 days. Germans proved to be the most successful clinching 3 gold medals. By winning the 5km and 10km event Thomas Lurz contributed greatly to this success. As for women, fellow swimmer, Angela Maurer became champion in 25 km. The remaining 3 medals went to Italy, UK and Australia.

Synchronised swimming: Russian-Spanish fight

Synchronised swimming was dominated by the Russians. Except for the free combination won by the Spanish all events were topped by Russian swimmers. Natalia Ishchenko claimed four world champion titles herself, she finished first in both of her solo events as well as the free duet and the free team routine. For the record, Spaniards collected 5 silver medals and they finished first in the free combo with runner-up team China.

Russia, free duet:

Diving: Chinese gold medal tally

Chinese divers excelled again winning 7 out of 10 gold medals and claiming half of all available medals (14 out of 30). Concerning men, it was only Tom Daley (GBR) who could keep up with the Chinese and he won a gold in 10m. As for women, Russian diver Julia Pakhalina could clinch gold in 1m and Mexican diver Paola Espinosa claimed gold in 10m somewhat balancing the Chinese dominance.

Tom Daley and his gold medal:

Water polo: Only one goal in favour of Serbia and the US

As for men, Serbia beat Spain in the final by one goal only (14-13). Title defender Croatian team claimed bronze this time. Best player of the tournament was Serbian Filip Filipovic. The Hungarian team missed qualifying to the top 8 by one goal in a match with the team becoming world champion afterwards. For women, US defended its title and beat Canada 7-6 in the final. In the bronze match Russia could beat Greece. The Hungarian team finishing first in group A was stopped by team Canada in the top 8.