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The 14th FINA World Championships hosted by China again

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Ten years after Fukuoka top athletes of aquatics gathered in the Far East again in 2011, but this time the hosting country was China. The 14th FINA World Championships took place in Shanghai between 16-31 July. USA topped the medal table again. Synchronised swimming events were dominated by Russia while all gold medals in diving were swept by China.

2157 athletes of 178 nations entered the 16 days long series of challenges staged by the brand new Shanghai Oriental Sports Center handed over at the beginning of 2011. A year ahead of the 2012 London Olympics the 14th Fina World Championships served as an Olympic qualification tournament. Qualification time standards were introduced for the swimming portion defined by the FINA Bureau in January 2010.

Beside Shanghai Doha, Seoul, Durban, Madrid, San Fransisco and a non-specified Japanese city applied for hosting the Championships but the tenders of China and Katar proved to be the most successful and in the end Shanghai was selected as the host city in March 2007, Melbourne.

The race for medals was dominated by the US and China just like in Rome two years earlier. The order was the same, as well, US won thanks to the higher number of gold medals clinched (17 vs. 15 by China), however, the total number of medals gained was higher for China (36 vs. 32 By US). China gained more silvers (13) than the US (6) whereas the US claimed more bronze (9) than China did (8). Russia came third with 8 gold, 6 silver and 4 bronze.

Team Hungary had one gold thanks do Dániel Gyurta defending his world champion title in men's 200m breaststroke. Two out of the 4 bronze medals were clinched by Gergő Kiss (men's 800 and 1500m freestyle), one by László Cseh (men's 200m medley) and one by Csaba Gericsák (men's 25km long course swimming).

Swimming: US sweeping the field

Concerning men's swimming events American swimmers proved to be the most successful primarily due to the achievements of Ryan Lochte sweeping 4 solo gold medals (200m freestyle, backstroke, medley and 400m medley). Adding his gold with the 4X200m relay team he claimed a total of 5 gold medals therefore it is more than symbolic that one of the two men's world records breached that time is linked to him. What is more, by swimming 1:54.00 in 200m medley he not only defended his world champion title but he excelled his previous world record of 1:54.10 achieved in Rome. His runner-up was fellow swimmer Michael Phelps while the bronze went to László Cseh. No one has excelled this achievement in this course ever since. The other world record is not less symbolic, either since it was performed by host swimmer Sun Jang (14:34.14) in 1500m freestyle as the outcome of the US-China trial. Spectators watching the 100m backstroke could witness a quite exciting outcome as two swimmers of the same nation, Jérémy Stravius and Camille Lacourt (from France) tied by finishing in the very same second. Brazilians claimed three gold thanks to their sprinters César Cielo (50m freestyle and butterfly) and Felipe França Silva (50m breaststroke).

Similarly to Lochte, Hungarian swimmer Dániel Gyurta defended his world champion title claimed in Rome. He won 200m breaststroke with his time of 2:08.41, runner-up Kosuke Kitajima finished 22 hundredths later. Gergő Kiss set new Hungarian records in both freestyle events he entered (800m and 1500m) claiming bronze in both behind Sun Jang and Canadian Ryan Cochrane.

Relay events were topped by team Australia (4X100m freestyle relay) and team US (4X200m freestyle and 4X100m medley relay).

Results of American ladies were the same as those of their male peers winning 6 solo and 2 relay events, the only difference was that for men half a dozen of gold medals were gained by 2 swimmers, Lochte and Phelps whereas for women 5 ladies, Missy Franklin (200m backstroke), Jessica Hardy (50m breaststroke), Rebecca Soni (100 and 200m breaststroke), Dana Vollmer (100m butterfly) and Elizabeth Beisel (400m medley) contributed to the victory of team US. Beside Soni it was Italian swimmer Federica Pellegrini who doubled in 200 and 400m freestyle. Considering the number of victories the host country finished second after the US by 3 gold medals thanks to Zhao Jing (100m backstroke), [Jiao Liuyang](#) (200m butterfly) and Ye Shiwen (200m medley). Although ties are rather rare, this time Shanghai could see that of ladies in 100m freestyle when Belorussian Aleksandra Gerasimenya and Danish Jeanette Ottesen touched the pad at exactly the same time (53.45). No new world records were set but two American national ones by Missy Franklin (200m backstroke, 2:05.10), and by the 4X100m relay team comprising of Coughlin, Soni, Vollmer, and Franklin (3:52.36).

Open water swimming: Lurz - the only one to defend world champion title

The open water swimming competition was contested at Jinshan Beach in South-West Shanghai. Long distance teams debuted this time in which mixed teams completed the 5 km course. The available seven medals were claimed by 7 nations. For men, Thomas Lurz, the German swimmer who had doubled in Rome 2 years earlier won the shortest course

defending his title. He was the runner-up in the 10km event finishing (1:54.27.2) 3 seconds after Greek swimmer, Spyridon Gianniotis (1:54.24.7). The 25 km event was claimed by Bulgarian Petar Stojcev, Hungarian swimmer Csaba Gercsák was placed third.

In the women's field Swiss swimmer Swann Oberson won in 5km, British Keri-Anne Payne excelled in 10km and the 25 km course was swept by Brazilian Ana Marcela Cunha. In the latter course German swimmer Angela Maurer gaining world champion title in Rome was in the same shoes as Lurz, finishing second and failing to defend her world champions title with the narrow margin of 2.1 seconds. The mixed team event debuting at this tournament was topped by the American team of Andrew Gemmel, Sean Ryan and Ashley Twichell.

Synchronised swimming: Russian siren shining at the World Championships

Seven out of seven synchronised swimming events were won by Russian swimmers in Shanghai. All events Nathalia Ishchenko entered saw her victory, whether it was solo, duet or team, she clinched 2 gold each, becoming the most successful athlete of the World Championships with a total of 6 gold medals. For the discipline's most successful athlete ever the pool has always been a usual environment. In contrast with the majority of swimmers she had no problem swimming without goggles and thanks to her almost 6.5l vital lung capacity she could stay underwater for 3 mins 5 seconds. Chinese synchronised swimmers did their best to keep up with unbeatable Russians and in the end they clinched 6 silver and a bronze.

Diving: Ten out of ten went to China

Diving was the discipline which brought unfettered happiness for the Chinese hosts. Their tally was complete with all ten gold medals. Furthermore, in some other events the silver went to China, also. In the overall ranking Russians were placed second with two silver and a bronze. The imaginary third place on the podium was taken by German divers claiming a silver and a bronze.

Water polo: Italian men for the third, Greek women for the first time

The stakes at the World Championships were particularly high for men water polo players since the first 3 teams qualified automatically for the 2012 London Olympics. In men's final Italy beat title defending Serbia 8-7, however, since they had qualified for the Games by their World League victory, the team going down in the match for the third place played by Croatia and Hungary resulting 12-11 got the green lights to the Olympics, also. For the Italian team this was the third victory (1978, 1994, 2011).

As for ladies, the Greek team won their first world champion title in Shanghai, in the final they beat hosting team, China 9-8. The bronze was claimed by Russia after beating Italy. Hungary went down against Australia in the match for top 8.