

31st LEN European Swimming Championships Summary

Hungarian Swimming delivers brilliantly in Debrecen

Debrecen (pps) The 31st European Swimming Championships in Debrecen, Hungary, saw the continental swimming elite present take a further step forward and offer a taste of what is to come at the Olympic Games that are just nine weeks away. For the top swimmers who were looking for tough challenges in Debrecen, it was an excellent opportunity to present their credentials and to let their rivals know what to expect in London.

"I am more than positively surprised by my performances at this point in time. It proves that I am on the right road in view of London", said Hungary's superstar Laszlo Cseh, 26, after his eleventh European long course title in his great career. German 2008 double Olympic Champion Britta Steffen, 28, may also draw a positive personal conclusion after Debrecen. She has redeemed her failure at last year's World Championships in Shanghai with three gold and one silver medal.

However, the great victor in Debrecen was undoubtedly Laszlo Cseh and the entire Hungarian team led by Cseh, with a total of 26 medals. He alone won six, three gold in the 200m and 400m individual medley (fifth successive title since 2004) and the 200m butterfly. In all three events Cseh had bowed only to the "alien" Michael Phelps in Beijing in 2008. Cseh has shown that he is ready to again challenge both Phelps and Ryan Lochte in London. In the women's events, Cseh's team-mate Katinka Hosszu brought herself successfully into position for the Olympic Games – she also won three individual titles in the same events as Cseh.

Another Hungarian to be considered one of the high-level European contenders for an Olympic victory in London is Daniel Gyurta, who successfully defended his European title in the 200m breaststroke after two World gold medals. As a 15-year-old Gyurta earned a surprising Olympic silver in Athens in 2004. In London, Gyurta will challenge Japan's "icon" Kosuke Kitajima who intends to win his third double Olympic gold in the 100m and 200m breaststroke after Athens and Beijing.



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Serbia's Milorad Cavic clocked a new season's World best time of 51.45 seconds in the 100m butterfly; he will also offer a new mouth-watering challenge to Phelps. Cavic lost to the American in Beijing and at the 2009 Worlds in Rome – in Beijing by just one hundredth of a second.

Spain's Mireia Belmonte also set a season's World best with 16:05.34 minutes in the women's 1500m freestyle, a non-Olympic event however. A total of six new Championship records were set at the European Championships in Debrecen.

Italy presented a new face to Europe's elite with 17-year-old Gregorio Paltrinieri, last year's European Junior Champion. He improved his best time in the men's 1500m freestyle from 15:04.57 minutes (in 2011) to 14:48.92 in Debrecen.

While Hungary finished at the top of the medal table (9-10-7) followed by Germany (8-6-3), Italy (6-8-4), France (4-4-3), Spain (3-1-3), and Sweden (2-4-2), Italy won the Championships Trophy with 780 points ahead of Hungary (745), Germany (671), France (419), Spain (281), and Sweden (276).

The Norwegian swimming team received the International Fair Play Award as a recognition for the strength demonstrated in being present and competing with their hearts and souls in memory of their team-mate and friend, Alexander Dale Oen, who passed away tragically so recently. They won two gold medals and a bronze.

LEN President Nory Kruchten drew a very positive conclusion of the 2012 European Championships with a record entry of 44 LEN Member Federations: "These Championships have been held in the right place. It was a big success for the LEN Family. I would like to express my gratitude again to the city of Debrecen, the Hungarian Government, and of course, to the Hungarian Swimming Association. The level of these Championships was in line with what is expected in an Olympic year, and this event provided a lot of swimmers the opportunity to achieve qualification for the Olympic Games in a highly competitive environment."

LEN's thanks to Debrecen is of special significance because the city had taken over the organisation of the European Championships at very short notice. By staging its sixth European Swimming Championships, Hungary also set a new record as host: Budapest in 1926 (inaugural event), 1958, 2006 and 2010, and Debrecen in 2012 in long course, and the 2007 Short Course Europeans in Debrecen. The next European Championships in Swimming, Diving, Synchronised Swimming, and Open Water Swimming will take place in Berlin in 2014. Berlin has already staged the event once in 2002.



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2012 European Diving Championships in Eindhoven:

For the first time at European Diving Championships, medals were awarded in eleven events. After two successful tests, the team event celebrated its premiere in Eindhoven. Audrey Labeau and Matthieu Rosset won the first gold medal in the new event with 416.50 points and the first European diving title for France since Vienna in 1950. And it was 65 years ago that a Frenchman took a European gold medal when Matthieu Rosset was also victorious in the 3m springboard competition with 504.00 points. Great Britain's women had been waiting even longer for a victory. The "Golden Girls" in Eindhoven were Tonia Couch and Sarah Barrow who ended the 74-year gold drought with their win in the platform synchro with 319.56 points.

In the men's 1m springboard Matthieu Rosset added a bronze medal (403.95) to his two gold and became the most successful diver in Eindhoven. Sweden's Anna Lindberg won the 1m (301.35) and the 3m springboard (342.75). Rosset and Lindberg were the only two competitors to stand twice on the top of the podium.

The Ukraine was the most successful nation with two gold, three silver, and three bronze medals. Russia also gained a total of eight medals (1-3-4), and Germany seven (1-3-3).

Diving Medal Table:

1. Ukraine 2-3-3, 2. France 2-0-1, 3. Great Britain and Sweden 2-0-0 each, 5. Russia 1-3-4, 6. Germany 1-3-3, 7. Italy 1-2-0.

Championships Trophy:

1. Russia 175 points, 2. Germany 168, 3. Ukraine 152, 4. Great Britain 111, 5. Italy 109, 6. France 76.



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2012 European Synchronised Swimming Championships in Eindhoven:

With two gold medals each, Russia and Spain shared the titles in the four events at the European Synchronised Swimming Championships in Eindhoven. Reigning World Champion Natalia Ischenko successfully defended her 2010 European Solo title with 97.810 points and together with partner Svetlana Romashina also her Duet gold from Budapest with 97.860 points.

In the absence of title holder Russia, Spain won the Team Event (96.210) and the Free Combination (95.600). Eindhoven seems a good location for Spanish synchronised swimming as they had also triumphed in the same events at the 2008 European Championships held also in the Dutch city. Andrea Fuentes was the most successful competitor with two gold (Team and Combination) and two silver medals in the Solo (95.900) and the Duet together with Ona Carbonell (95.980).

Synchronised Swimming Medal Table:

1. Spain 2-2-0, 2. Russia 2-0-0, 3. Ukraine 0-2-2, 4. Italy 0-0-2.

Championships Trophy:

1. Spain 571 points, 2. Ukraine 558, 3. Italy 543, 4. Greece 526, 5. Switzerland 497, 6. Belarus 386.

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