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# Back From the Lake Balaton to the Cook Strait: Attila Mányoki, living legend of marathon swimming

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*Attila Mányoki is one of the bravest open water swimmers of the world. The Hungarian athlete, who was born in 1973, the year of the first FINA World Championships, has completed several dangerous swims in the last couple of years, and thanks to that he will be member of the International Swimming Hall of Fame from this november. He will join among others former Hungarian legends Tamás Darnyi, Krisztina Egerszegi, Ágnes Kovács and Éva Székely, and of course many world-class water polo players like Tibor Benedek or Tamás Faragó.*

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„I started swimming like any other child: I was competing in the pool in 100 m and 200 m butterfly. I was not like a typical swimmer: I was a little overweight, and I didn't have too many chance against the best rivals, but I was happy in the pool because I liked the guys very much and I loved this sport” - Attila Mányoki said.

„The Hungarian marathon swimming championship was held between Balatonfüred and Siófok in the 80's, and I liked the atmosphere of it very much, so I decided to start in 1989. I'd loved swimming before that as well, but if you are in the open water, you have more time to think about things, I find it more exciting than swimming in the pool between the walls. It gave me new impulses.”



Mányoki started solely open water events from 1993, he joined the World Cup series in 2004. The problem was that from the first half of that decade the main event of those competitions was the 10 km, which required a total different preparation.

„I had been used to a longer distance, the new version was not advantageous for me any more, so I wanted to finish my career, but then I met Nikos Gemelos, head coach of the Greek swimming national team, who gave me confidence, so I decided to go on. He said I have to fight for my own goals and look for new challenges.”

Mányoki swam through the lake Balaton lengthwise in a record time of 25 hours and 32 minutes, by the rules of open water swimming.

„It gave me confidence again, and from that point I always had new goals. The challenges became more and more difficult, I wanted to be member of a special club, completing the Ocean's Seven.”

Ocean's Seven consists of seven long-distance open-water swims, and is considered the marathon swimming equivalent of the Seven Summits mountaineering challenge. It includes the North Channel, the Cook Strait, the Molokai Channel, the English Channel, the Catalina Channel, the Tsugaru Strait and the Strait of Gibraltar. Mányoki has already completed four of them, but he failed to swim through the North Channel in August.

„You have to learn from everything. I'm doing something which hasn't been documented yet, I have to find the right path. Before the North Channel challenge I was physically ok, but I didn't know how my body would react to the extreme conditions, the 13-degree-water, the big waves and the jellyfishes” - said Mányoki, whose body temperature was 27.2 degrees (!) when he was pulled out from the water.



The 43-year-old swimmer is challenging the Cook Strait and the Strait of Gibraltar next year. In the weekdays he's training in the pool of Zalaegerszeg.

„It may sounds funny but I also have to buy the ticket for the entrance, and I swim in the same pool as the general public. In the Cook Strait, however, the water will be very cold, so I have to get used to that kind of environment, therefore you will see me swimming in the cold water of the Balaton or the Velence Lake quite often in the first months of next year.

Mányoki is of course interested in the big FINA events as well, he still has a lot of friends among the open water swimmers. He even supports them if he has the chance to go personally to a competition, like the FINA World Cup in Balatonfüred this year, and he plans to visit the events of the 2017 FINA World Championships as well.