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# Marc-Antoine Olivier: historic win in Balatonfüred?

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*Marc-Antoine Olivier aims for the gold medal at the 17th FINA World Championships. 21-year-old French athlete, who won bronze at the Rio Olympics, could be the first French male world champion in open water swimming.*

Marc-Antoine Olivier's father and brother were both swimmers, so it was not a big surprise that he chose this beautiful sport also. He began swimming at age 7, but at age 15 he decided to specialise in open water. A year later, in 2012 he won the gold medal at the European Junior Open Water Swimming Championships in the 5k event.

Olivier has always been member of his hometown's swimming club in Denain, but in January 2015 he moved to the South, the city of Narbonne, to join his coach Philippe Lucas.

"Lucas requires a lot, but he is empathetic and always attends to us." - said Olivier about his coach. The Frenchman's idol is Alain Bernard, who fascinated him in 2008 by winning the gold medal at the Beijing Olympics. "I thought then it would be great to become an Olympian."

He managed to do so, but first he took part in his first ever FINA World Championships in Kazan in 2015. He achieved a great result by finishing 6th in the 10k event, claiming qualification for the 2016 Olympic Games. He could not finish the 25k, and finished 11th in the team event with David Aubry and Aurélie Muller.

He started the 2016 season pretty well, winning the Abu Dhabi race of the FINA/HOSA Marathon Swimming World Cup, and was preparing hard for the Olympics. He took ice baths to accustom his body to the relatively cold water around Fort Copacabana, the venue of the race. Earlier he said he was thin and that's why he was not fond of cold water. Thank God the water temperature of Lake Balaton will be around 23-25 °C in mid-July, when the open water swimming events of the World Championships will take place.

Olivier performed really well at the Olympics, finishing in third place behind Ferry Weertman and Spiridon Ganniotis, outtouching Zu Lijun of China who was recorded in the same time. He praised his friend and national team mate Aurélie Muller, who was very unlucky a day before his race.

"After being disqualified, Aurélie forgot every heart-break and pain and helped me to achieve a good result. I swam for her, and I dedicated my bronze medal for her. We had been training all year together, so I was very happy to win that medal."

Philippe Lucas was satisfied with that result also, but he added that Olivier had to work even harder after the Olympics, especially in the pool.

"In the open water races we start to accelerate in the last 1500 metres, so these trainings in the pool help us a lot."

"This year my main goal is to perform well at the World Championships, but I already think a lot about the 2020 Tokyo Games and the Olympic gold medal. I may have plenty of time until that but if you want a dream come true, you must have long-range plans."

The open water swimming events of the 17th FINA World Championships will be held from 15 to 21 July in Balatonfüred.

## **MARC-ANTOINE OLIVIER**

Born: Denain (France), 18 June, 1996

### **Medal record:**

Olympic bronze medallist (2016 Rio de Janeiro, 10 km)