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Happenings of this week: only 9 days left until the World Championships kick off

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International panorama of potential protagonists in six disciplines at the 17th FINA World Championships in Budapest and Balatonfüred.

Swimming: Chinese squad coming to Budapest without Ning Zetao

It is official now, the Chinese delegation to Budapest will not feature men's 100m freestyle title defender, Ning Zetao. The world champion of Kazan touched in 49.67 in the prelims at the Chinese nationals, then he was forced to give up the final due to some injury. „*Since Ning's result didn't beat the designated A cut time he cannot enter the World Championships*” – said Zhao Jian Vice Director of the Chinese Swimming Association about the misfortunate incident of 24-year-old swimmer.

The fact that the Chinese talent is not eligible to enter the World Championships was especially interesting for the Belgian, since this way Pieter Timmers, silver medallist in Rio has increased chances. As we know, greatest fan favourite Olympic champion Australian swimmer Kyle Chalmers has recently had heart surgery hence he will not stand on the starting block in Budapest either. In the meantime, Belgian swimmer preparing for Budapest has to face new „challenges” outside the pool. On 27 June his first child, Jutta was born and Timmers had told earlier the new-born's arrival will most definitely influence his performance at the World Champs. Whether the milestone event boosts or weakens his performance, the World Championships will tell.

Diving: Mexican hopes for mixed events

Mexican divers will focus primarily on synchro and mixed events at the World Championships in Budapest. According to head coach Ivan Bautista it is really difficult to get to the top in solo events, whereas new mixed and synchro events provide opportunity for various nations, including Mexico.

„The World Championships in Budapest mark the first station of a new Olympic cycle hence participation is of key importance. We shall enter in order to see our position compared to other nations, to assess powers and see standards set by divers of England, Germany, China and the US” – Ivan Bautista said, emphasizing their preparation for Tokyo Olympics will

begin in Budapest.

Water polo: Arno Havenga calls for caution with Hungarians

Arno Havenga, head coach of the Dutch women's national water polo team announced the 13-member roster for the World Championships. In preparation for the World Champs the team is playing its last matches against France, Canada and China in Utrecht between 5 and 7 July. Concerning their chances at the World Champs Havenga told they expect favourable outcome in group matches against the French and the Japanese. He considers Hungary the strongest rival, adding that in his view the home team has better chances. It will definitely not be easy to win, yet they managed to do so at the European Championships in Budapest back in 2014.

„We aim at finishing first in our group, if we are only second, we might have such strong rivals in the next round as Russians, Greeks or Australians. I don't want to make guesses about chances, for sure we will do our very best for victory in all matches” - said Arno Havenga after announcing the roster. For the record, the head coach is highly satisfied with the team's preparation, especially with the 2-week period spent in China where they played 12 high level matches testing no fewer than 21 players. Their attendance in Thetis Cup in Greece was effective, as well thus the team ranked second at the previous World Championships is visiting Budapest with high hopes.

Roster for the World Championships includes: Debby Willemsz, Laura Aarts, Amarens Genee, Dagmar Genee, Marloes Nijhuis, Nomi Stomphorst, Ilse Koolhaas, Sabrina van der Sloot, Vivian Sevenich, Lieke Klaassen, Yasemin Smit, Kitty Lynn Joustra, Maud Megens.

Last week the Dutch Swimming Federation announced rosters for open water swimmers and divers, also. In Balatonfüred the Netherlands will be represented by Sharon van Rouwendaal (women's 5, 10 and 25k), Ferry Weertman (men's 10k) and Marcel Schouten (men's 10k and 25k). Sharon van Rouwendaal and Marcel Schouten will enter the mixed event.

As for women's diving events, Daphne Wil (1 m, 3 m, 3 m synchro), Inge Jansen (1 m, 3 m, 10m synchro, 3m synchro) and Céline van Duijn (10m, 10m synchro, team) will be delegated from the Netherlands, while for men's diving Joey van Etten (men's 1m, 3m, team) will attend the World Championships.

In accordance with the decision by the Dutch Federation the duet of sisters, Noortje and Bregje de Brouwer will enter synchronised swimming in Budapest this summer.

Swimming: Lacourt can't wait for his last final

Last week Open de France was staged in Chartres featuring several top swimmers preparing for the World Championships. Concerning women, Katinka Hosszú, Russian Yulija Efimova and Australian Emma McKeon shall be highlighted since they all topped the podium in 3 events each. Hosszú swept 200 and 400m medley as well as 200m backstroke, Efimova touched in first in 50, 100 and 200m breaststroke while McKeon excelled in 100 and 200m freestyle and 200m butterfly.

Highest interest was attracted to the performance of host swimmers. French swimmer Mehdy Metella clinched gold both in men's 100m freestyle and 100m butterfly although great rivals Cielo, Magnussen and Czerniak were present, also, yet apparently French medal contender is in his top form.

„I never had such a great series of results as this spring. I don't know what to expect in Budapest after this, still I am absolutely satisfied with my preparation” - told Metella at the end of the race.

Most spectators were interested in men's 50m backstroke final which was attended by legendary French swimmers Camille Lacourt and Jérémy Stravius. Prior to the World Championships this was the last race for Lacourt, who hopes to claim gold in Budapest. At the weekend in Chartres he removed all doubts, he will definitely go for gold in Budapest. He finished first with 24.82, whereas Stravius was placed fourth only, behind Brazilian Guido and Greek Christou. The 32-year-old swimmer hoping to earn world champion title for the fifth time now, could not be hindered by rivals, he performed excellently. *„I never made such a good time during trainings and I will further improve until Budapest. This victory was quite important for me since this was my last race home. Looking back to my career I am really satisfied. There were ups and downs alike, but I always stood up and I am very proud. I can't wait for the World Champs” - told Lacourt, who is preparing for his last final in the capital of Hungary.*