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László Cseh: „The point for me is to enjoy swimming”

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Come what may, one of the greatest icons at the 17th FINA World Championships will definitely be László Cseh. He has a huge career behind him and now at the age of 32 he has the opportunity to jump in the water in front of home crowd at his eighth World Championships. He has experienced at three European Championships hosted by Hungary what energy level and drive the home crowd can bring, as a matter of fact thanks to his qualities he was able to do his very best and make best use of his energy in front of foreign audiences as well. It is also demonstrated by his tally of 12 medals from World Champs. In Budapest he will enter 50, 100 and 200m butterfly. The last but one period of preparation was finished last weekend, he will spend the last 2 weeks preparing in Törökbálint.

EIGHTH WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS - HOSTED BY HUNGARY FOR THE FIRST TIME

László Cseh is the only male swimmer to have claimed medals at seven consecutive World Championships. In 2003 he clinched silver in 400m medley in Barcelona, this was the first medal while the most recent is from Kazan, he finished second in 100m butterfly. He has collected a total of 2 gold, 5 silver and 5 bronze medals at World Championships so far.

Hungary is about to host the World Championships for the first time in its history, however several European Championships have been staged here therefore László Cseh knows what it feels like racing at an international tournament in front of home crowd. In 2006 he collected 2 gold and 1 silver in Budapest, in 2010 he won 2 gold medals here while in 2012 he clinched 3 gold, 1 silver and 2 bronze medals in Debrecen.

He may continue to grow his amazing medal tally in Duna Arena.

We have very little time left until the World Championships, yet swimming events will begin somewhat later, in the second week of the World Champs. Last week you were preparing here in Duna Arena. Was it easier, calmer, more intense to map and test the venue this time compared to Budapest Cup at the beginning of June?

Training in Duna Arena is very pleasant, both pools are excellent, this was my conclusion back in June already. The competition pool is fast, swimming in it feels great, the only thing I missed was scoreboards since it matters a lot when turning. It is also important to ensure

ideal water temperature, everything is alright in the complex really. This was the last time we were here, the complex will be quite busy from Monday, we will spend the last two weeks in Törökbálint again. We need some peace and quiet before returning here for the World Championships.

Looking up to the grandstands, especially to the top, is an extraordinary experience, just as it is the other way round looking down to the competition pool from above. Soon Duna Arena will be fully packed with people, does it put any pressure on you?

Actually, yes, I wouldn't want to walk up there, it must be rather exhausting. I really like the complex, it is spacious, I am sure the audience will encourage us greatly. It is always special to race in front of home crowd. It is definitely not easier to swim in home environment, yet I am sure the audience will boost us. This will be the first time World Championships are hosted by Hungary, it will sure be a remarkable experience for all of us.

NOTHING ELSE BUT BUTTERFLY FOR NOW

At the beginning of his career László Cseh focused on medley events primarily, both his first World Championships medal (silver in Barcelona) and his first gold (Melbourne, 400m medley, 2005) were clinched in the classic Hungarian event. In 2013 he won his first World Championships medal in butterfly in Barcelona (silver in 100m) then, 10 years later he became champion in butterfly (200m) in Kazan.

Things are becoming clear now.

You will enter three butterfly events at the World Championships and you will miss 200m medley this time. A bit less than 2 weeks before the kick off, how are you getting on with your preparation?

We have done our job, last weekend marks the end of a harder period, now we shall focus on getting into shape, speeding up and relaxing are the focus areas from now on. I have given up on entering 200m medley, it would also require improving my breaststroke. Quite frankly I am not so much keen on this event any more so I decided to focus on butterfly instead.

50, 100 and 200m butterfly events have their history in your case. Interesting memories include the 100m final in Rio where you won silver in first ever Olympic three-way tie with Michael Phelps and Chad Le Clos. In 200m you are title defender, in 50m anything can happen...

I anticipate I will do well; preparations are going according to plans. It is true I haven't had outstanding results lately, still I think I will manage to achieve my best form by the World Championships. In fact all events are interrelated: 50m butterfly is very important because of speed, in 100m physical fitness is a key in addition to speed, while in 200m focus areas include speed and dynamics. We are making good progress.

Which is your favourite course from these three?

It is difficult to pick, it is different what makes them demanding and enjoyable. I love all three, still 50m might be a bit too short, anything can happen there really. When I am good at 100m it makes me feel great and motivates me highly. 200m butterfly is the longest course so it allows for enjoying the „progress”, the beauty in swimming while racing. The point for me is to jump in the water and enjoy swimming. This is the primary focus even in a final. I have acquired the necessary experience and technique how to perform in the different events but a lot depends on rivals and on my forma at the time. I hope it will not be too exhausting to race and I will get out of the pool feeling untired.

RACING WITH TITANS (TOO)

Other Hungarian contender in 200m butterfly Tamás Kenderesi was 6 and a half while Kristóf Milák was 3 when László Cseh first became World Championships medallist in Barcelona. Now they both will enter the tournament and make the race with elder generations more nail-biting.

What time results do you aim for? Your master, Zsolt Plagányi told you hope for finishing within 51 seconds in 100m and in 1.54 in 200m, so that you could participate in the award ceremony.

I will definitely need to do my personal best in order to finish in the top. The field of butterfly is really strong and has improved significantly so it is rather difficult to make it to the final. I will aim at making it.

You are right, there are several excellent swimmers in the field, including youngsters, and to our pleasure, Hungarian youngsters such as Olympic bronze medallist Tamás Kenderesi and 17-year-old Kristóf Milák, who is in great form.

I am very glad about youngsters appearing on stage, still I hope I will manage to keep them behind somehow. 200m has been really strong recently due to Tamás Kenderesi among others, and Kristóf Milák is another talented Hungarian swimmer in 100m to be careful with. In the ideal scenario we three could swim in the 200m final but unfortunately it is not possible. Getting into the Hungarian roster for the World Championships is like swimming in the final.

Last week your dad helped out as the time keeper at your morning trainings since Zsolt Plagányi had to go to Netanya for the European Junior Championships where another young Hungarian talent Nándor Németh clinched gold in 100m freestyle and freestyle relay as well. It is great to see the harmony between swimmers from Eger and Törökbálint.

Yes, absolutely. My coach was absent for due reasons, our team is a good one for sure. Sometimes there are ups and downs, when I am tired and my performance is not that good I tend to be down. In these situations, my coach tries to lift me up, most often his attempts are successful. He helps me a great deal to get over, continue the work and pursue positive attitude at all times. The last week was really demanding, I was a bit down but in a few minutes he could lift me up and I know things will be just alright next week.

A MESTER RÖVID ELŐZETESE

Zsolt Plagányi managed to pull László Cseh together not only in the short but in the long run, as well, since the Hungarian top swimmer is in a great form again thanks to his master. It is clearly demonstrated by the most recent world champion title gained in Kazan. In Rio after a devastating performance in 200m butterfly, he clinched that shiny silver in 100m demonstrating incredible willpower and mental preparedness. László's coach thinks everything is given for the iconic swimmer to do well at the World Championships.

„Laci is quite tired now, preparations will be different from now, as usually, we will finish the process of getting into form in Törökbálint. If he manages to achieve the necessary speed at the World Championships, I believe he will have good results in all events” - said Zsolt Plagányi.

What is his schedule in Duna Arena?

„We will start off by 50m butterfly, this is the event which requires the appropriate speed. Obviously there are specialists in this event, we do our best to keep up with them. It will be followed by 200m butterfly where he is the title defender, he tops last year's world ranking. He is still in the top, we pay special attention to this event. In 100m he is Olympic and World Champs silver medallist, he is capable of achieving great time (below 51 secs) and in 50m he will show what to expect in 100m. We both now that he needs to do better than in Kazan in order to win a medal. We expect close races, great battles, especially in 200m where the field is not so large yet there are a lot of swimmers who could finish under 1:54.”

And now a little about anticipation.

„In my opinion he is quite balanced now. Eventually it may turn out to be beneficial that he could not achieve any outstanding results at the beginning of the year, this way he was not so much in the centre of attention. Sometimes it is good to avoid this burden as long as possible and cope with it only in due time. We do everything together, we always discuss what to improve or refine during races, trainings. We see his time results, the goal and inside we feel what to change. Since January Laci has lost 10 kg, which is fantastic, this is his competition weight. We will do our very best at the World Championships, this event is a fantastic opportunity. The goal is to make sure swimmers find joy in swimming.”

László Cseh will be among the first ones to swim as he enters 50m butterfly prelims in the morning and the semi-final in the afternoon on 23 July, the opening day of swimming events. The final will take place the following day. Prelims and semi-finals for 200m butterfly will be held on 25 July, while the final is scheduled for the following day. In 100m contenders will jump in the water on 28 July, the final for this event is due on 29 July evening.