

## European Aquatics Championships, Rome (ITA), Day 6 – Summary

**Sjostrom hits 27, Milak, Martinenghi, Panziera with the doubles, emotional win for Romanchuk**

**Sarah Sjostrom overtook Alexandre Popov and now leads the all-time European Championships medal chart with 27 podiums – fittingly, a gold in the 50m free put her atop. Specialists completed their respective missions: Hungary’s Kristof Milak made the 100-200m fly double (and finished the meet with 5 medals), home hero Nicolo Martinenghi had the 50-100m breast golds, while compatriot Margherita Panziera added the 100m crown to her 200m back title. Netherlands’ Marnit Steenbergen claimed a 6<sup>th</sup> medal, soon Britain’s Freya Anderson caught her up as she was member of another triumphant British relay. Italy and GB could also celebrate respective wins in the diving pool.**

### *Swimming*

As expected, history was made on the penultimate day of the swimming meet when Sarah Sjostrom hit the wall first in the 50m free with a world best time of the season (she also won that event at the Worlds). This gold placed Sarah Sjostrom atop of the all-time individual medal-charts of the Europeans – she has now 27 medals (16 gold, 7 silver, 4 bronze) and leads the ranks alone, leaving Russia’s Alexander Popov behind. The Swede was no match for the others, gained 0.29sec on Poland’s Katarzyna Wasick while Valerie van Roon of the Netherlands was a distant third.

Sjostrom won her first title back in Eindhoven 2008 in the 100m fly (and repeated that win a year later here in Rome at the Worlds) – let alone getting titles 14 years apart at the elite level is an incredible feat.

While she bagged her 4<sup>th</sup> medal here, there are others whose count stands at six here in Rome. Marnit Steenbergen added a silver to her tally after finishing runner-up in the 200m IM (4-1-1), while Freya Anderson got a fourth relay medal to have also six here (2-3-1). It was a gold as the Brits retained their title in the mixed 4x200m free relay, ahead of France and Italy.

Among the men, Hungary’s Kristof Milak amassed the most impressive silverware so far, five medals (3-2-0). Winning the 200m fly was a simple routine for him, a third straight victory and a second 100-200m fly double, something only the German legend Michael Gross was capable of in the history of the Europeans, three decades ago. By his own standards, Milak’s 1:52.01 looks just another usual day in office, though in reality this is the 6<sup>th</sup> fastest time ever and apart from him (who owns the top four times) only Michael Phelps could swim faster once, here in Rome, in a shiny suit when he clocked his 1:51.51 WR in 2009. Still, Milak didn’t care much of his win but hailed his closest friend and training partner Richard Marton who pipped Italy’s Alberto Razzetti for the silver to give the Magyars a 1-2 finish.

The hosts also staged a 1-2 as Nicolo Martinenghi and Simone Cerasuolo came inside 27sec in the 50m breast – Martinenghi, just like at the Worlds, doubled down the 50-100m titles (in the absence of the emperor Adam Peaty). Margherita Panziera, after having won her third consecutive 200m back gold,

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managed to add the 100m crown for the first time. With GB's Medi Harris and Dutchwoman Kira Toussaint, they produced one of the closest contests, hitting the wall inside 0.13sec, Panziera's winning margin was 0.06sec.

Though the enthusiastic home crowd expected another big splash from world champion Gregorio Paltrinieri in the men's 1500m free, this time the Italian master of the distance was outpaced by Mykhailo Romanchuk who changed gears at 600m and never looked back. It was an emotion-filled finish, despite the Ukrainian beating the town's favourite, the fans still cheered for him loudly, even chanting his name as a tribute to what he and his country has been going through in recent months. Romanchuk's winning time was a stunner, the 14:36.10 puts him 4<sup>th</sup> on the all-time ranks. Germany's Florian Wellbrock couldn't bounce back from his sickness (Covid infection), was unable to keep up (settled for the 5<sup>th</sup> place) and France's Damien Joly grabbed the bronze.

Romanchuk's win was also a successful title-defence, just like Anastasia Gorbenko's brilliant victory in the 200m IM, to secure Israel's first medal here, a gold straight away.

### *Divining*

The afternoon heat was nothing compared to the electrifying atmosphere the fans created during the women's 1m final, and Elena Bertocchi fulfilled their expectations. She came up with an extremely balanced performance, only 2 out of the 35 marks she got was below 7.0 (a 6.0 and 6.5), securing her another gold after Budapest 2021. Before the last round, a 1-2 was in sight for the hosts as Chiara Pellacani was a close second, but Emma Gullstrand's final attempt was slightly better and the Swede moved up to the second place, by a tiny margin of 0.6 points.

The battle for the mixed 10m synchro title also came down to the final dives. Ukraine's Sofia Lyskun and Oleksii Sereda took jumped to the lead in the second round and held on till the last. They performed the highest scoring dive the final, a 78-pointer, receiving a handful of 9.0s, however, an erroneous jump from Lyskun in the 5<sup>th</sup> round halved their lead ahead of Britain's Lois Toulson and Kyle Kothari. And in the last round the Ukrainians offered an average dive, while the Brits were close to excellent which gave them a winning margin of 2.19 points. Italy booked the third place of the podium.

### *Open water swimming*

At its meeting, the LEN Bureau approved the proposal of the LEN Technical Open Water Swimming Committee to reschedule the programme of the open water swimming meet to be held in Ostia at the European Aquatics Championships.

Based on the weather forecast, with strong winds and high waves predicted for 18 August, the LEN TOWSC proposed the following changes to the programme which is now confirmed:

#### **18 August – no race**

19 August – Men's and Women's 10km, held parallel, from 9.00AM

20 August – Men's and Women's 5km, held parallel, from 9.00AM

21 August – Men's and Women's 25km, held parallel, from 7.00AM, followed by the 6km team relay (exact starting time TBD)

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This schedule is subject of change in case the weather and sea conditions require.  
The technical committee, together with the local organising committee and the responsible authorities, shall determine if the conditions are safe to hold the respective races.

“Athletes’ safety comes first, before anything else, the decision-makers shall consider that principle first and will give the green light only if all safety requirements are met” LEN President Antonio Silva said.

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