



Swimming, Day 4: Clear victories in the men's 200m fly and women's 200m free Phelps and Pellegrini: great show at the Foro Italico

Seven new World Records and clear victories from the local star Federica Pellegrini and worldwide legend Michael Phelps (USA) highlighted the fourth day of the swimming competitions at these 13th FINA World Championships, held in the Foro Italico in Rome (ITA). Pellegrini gave the second gold to her country (in the 200m free), also in a WR time, while Phelps wanted to forget as soon as possible his defeat in the 200m free and easily controlled the pace in the 200m butterfly in a WR performance. After being third in the 100m, Cameron van der Burgh (RSA) won the gold in the 50m breaststroke, while China's Lin Zhang got a brilliant victory in the men's 800m free.

After losing the men's 200m free on Day 3, Michael Phelps (USA) did not want to leave his supporters with doubts about his shape or capacity to win: in the 200m butterfly, the greatest swimmer in history controlled the race as he wanted and finished in a World Record time of 1:51.51, improving his own mark obtained at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing (1:52.03). It was Phelps' 21st award at FINA World Championships (and third in Rome), which makes him the most medalled athlete in this competition, after being also the most successful Olympian ever (14 gold, from which eight in a single edition of the Games, a record in any Olympic sport). Far behind were Poland's 2005 champion Pawel Korzeniowski (1:53.23) and Japan's Takeshi Matsuda (after being the fastest in the semi-final, he finished in third with a time of 1:53.32).

When asked if his fantastic performance in this final was influenced by his silver medal the night before, Phelps said that he had always had to put races immediately behind him in order to be successful and that although he was disappointed about last night, he had already moved on. He considers the 200m butterfly, he explained, to be his "bread and butter" event, and one that he and his coach are always working on and trying to improve. "My sister did it too, so I guess I'm just trying to keep it in the family," he joked. For his upcoming individual race - the 100m butterfly - he said that "whoever has the good turn; whoever can get

the perfect hand on the wall, will take it. The best start, turn and finish; whoever can nail all three will win it, but it's going to be tight...there's so much speed in there. Those guys are going to be battling it out."

Phelps was further asked if he had essentially set himself up for failure at these Championships because unless he does everything perfect - like he did in Beijing - it will be considered an upset. To this he responded: "I have (my own) goals that I want to accomplish... and people said in '04 that that was a failure, but I didn't think so, and, if I'm satisfied and I'm happy then that's all that matters. If people think that not perfect is a failure, that's how they look at it, that's not how I look at it."

In the women's 200m free, the favourite on the paper and of the crowd at the Foro Italico, Federica Pellegrini (ITA), who also won in a very convincing way - touching in 1:52.98 - a new WR after her 1:53.67 effort in the semi-final. It was Pellegrini's second gold medal in these championships, after her triumph on Day 1 in the 400m free, also in a WR time. The Italian had been third in 2007 and Olympic champion in 2008 in this event. Like in Phelps' case, the winner was well ahead of the main challengers: Allison Schmitt (USA) got the silver in 1:54.96 and her compatriot Dara Vollmer obtained the bronze in 1:55.64.

On her performance, Pellegrini said: "after the semi-finals I was very self-aware that I could break the record; that I could really win, but today I was also really tired. From a muscular point of view I didn't really believe I could break this record, so it's amazing." Pellegrini has surprised herself in Rome and said she never thought she could go so fast in the 200m. She also expressed high hopes for the rest of the competition, saying that she feels Italy will have an excellent 4x200m free relay tomorrow. In conclusion, Pellegrini spoke of national pride, saying that she touches her heart and her head before she races, "because I have to compete with both my mind and heart". She competes for Italy, she explained, because that's where

Medals Table				
After day 12				
	Gold	Silver	Bronze	TOTAL
CHN	8	5	9	22
RUS	7	6	3	16
GER	5	2	0	7
USA	4	7	4	15
ITA	4	1	4	9
GBR	3	1	1	5
AUS	2	4	3	9
ESP	1	6	2	9
RSA	1	0	2	3
JPN	1	0	1	2
MEX	1	0	0	1
NED	1	0	0	1
SRB	1	0	0	1
SWE	1	0	0	1
TUN	0	2	0	2
CAN	0	1	5	6
BRA	0	1	1	2
FRA	0	1	1	2
DEN	0	1	0	1
GRE	0	1	0	1
POL	0	1	0	1
CUB	0	0	1	1
HUN	0	0	1	1
MAS	0	0	1	1
ROU	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	40	40	40	120

her heart is, and to compete in an international event at home in Italy means so much.

The third final of the day was, on the other hand, quite undecided until the last metres (perhaps, even better, the last centimetres). In the men's 50m breaststroke, Cameron van der Burgh (RSA) improved his third place from 2007 in Melbourne (AUS), in a World Record time of 26.67 - faster than the 26.74 he had established in the semi-final. It is the first success at this level for the South African (he was third in the 100m on Day 2), who was dominator of the 2008/2009 short course season, winning the yearly circuit of the FINA

Swimming World Cup (at the 2008 Olympics at the "Water Cube" he was 10th in the 100m breaststroke; the 50m not being on the programme). In Rome, in a very close arrival, Felipe Silva was Brazil's first medallist in the swimming competitions, taking silver in 26.76, while Mark Gangloff (USA) was third in 26.86.

To close the afternoon session, Lin Zhang (CHN) did a perfect race in the men's 800m free and touched first in a WR time of 7:32.12, much faster than the 7:38.65 clocked by Grant Hackett (AUS) at the Worlds in 2005 (Montreal). It was the first swimming gold medal for China in these championships and his first title at this level, after being second in the 400m free and seventh in the 1500m free at the 2008 Olympics. In Rome, he had been third in the 400m free. Oussama Mellouli (TUN), third in the 400m, was second in a time of 7:35.27 (also under the former WR). In a race dominated by Zhang and Mellouli, Canada's Ryan Cochrane was the "distant" bronze medallist in 7:41.92.

Zhang was quite speechless after his victory; admitting it is "difficult for [him] to put in words how he feels," but extending congratulations to the other medallists. "I'm very moved," he said. "Sorry, I am holding back the tears."

One of the shortest existing WR ever was established in the first semi-final of the women's 50m backstroke by Germany's Daniela Samulski in 27.39 – better than the unofficial World Record (pending FINA approval) she had set on June 26, 2009 in a time of 27.61. A few minutes later, Anastasia Zueva (RUS), improved that mark by 0.01 and qualified in first place for the final in 27.38. In the women's 200m butterfly, Mary Descenza (USA) qualified second for the final, after beating the WR of the distance in the heats, in 2:04.14 (faster than the 2:04.18 with which Zige Liu, from China, was Olympic champion in Beijing).

In one of the day's surprises, Filippo Magnini (ITA) did not qualify for the final of the men's 100m free, after being ninth in the semi-finals in a time of 48.04. The Italian was the defending 2007 and 2005 world champion in this event, after winning in Melbourne (AUS) in 48.43 and in Montreal (CAN) in 48.12. Curiously, he was also ninth at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing (48.11). The fastest qualifier for the final was France's Alain Bernard (2008 Olympic champion), with a time of 47.27.

WATER POLO

Champion USA to play Canada in women's water polo final

Thanks to Elsie WINDES, the United States of America will defend its women's water polo title at the FINA World Championships at the Foro Italico in Rome on Friday.

It will be an all-North American final with Canada repulsing the Russian challenge 8-7. The USA beat Greece 8-7, but it was the 24-year-old WINDES who the USA can thank for pushing the team to a sixth FINA World Championship medal.

With two gold, one silver and two bronze already in the cabinet, the USA is expected to make it three gold, without the support of people north of the border.

WINDES set the pool alight with the opening two goals inside two minutes and then followed up with another two goals in just over a minute late in the second quarter as the USA shot to a 5-3 lead at the long break.

To the Greeks' credit, the 3-0 deficit was not insurmountable and by halfway through the second quarter it had been wiped out but then WINDES struck.

Canada shot to a 4-1 lead over Russia only to see it dissipate in the Roman heat by three-quarter time. At 5-5, Canada was stung back into action and won the final quarter 3-2. Russia had the final chance to level the game when it came tantalizingly close with a last-gasp shot finding the left post twice but failing to fall into the net.

Canadian head coach Pat OATEN, who has led the team for much of this decade, said he did not dream of making the final "but we knew we could do it".

He believed hours before the second semifinal that the USA would beat Greece. "Today we suffered Russian pressing. The US team also plays good pressing. The final will be a game like the others — same ball, same pool but different referees."

In the group of 5th-8th semifinals, the Olympic champion Netherlands played the miracle hand and came back from a mid-game slump to beat 2005 champion Hungary 10-9. The Dutch led 6-2 but had to watch as Hungary raced to an 8-6 lead before the Netherlands reshaped its game,

led 9-8 and then broke the 9-9 impasse with a pressure-relieving goal in the final minute.

Dutch head coach Mauro MAUGERI said his team had a "moment of absolute craziness".

"Then we came back and we managed to win. I'm glad for the result even if I'm still disappointed for our loss to Russia."

Australia led 5-0 against Spain in their 5th-8th semifinal before winning 7-6. The lead was nearly nullified by Spain as it slowly groped its way back into the game to be 5-2 down at halftime and 6-4 at the final break. This became 6-5 before Australia went two ahead in the final quarter and allowed a consolation goal in the dying seconds.

Italy closed with one of its best games of the tournament, thumping Germany 12-3 for ninth place and China, the fifth-ranked team from the 2008 Beijing Olympics, beat New Zealand 16-9 in the 11th-12th play-off.

In Thursday's men's matches, the big four contest their semifinals. Serbia and reigning world champion Croatia play 16:50 while Spain and the USA play at 21:00.

Match reports:

Game 77, 09:00, women, CHN 16 NZL 9

Classification 11th-12th

Referees: Guy PINKER (RSA), Igor MERNENKO (UZB).

Quarters: 4-2, 5-2, 2-2, 5-3

Extra man: CHN 1/5; NZL 2/8

China muscled its way to 11th position, which was a far cry from fifth at the Beijing Olympic Games. China has not performed here and New Zealand put plenty of pressure on the top-line team. The relative closeness of the game was blown apart in the final quarter but New Zealand managed to level at two was 7-4 down and 9-4 at halftime. The margin narrowed to 10-6 in the third and 11-7 early in the fourth before the powerful centre forward SUN Yating snared two more goals for five before Kiwi captain Anna SIEPRATH lobbed to close the scoring and a good effort from the New Zealand team, which will host next year's FINA World Cup in Wellington.

Game 78, 10:20, women, ITA 12 GER 3

Classification 9th-10th

Referees: Gideon REEMNET (NED), Risto DAMCEVSKI (MKD)

Quarters: 3-1, 2-1, 3-1, 4-0

Extra man: ITA 3/11; GER 1/7

Italy blew away Germany with a faster pace,

counter-attacks and a willingness to take chances in claiming ninth place. Captain DI MARIO was compelling and dangerous and for once Italy did not have to rely on the superior centre-forward skills of CASANOVA. Germany looked sluggish for much of the game and, except for a goal at the top of the third quarter, could not breach Italy's defence for the rest of the game. Italy can be proud of the efforts of BIANCONI and EMMOLO, newcomers to the team who scored 10 and nine goals respectively. DI MARIO topped her team's scoring with 13 goals.

Ninth was well down on fifth in Melbourne two years ago and equaled the Montreal finish in 2005. Memories of bronze in Rome in 1994 are just that, as are the titles of 1998 and 2001. Germany was 11th in Melbourne and eighth in Montreal.

Game 79, 11:40, women, HUN 9 NED 10

Semifinals 5th-8th

Referees: Steven ROTSART (USA), Nikolaos STAVROPOULOS (GRE).

Quarters: 1-3, 1-2, 5-1, 2-4

Extra man: HUN 2/8; NED 4/9

The Netherlands survived one of the most intriguing matches of the tournament to win through to the play-off for fifth. At 6-2 ahead in the third quarter, the Dutch looked comfortable and en route to an easy victory.

Then the wheels fell off, or perhaps the Dutch sunk into the mud. Hungary grabbed five successive goals to lead 7-6 at the final break. This became 8-6 on its first attack in the fourth period, seemingly a miraculous recovery. But the Dutch aren't Olympic champions for nothing and the next three goals fell the way of the Orange brigade. But there was still more than three minutes remaining. With just over a minute left on the clock,

SZUCZ took a chancy shot from eight metres at the end of possession and Mieke CABOUT deflected it, sending it too high for goalkeeper VAN DEER MEIJDEN to stop, levelling the game at 9-9. The Dutch went to a timeout and the tactic was simple - two passes and then into VAN BELKUM'S hand. She did the rest from well outside, scoring for 10-9 with 40 seconds left. Hungary took a timeout but no one wanted to shoot and the 30 seconds ran out, leaving the Dutch to swim the ball up the pool and win the match.

Game 80, 15:30, women, AUS 7 ESP 6

Semifinals 5th-8th

Referees: Ulrich SPIEGEL (GER), Alan BALFANBAYEV (KAZ).

Quarters: 3-0, 2-2, 1-2, 1-2

Extra man: AUS 2/10; ESP 1/8

Australia nearly lost the unloseable game when

it watched a 5-0 lead evaporate as Spain bounced back to nearly clinch extra time. Australia shot out of the blocks and had a 2-0 lead in the first two minutes, stretching that to 3-0 after four and a half minutes. By early in the second quarter it was 5-0 but Spain stopped the onslaught and GIL with a penalty goal and GARCIA from centre forward had the score at a more respectable 5-2. Five minutes passed until halftime with no further score. Laura LOPEZ struck twice in the third and the score was 5-4 before Rebecca RIPPON stopped the rot on extra, ending nearly 14 minutes without a goal. LOPEZ-ESCRIBANO converted extra man for 6-5 and it took Australia a further five minutes to respond on extra to Sophie Smith off a sweet play after a timeout. LOPEZ-ESCRIBANO countered but at 12 seconds remaining in the game, Australia had earned the shot at fifth place.

Game 81, 16:50, women, CAN 8 RUS 7

Semifinals 1st-4th

Referees: Gabor KISZELLY (HUN), Erhan TULGA (TUR).

Quarters: 3-1, 1-1, 1-3, 3-2

Extra man: CAN 2/6; RUS 3/9

Canada became the first team to make the gold-medal final, a realm it has only conquered once before - in 1991 when it lost to the Netherlands in Perth, Australia. The victory was built on a 4-1 lead early in the second quarter and much like the game before, the leading team watched as the underdog relentlessly came back. IVANOVA scored two in a row for 5-4 and PANTYULINA nearly ruined Canada's dreams when she levelled the game four seconds from three-quarter time. But Canada scored twice on extra at the top of the fourth with Russian captain KONOUKH pulling one back on a drive soon after. The game was there for the taking. At 2:48 the game-changing goal was scored and possibly the goal of the tournament when ROBINSON sent in a high long ball to ALOGBO at centre forward. The Canadian captain rose high and swatted the ball backwards behind her head over the head of PROTSSENKO into the goal. At 8-6 the lead looked unassailable. However, Russia went to a timeout at 1:02 and drew a penalty, which RYZHOVA-ALENICHEVA converted at 0:38. The game wasn't over. Canada took a timeout at 0:20 and played out time until seven seconds from time when Russia took its second timeout. The ball moved to PANTYULINA who shaped, shot, hit the left upright, hit goalkeeper RIDDELL and rebounded into the left upright again and not into the goal. Canada had forced its way on to the podium where it has been twice before this century, claiming bronze medals at Fukuoka in 2001 and Montreal in

2005.

Game 82, 21:00, women, GRE 7 USA 8

Semifinals 1st-4th

Referees: Decio PATELLI (BRA), Sergio BORRELL (ESP).

Quarters: 2-3, 1-2, 2-1, 2-2

It could have been like any other game except this was a semifinal and the USA was expected to win heavily. Greece had upset World Cup champion en route to the semifinal and would not be denied a shot at history. Greece has an Olympic silver from 2004 but no medal at FINA World Championship level. Here was a chance to secure a medal two days before the final women's competition day. The USA went three up thanks to two WINDES shots and a VILLA penalty. That lead was snuffed out by midway through the second quarter as ANTONAKOU twice and ASIMAKI once had the Greeks back on track. WINDES did her best to dent Greek pride with two more goals before halftime. ASIMAKI struck again early in the third period while RULON scored on extra. ROUMPESI closed to 6-5 by the final break. The game lit up further when KOUTELI opened the final-quarter scoring and brought the game to 6-6. WINDES scored her fifth goal of the semifinal and only her fifth goal of the tournament, surprisingly enough, when she found the top corner from outside for 7-6. GREGORKA scored her eighth of the championship from point for 8-6 at 2:20 and the game headed in favour of the USA. A Greek timeout yielded no goal but the next Greek attack saw TSOUKALA drill a long shot into the bottom right for 8-7 at 0:48.

RESULTS



MEN

200m BUTTERFLY

1. PHELPS Michael USA 1:51.51 WR
2. KORZENIOWSKI Pawel POL 1:53.23
3. MATSUDA Takeshi JPN 1:53.32
4. ALMEIDA Kaio BRA 1:54.27
5. CLARY Scott Tyler USA 1:54.45
6. JUKIC Dinko AUT 1:55.08
7. ROUSSEAU Sebastien RSA 1:55.43
7. ROCK Michael GBR 1:55.43

50m BREASTSTROKE

1. VAN DER BURGH Cameron RSA 26.67 WR
2. SILVA Felipe Franca BRA 26.76
3. GANGLOFF Mark USA 26.86
4. FELDWEHR Hendrik GER 26.95
4. RICKARD Brenton AUS 26.95
6. MARKIC Matjaz SLO 27.10
7. TAHIROVIC Emil SLO 27.31
7. GOMES JR Joao BRA 27.31

800m FREESTYLE

1. ZHANG Lin CHN 7:32.12 WR
2. MELLOULI Oussama TUN 7:35.27
3. COCHRANE Ryan CAN 7:41.92
4. COLBERTALDO Federico ITA 7:43.84
5. DAVIES David GBR 7:44.32
6. VANDERKAAY Peter USA 7:48.44
7. RIVERA Marco ESP 7:49.46
7. PRILUKOV Yuriy RUS 7:49.46

WOMEN

200m FREESTYLE

1. PELLEGRINI Federica ITA 1:52.98 WR
2. SCHMITT Allison USA 1:54.96
3. VOLLMER Dana USA 1:55.64
4. JACKSON Joanne GBR 1:55.88
5. YANG Yu CHN 1:56.28
6. PANG Jiaying CHN 1:56.47
7. MUTINA Agnes HUN 1:56.70
8. VERRASZTO Evelyn HUN 1:57.50

RECORDS (DAY 4)

7 WORLD RECORDS

- 800 Fr Men 7:32.12 Lin Zhang CHN
 200 Fly Women 2:04.14h Mary Descenza USA
 50 Back Women 27.38sf Anastasia Zueva RUS
 50 Back Women 27.39sf Daniela Samulski GER

- 200 Fly Men 1:51.51 Michael Phelps USA
 200 Fr Women 1:52.98 Federica Pellegrini ITA
 50 Breast Men 26.67 Cameron Van Der Burgh, RSA

8 CHAMPIONSHIPS RECORDS

- 800 Fr Men 7:32.12 Lin Zhang CHN
 50 Back Women 27.38 sf Anastasia Zueva RUS
 50 Back Women 27.39 sf Daniela Samulski GER
 50 Back Women 27.65h Aleksandra Gerasimenya BLR
 200 Fly Women 2:04.14h Mary Descenza USA
 200Fr Women 1:52.98 Federica Pellegrini ITA
 200 Fly Men 1:51.51 Michael Phelps USA
 50 Breast Men 26.67 Cameron Van Der Burgh RSA