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Sian Whittaker storms home to take first gold for Australia

Gold, gold to Australia... gold.

Deakin University's Sian Whittaker has captured Australia's first gold medal of the 2017 Summer Universiade with a superbly timed swim to win the 200m backstroke at the Taiwan Sport University Arena in Taipei.

The 20-year-old entered the final as the second fastest qualifier, but was confident she had something extra to give in the final and swam a composed first 100m to turn in second, a place she maintained until the final turn where she unleashed a fierce final 50m to win in 2:09.50.

She overpowered Canada's Alexia Zevnik who won silver in 2:09.92, with USA's Bridgette Alexander third in 2:10.30. The fastest qualifier, American Asia Seidt faded to finish fourth.

"That was how I hoped it would pan out, I was coming in ranked second, so wasn't the quickest in the final but I'm happy with the time and extremely happy with the place, so all round happy."

Whittaker said her strong finish was something of a trademark.

"I'm more of a back-end swimmer and I try and pace it so I have a quick back end – I kept to my race plan and didn't get caught up with what the other girls were doing and it paid off."

A first-year primary education student who calls Bendigo home, Whittaker is based at the Victorian Institute of Sport in Melbourne where she trains with Olympic champion Mack Horton under Craig Jackson as part of the strong Melbourne Vicentre squad.

Whittaker will also line up in the 100m backstroke heats on Tuesday and the 50m event later in the program.

In other events on day two in the pool:

2013 Universiade and Glasgow Commonwealth Games gold medal winner over the 50m backstroke, Ben Treffers (Australian National University) lined up in the final of the 100m backstroke. Seventh fastest into the final, Treffers was hoping to turn lane one into a lucky charm, and the commerce and business honours student produced a strong race to finish 5th in 54.39. He will return for the heats of the 50m event on Tuesday.

- After winning her heat in 1:08.94, dual Commonwealth Games 50m breaststroke gold medallist Leiston Pickett (Griffith University) returned for the evening semi-finals. Leading at halfway, Pickett got to the wall in 2nd place in 1:08.26 to comfortably qualify for the final as 5th fastest qualifier. Abbey Harkin (Griffith University) also qualified for the semis after her 1:10.39 heat swim, she finished 8th in her heat (1:10.32) for 15th overall.
- Gemma Cooney (The University of Queensland) reached the semis of the 100m freestyle with a 55.79 heat swim. Good enough for 11th fastest it was always going to be a stretch to make the final and despite improving in time to 55.54 for 7th in the semi, she finished 10th overall.
- Bond University's Laura Taylor placed 17th overall, just missing a spot in the semis with her 6th place heat swim of 56.38.
- Up against reigning world and Olympic 1500m champion Gregorio Paltrinieri in his heat, Josh Parrish (Griffith University) found the opposition hot in the 1500m heats, finishing 6th in his heat in 15:27.71 to place 12th overall. The top eight qualified for Tuesday's final.