

Fox beats Woods by 0.04 sec

World Cups Final

Four competitors who have not won a single slalom World Cup between them put down the quickest times on the opening day of finals competition in Prague but, while Slovakia's Jakub Grigar, Austria's Nadine Weratschnig, Czech Katerina Kudova and Great Britain's Ryan Westley had not won World Cups, they had previously won eight world championships between them, including Kudova's senior world title in 2015.

Kudova was quickest in the women's K1, ahead of Great Britain's Kimberley Woods and Italy's Stefanie Horn, and said she was happy to find some good form.

'I thought it would be really hard, that course, because I don't like that downstream that's really close but it was easy,' she said.

'Yes, I am surprised with my time but I didn't make any mistakes so it was good.

'I haven't had a really good year because the start of my season was really bad but the last races were really good so I'm hoping I will also be good for the world championships.'

Jakub Grigar had experienced a long podium drought since he won two junior and two U23 canoe slalom world titles but he reminded his opponents of his abilities with the quickest time in the men's K1.

Prague was also an Olympic qualifying event for the Slovakian team so the timing was good for the 22 year old.

'I would say the last two or three years have been a little bit frustrating for me. I couldn't really deliver what I wanted,' Grigar said.

'I was training well but when I came to the race I was pretty disappointed after my runs so I'm happy to have done at least one run that actually worked out for me.

'Hopefully, I've found my style and, hopefully, it will work for me on the next races as well.'

Czech pair Vavrinec Hradilek and Jiri Prskavec were second and third fastest.

Ryan Westley was also involved in Olympic selection this weekend for Great Britain's men's canoe team. He put the pressure on three time Olympian David Florence and team mate Adam Burgess by posting the overall quickest time in the men's C1.

'It certainly brings another level to it but at the end of the day the processes you go through are still the same; you are still, effectively, trying to win the race,' Westley said, 'especially in Great Britain; with the

quality we have got with David and Adam you certainly know you can't try and do anything different.

'It's always strange, not having raced for a long time, sitting on the start line after watching all the other World Cups; you're never sure how you're going to stack up.'

Switzerland's Thomas Koechlin was second fastest and Italy's Roberto Colazingari third.

Nadine Weratschnig had been on the verge of winning her first World Cup the previous weekend in Markkleeberg but made a late mistake which cost her a medal. On Friday she again reminded everyone of her speed, qualifying quickest in the women's C1.

'I'm not happy about my mistakes and there were some lines I wanted to do better and in a different way but in the end it was enough,' Weratschnig said.

'I really want to be fast for this race because it will give me a good feeling for the worlds and the Olympic qualifications so I'm really of a mind to race nice this time.'

Kimberley Woods was second fastest with defending world champion and World Cup titleholder Jessica Fox third.

Australia's Jessica Fox broke through for her first K1 win of the 2019 season and Slovakia's Matej Benus posted his first win for more than two years on the penultimate day of competition.

With their wins both Fox and Benus also locked away the overall World Cup titles for 2019 and took important steps toward qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics.

After dominating the women's K1 for much of the 2018 season, Fox had not been able to get back to the top of the podium in 2019 but the two time Olympic medallist got it right on the challenging course on Saturday to win by almost 3 seconds with Slovakia's Eva Tercej 3rd.

Fox felt it was close to her best form.

'I think so. I think today was really exactly what I was looking for,' she said.

'I've been training so well here so I really wanted to put it together. It was just about getting that run out, just to deliver that in the final. I was so pleased. That was the elation when I crossed the finish line. I'm really pleased with today; it could not have gone better.'

Fox was also rewarded for her consistency with the overall K1 World Cup title, defending the crown she won last year.

'It's always a little confidence boost,' she said.



Men's kayak winner Prskavec.



Westley posted the quickest C1M time.



Weratschnig did the same in C1W.



Fox was back on form with two wins.



Benus was the men's C1 winner.