



Fox placed 2nd.



Winning men's K1, Prskavec.

France's Marie-Zelia Lafont was the stand out performer in the women's K1 qualifying, the only competitor to break 100 seconds and one of only a handful of females to complete the course without any penalties.

Lafont posted a time of 99.83, 2.57 seconds ahead of Italy's Stefanie Horn with Great Britain's Mallory Franklin third fastest.

'When I started my run I had a really good feeling and had a good line which I held until the finish line,' Lafont said.

'Sometimes you have a good feeling and you don't know why so this is so cool. I like paddling here; it is so near to France and I love the Spanish spirit.

'This is not finished so I need to stay concentrated. It's important for the Olympic selection but for the moment I just want to paddle and we will see what happens.'

Among those who had to work hard on Thursday to progress were New Zealand's Rio 2016 silver medalist, Luuka Jones, two time world champion Corinna Kuhnle of Austria and Fiona Pennie and Kimberley Woods.

The quartet needed a second run to progress to Saturday's semi finals.

In the race for Olympic quotas, eighteen different countries, including 2020 Olympic host nation Japan, would contest the women's K1 semi final on Saturday. Under ICF rules, the top eighteen countries, excluding Japan, would earn Olympic tickets. Japan automatically qualifies.

In the men's C1, where the top 11 countries would all earn quotas, there would be 16 different nations represented in the semi finals.

Two first time world champions were crowned and a long list of athletes booked their tickets to Tokyo on an emotional day of competition on Saturday.

France's Cedric Joly put a difficult season behind him to take gold in the men's C1 while Slovenia's Eva Tercej not only celebrated her first ever world championship podium but also secured the women's K1 gold.

Tears flowed freely for 24 year old Joly after he notched up the biggest win of his career.

'I already cried after the semi final; it was my first final of the season. The year has been super hard for me,' Joly said.

'I feel really emotional right now; it is unbelievable. I really had a hard time qualifying to the team this year so the whole season was complicated. I had a very hard time around July after the second World Cup when I told my coach I was done with my training centre and that I had to move.

'I moved to Paris and I changed quite a number of things this summer and it's paid off. It was an amazing run. I love racing here; the crowd cheered me up from the first gate until the bottom.'

Joly finished 0.51 of a second ahead of Spain's Ander Elosegi, who is off to a fourth Olympic Games, while Slovenia's Luka Bozic picked up a bronze, a 2 second penalty for a gate touch ruling him out of the gold medal.

Eva Tercej was born in 1992, the year the Olympics came to La Seu. Just 27 years later she found herself on top of the podium after defeating reigning world champion Jessica Fox and New Zealand's Rio 2016 Olympic silver medalist Luuka Jones.

Some 12 months earlier at the 2018 world championships she couldn't even make the semi finals.

'This is still a dream for me. I was always dreaming about it and now it is the best end of season that I could imagine,' Tercej said.

'One year ago it was a really hard experience for me but I think I learned a lot. It was the mindset in which I started this season. I think this is the right comeback. I can see that it is still worth fighting for.

'I think I did a great step forward this season. I have been very confident all season, which is so important.'

Despite their world titles, both Joly and Tercej were two of a handful of competitors who have still to confirm their tickets to Tokyo. They have qualified the quota for their country but individual selections have not been finalized.

Among those who did confirm their Olympic selections on Saturday were Jessica Fox, Germany's Ricarda Funk, Luuka Jones, Steffi Horn and Kimberley Woods in the women's K1.

In the men's C1, joining Ander Elosegi in Tokyo will be Switzerland's Thomas Koechlin, Canada's Cameron Smedley and Great Britain's Adam Burgess.

Czech Jiri Prskavec and German Andrea Herzog took world titles while Rio gold medallist Joe Clarke sensationally missed out of the British Olympic team on a dramatic final day.

Prskavec added the 2019 K1 world title to the crown he won in 2015 while Herzog had double cause for celebration, picking up her first C1 world title as well as securing her ticket to Tokyo 2020.

The shock came in the men's K1 final, where Great Britain's Clarke, the Rio 2016 Olympic gold medallist, was squeezed out of the British Olympic team by Bradley Forbes-Cryans, who finished one place and just 0.89 of a second ahead in the final.

Herzog was assured of victory in the women's C1 after reigning world champion Jessica Fox picked up a 2 second penalty for a gate touch in the final. Herzog's final margin over the Australian was 0.94 of a second, with Austria's Nadine Weratschnig finishing 3rd.

'I still feel really nervous because I can't believe that I can be a world champion and catch that Olympic spot,' Herzog said.

'I always knew that I could win a medal but I didn't think it could be a gold medal. I think I will need some days to understand what happened here.

'This has been a tough year for me but I thought it would have to be a medal here. I just kept reminding myself that it was my turn and that if I paddled well it could be enough for an Olympic spot.

The Czech Republic won't finalize its Olympic team until early next year, but 2016 bronze medalist Jiri Prskavec put himself in the box position with a K1 world title on Sunday.

The 26 year old ended a long run of minor placings with victory in the 2019 World Cup final in Prague earlier in the month and then followed up with an electric final in La Seu on Sunday. As he did four years ago, he became world champion on the eve of the Olympic Games.

'This is so incredible for me after winning the final World Cup in Prague and now this,' Prskavec said.

'I felt really in good shape. This is the biggest race of the year and always the one before the Olympics is something special. Countries are trying to win Olympic quota places and there are individual selections so it's super nice to be a world champion again.

'This is our first selection race and I was coming into it to show my best. It was really hard to concentrate but I did it in the end and I'm now a world champion again.'

Local hope David Llorente posted the quickest raw time on the course but a 2 second penalty dropped him to the silver medal although his result confirmed his place at next year's Olympics and a return for Spain after the country missed the men's C1 in Rio.

Another local, Joan Crespo, finished 3rd.

ICF



Grigar in K1.



Herzog, women's C1 winner.

K1W: 1 E Tercej, Slovenija, 94.27. 2 J Fox, Australia, 94.69. 3 L Jones, NZ, 94.77.

6 K Woods, GB, 99.04. 11 F Pennie, GB. 20 M Franklin, GB.

K1M: 1 J Prskavec, Ceska, 84.26. 2 D Llorente, Espana, 85.96. 3 J Crespo, Espana, 87.22.

4 B Forbes-Cryans, GB, 87.91. 5 J Clarke, GB, 88.70.

C1W: 1 A Herzog, Deutschland, 100.52. 2 J Fox, Australia, 101.46.

3 N Weratschnig, Osterreich, 106.45. 11 M Franklin, GB. 12 K Woods, GB.

C1M: 1 C Joly, France, 90.84. 2 A Elosegi, Espana, 91.35. 3 L Bozic, Solvenija, 91.92.

6 D Florence, GB, 95.86. 14 R Westley, GB.

K1WT: 1 GB, 103.96. 2 Ceska, 104.16. 3 Rossija, 104.19.

K1MT: 1 Espana, 89.87. 2 Ceska, 90.86. 3 Polska, 93.69. 9 GB, 98.41.

C1WT: 1 Australia, 117.97. 2 Espana, 121.72. 3 Ceska, 124.48. 8 GB, 139.37.

C1MT: 1 Slovensko, 94.38. 2 Espana, 97.43. 3 Rossija, 98.62. 7 GB, 101.54.