

Atkins wins junior K1 200m

U23/J World Championships

Exciting Canadian teenager Sophia Jensen once again underlined her incredible talent with two strong performances on the opening day of competition at the junior and U23 sprint world championships in Pitesti, Romania.

Also impressive on Thursday were Germany's defending U23 C1 1,000m gold medallist, Conrad Scheibner, Cuba's canoe prodigy, Jose Cordova, and Australia's Tom Green in the K1 1,000m and team mates Jean Van Der Westhuyzen and Jackson Collins in the K2 1000.

The 17 year old Jensen picked up three gold medals at her junior world championships debut in Bulgaria in 2018 and was impressive again on Thursday when she qualified straight through to the finals of both the junior C1 200m and C1 500m.

'I was really stressed on the start line. I don't think I have ever been so stressed in all my life,' Jensen said.

'It's weird being the defending champion. I guess. I've never really had that experience so that was really stressful.'

The 18 year old Cordova caused a major boilover when he won the C1 1,000m at the opening World Cup this year and had little trouble in his junior heat on Thursday, posting a time more than 4 seconds quicker than the next best.

Australia's Tom Green already had a K1 1,000m senior World Cup final to his name this year and in Pitesti he was easily the fastest qualifier for the semis in the U23 event. His time was quicker than the gold medal winning time at last year's U23 world titles.

'It felt all right; the water's a bit heavy but it felt good,' Green said.

'I'm just going to go as well as I can here and take that expectation off everything. With senior worlds coming up, I've got a lot of expectations on myself for that so I'm pretty much just here to have some fun.'

Green's K4 1,000m team mates Van Der Westhuyzen and Collins were also quick in the heats of the men's U23 K2 1,000m, going under last year's gold medal time to book a direct place in the final.

'It's really exciting to be able to come here and race for your country,' Collins said.

'Everyone's paddling really well and we have a good team environment. Everyone's feeling really good.'

Hungary's Anna Lucz was the fastest on the water in the women's K1 200m, qualifying straight through to the final.

'I'm quite happy but I was really nervous before the race. The first race is always so nervous for me,' Lucz said.

'I'm glad that I'm over it. I think I'm in good shape and I'm also going to the senior world championships, which I'm really excited about.'

Also impressive on Thursday was Russia's reigning C1 500m world champion, Kseniia Kurach, who appreciated the drop back in distance to qualify easily for the final in the U23 C1 200m.

'The race wasn't hard but it wasn't easy,' Kurach said.

'It's my first race for the year in 200 metres in international competition. I feel a little pressure. I'm world champion in the 500 but I need to win the 200 metres.'

Scheibner won the U23 C1 1,000m in Bulgaria last year and showed he was on track to defend that title with a solid heat win on Thursday.

'This is my last year in U23 so it's quite special and hopefully it will work out,' Scheibner said.

'I really want to show that I'm still in good form. Last year the pressure wasn't that high because I didn't have to prove anything but this year I am the reigning champion so there's quite a lot of pressure but I think I'm more stable and stronger this year.'

Gold medals were successfully defended and new champions were crowned on another exciting day of racing.



Conrad Scheibner made it gold in the men's U23 C1 1,000m and then teamed up with Tim Hecker to win the U23 C2 1,000m title just over one hour later.

Sophia Jensen began her quest for another three junior gold medals with victory in the C1 200m while another German, Jule Hake, successfully defended her U23 K1 1,000m title.

Hungary and Germany picked up four gold medals each and there were also triumphs for Cuba, Australia, Poland, Russia and Belarus.

Scheibner was the stand out on the day, leading from start to finish in the C1 1,000m and then helping Hecker to a last gasp gold in the C2 1,000.

'I wanted to save some energy for the C2 so I took out my C1 hard and just tried to defend my position,' Scheibner said.

'Winning a title is great but I think, just defending it, only a few people have done that so I feel quite honoured to be among those people.'

Australia's Tom Green was also impressive, leading all the way to take gold in the K1 1,000m.

'It was good fun but it was also a bit tough,' he said.

'I was just trying to keep control of the race and it seemed to go well.'

It was Jose Cordova who caught the crowd's attention with a swashbuckling win in the junior C1 1,000m. Earlier this year the then 17 year old beat a world class field which included two time Olympic gold medallist Sebastian Brendel at a World Cup.

His win in Pitesti on Friday showed his form had held up.

In Olympic distance events Hungary picked up gold in the junior women's K4 1,000m, Poland won the women's U23 K4 1,000m and Hungary's Andras Redl won the junior men's K1 1,000m while Germany's Elias Kurth and Niklas Heuser won the men's K2 junior 1,000m.

Russia's gold medal came courtesy of Ivan Malkov and Kirill Romanov in the junior C2 men's 1,000m while Hungary's Matyas Koleszar and Viktor Nemeth triumphed in the men's U23 K2 1,000m.

Athletes from nine nations shared the ten gold medals on offer on the penultimate day of competition with Sophia Jensen picking up her second and Anna Lucz successfully defending her K1 200 title.

Uzbekistan won two gold medals while Canada, Belarus, Great Britain, Spain, Hungary, China, Latvia and Poland all picked up world titles in perfect paddling conditions.

Jensen was hoping to repeat her performance from 2018 when she won three junior gold medals. On Saturday she added the C1 200m to the C1 500m she won on Friday and then teamed up with Julia Osende to easily win their heat of the women's C2 500m.

'I was a little hesitant. I was super nervous. I didn't really process that the race had started until half way through the race,' Jensen said after her C1 200m race.

'A lot can change over a year and all these girls are super strong and super amazing. Anything can happen, really.'

After dominating the opening day of medals with eight gold medals between them, Hungary and Germany only won a single gold on Saturday with Anna Lucz successfully defending her U23 K1 500m title.

'I was very nervous; it was quite hard for me to defend my gold medal but now I'm really happy that I was able to do it,' Lucz said.

'I've been feeling very good on the water and feeling quite confident.'

Belarus's Veranika Leaniuk won the women's junior K1 200m while Great Britain's Daniel Atkins followed up his European junior K1 200m gold with a world title in Pitesti.

'I had a bit of a struggle off the start, just the first few strokes, but then I just went for it and tried to push through to the line,' Atkins said.

'I didn't even think I had a medal. I felt confident going into the race but there's always that doubt so I just tried to reassure myself that I had

