



Harrison wins C1 200m.



Dos Santos in C1 1km.

ICF photographs

can win a medal at a world championships, in both sprint and para,' Behrouzirad said.

'The whole canoeing family is going to be very happy when they hear about this medal. It is every athlete's dream to take part in the Paralympics and I was in Rio. I am glad to now have the chance to go to my second Games.'

Germany and Belarus picked up two gold medals each while Spain, China and host nation Hungary were also triumphant on the first day of medal racing.

There were no Olympic quotas up for grabs on Friday but that didn't lessen the emotion and the ferocity of the racing as a massive Hungarian crowd revelled in the excitement of having the world's best athletes on show.

Belarus' K2 200m combination of Volha Khudzenka and Maryna Litvinchuk had their sights set on the Olympic K2 500m distance this weekend and warmed up in the best possible fashion with a hard fought and emotional win over Friday's shorter distance.

'200 metres is a very hard distance and it can be emotional,' Khudzenka said.

'We are very happy now but we must focus on the Olympic discipline now,' Litvinchuk said.

Team mate Alena Nazdrova successfully turned the tables on Russia's Kseniia Kurach in the C1 500m, reversing the result from the world championships 12 months earlier. Nazdrova's main focus was the C1 200m, which will make its Olympic debut next year.

'I am not ready to be happy yet because I have another race and the next final must be good,' Nazdrova said.

'The 200 must be my focus. The Olympics is my target because it is the first time women's canoe will be in the Games and I want to be there.'

Germany's Tom Leibscher spends nearly all of his time in the men's K4 boat but took the opportunity in Hungary to race over the non Olympic K1 500m distance. He said winning was a bonus but his focus was on the team boat.

'The K1 500 is always a special race, especially in this venue,' Liebscher said.

'In 2013 I was the young guy who wanted to beat the older guys and now it turns to my side. My coach asked if I wanted to do the K1 but we had to make sure it didn't disturb the rhythm of the K4 and that in my training that I'm focused fully on the K4.

'I think I did it and now it is time to go in the K4.'

Germany's second gold came in the men's K4 1,000m with the crew of Lukas Reuschenbach, Felix Frank, Jakob Thorsden and Tobias-Pascal Schultz's beating the crews from Russia and Slovakia to defend the gold they won last year.

'It was absolutely amazing; it is so loud here and there are so many people,' Jakob Thorsden, one of the two remaining crew members from 2018's boat, said.

'We had a really good second 250 and managed to get quite a good lead. For the last 200 I thought we can only lose it from here on. It is really hard in Germany because there are so many good kayak men. Maybe after Tokyo we can beat the old guys.'

China has established itself as a world power in the canoe disciplines, especially in team boats. Song Xing and Qiang Li posted one of the most dominant wins of the day in the men's C2 500m, finishing more than one second ahead of Hungary and Spain.

'We've been doing a lot of training for these world championships,' Xing said.

'This is a good start for our Chinese team. Our goal is a medal in Tokyo in the C2 1,000.'

Hungary's win came in the women's K2 1,000m with Reka Hagymasi and Erika Medveczky cruising to gold ahead of Germany and Mexico. It was the first canoe sprint gold medal for Hungary, giving the Szeged crowd reason to celebrate.

'It's magic for us; the people are amazing,' Medveczky said.

'There's no pressure; it is more excitement. We are always a little bit nervous because it's a world championships final.'

Spain's Alberto Pedrero and Pablo Grana held on to win the men's C2 200m in one of the closest finishes of the day. Less than one second

covered the first five boats with Poland finishing 2nd and Uzbekistan 3rd.

'In the last few metres we didn't feel very good because we didn't know if we had won,' Pedrero said.

'We were very nervous but confident at the same time. We had the best time in the heats. This is our goal, to be a world champion.'

Curtis McGrath and Ukrainian pair Maryna Mazhula and Serhii Yemelianov reminded everyone why they are already Tokyo 2020 Paralympic gold medal favourites by successfully defending their crowns on Saturday.

The trio are now multiple world champions in their categories with 2016 Paralympic champion McGrath picking up his fourth KL2 title. Mazhula has two and Yemelianov now has been world champion three times to go with his Rio gold medal.

Yemelianov has dominated his event since the Rio Paralympics and, although he had to work harder on Saturday to hold off Russia's Leonid Krylov, he's planning to hold on to the title for a lot longer.

The wins by the two Ukrainians came on their country's national day.

'This was a very hard world championships. I've been training every day and I have a dream to win the world title ten times,' Yemelianov said 'but I have to keep working harder because every year athletes are getting faster.

'Paracanoe in the Ukraine has not been going for very long so this success is very good for our country. We hope to keep the sport growing in the future.'

Mazhula finished almost a full second ahead of Germany's Edina Mueller, who was back racing after having a baby in January, with Chile's Katherinne Wollermann 3rd.

'This is a very special world championships for me because I want to be at the Paralympics next year,' Mazhula said.

'I know about the course in Tokyo and I know about the weather there and the wind but I will try and do a good job.'

Like Yemelianov, McGrath has dominated his KL2 category since Rio but he had to finish hard on Saturday to chase down Italy's Federico Mancarella with New Zealand's Scott Martlew 3rd.

'This is probably the most nervous I have ever been, I think, because the field is getting closer and the competition is heating up,' McGrath said.

'I need to work on my mental side of things, focusing on and zeroing in on what I can do. A win is a win but there are always things to improve on.'

The top six in each final earned a Paralympic quota for next year with a limit of one per country.

Hungary's Balint Kopasz sent a capacity Szeged crowd into raptures and a little known American teenager stunned a world class canoe field on the penultimate day on Saturday.

Six different nations, including defending Olympic champions Lisa Carrington and Liam Heath, shared the honours in the Olympic class events on a day when quotas were also earned for next year's Tokyo Olympic Games.

The roar of the crowd helped Kopasz fly home over the last 250 metres of the K1 1,000m to mow down reigning world champion Fernando Pimenta and Olympic silver medallist Josef Dostal to claim the biggest result of his career.

'I am really happy that I could beat the best champions in the world,' Kopasz said.

'The Hungarian fans meant a lot. I love the Hungarians and my favourite course is Szeged. It's a huge feeling that I can beat the best paddlers and prove that I am one of the best in the world.'

The 17 year old Nevin Harrison was barely known even in her own country before winning the C1 at the Pan American Games but the American has thrown herself into medal contention for next year's C1 200m Olympic debut with a stunning gold in Szeged.

Multiple world champion Laurence Vincent-Lapointe, suspended because of a doping violation, was the only big name missing from the final but it didn't phase Harrison, who beat home Russian Olesia Romasenko and Alena Nazdrova.

'I was going into that final thinking, man, I'm just happy to be here and I never ever felt that a medal was possible and especially gold,' Harrison said.

'Oh my gosh; its been my dream since I was a little kid to make the Olympics; it's so good to be here.'

Lisa Carrington has not been beaten in the K1 200m at a major international since before the London Olympics and on Saturday posted one of her most convincing wins of her career.

She picked up her seventh K1 200m world title with almost 2 seconds to spare on 2016 Olympic silver medallist Marta Walczykiewicz