

The home fans who took the afternoon off to watch their canoe slalom heroes in action were not left disappointed after the host nation picked up a gold and two bronze medals in a thrilling afternoon in Tacen.

Luka Bozic brought the crowd to its feet when he took the gold in the men's C1 with team mate and Olympic gold medallist Benjamin Savsek taking the bronze. Zachary Lokken split the pair to take his first ever World Cup medal.

In the women's C1 Germany's former world champion Elena Lilik stormed to victory by more than three seconds over Ukraine's Viktoriia Us with local paddler Eva Alina Hocevar taking her first ever senior World Cup medal in third.

The win for Bozic came after a disappointing start to the season for the five time World Cup gold medallist. He missed medals at both Augsburg and Prague and was feeling the pressure going into Friday's final.

'It's always really nice to win at home. I'm happy because in the last two World Cups I didn't feel really good so after today I think I'm going to be more calm and attaching for the next races,' Bozic said.

'Of course I was nervous. I was so nervous before the semi final. Every time when we race here at home it is very special for us. I think I made a good run today which is the most important thing for the future.'

Elena Lilik had won K1 at the opening World Cup of the season in Augsburg and on Friday added a C1 gold to her collection. Her main rival, Olympic champion Jessica Fox, had already posted a 50 second penalty for a missed gate which ruled her out of a medal but Lilik said she was unaware of Fox's mistake and was just trying to replicate her fast run in the semi final.

'I didn't hear anything at the start line. I was just by myself and focussed,' Lilik said.

'It's crazy. I saw the time and I wondered how I even went faster.'

'Prague was perhaps a bit of a wake up call for me, that I needed to do something a little bit different. I was very hungry and felt really excited at the start line.'

Lilik posted a winning time in the final of 101.97 with Us posting a time of 105.27 which included a two second penalty. Hocevar's maiden World Cup medal came in a time of 108.00.

The two biggest names in world canoe slalom paddling in 2023 once again underlined their class with gold medal winning performances on day two of finals on Saturday.

Jessica Fox won an incredible fourth gold medal for the season with victory in the women's K1 while Czech Jiri Prskavec took his second win for 2023 in the men's K1.

There was also a second silver medal for the weekend for Viktoriia Us and a bronze medal to follow on from the previous day's gold medal for Elena Lilik but it was the three time Olympian Fox who once again stole the show, bouncing back from a disappointing C1 final on Friday to lock away back to back K1 gold medals. It also continued Fox's love affair with the Tacen course, where she has won every time she has competed there since 2013.

The Tokyo C1 gold medallist said she was looking forward to a break.

'I think I have a kind of love hate relationship with Tacen,' Fox said.

'I can't be mad at the course today but I definitely was feeling it yesterday. It's definitely been amazing to come back and race here; the crowds are always really great to be in front of and the course is always challenging.'

'We've had three weeks of back to back racing which is quite tough, physically demanding and mentally taxing. This new programme is pretty challenging because there are no rest days so I'm looking to a few days off.'

Fox finished in 96.22, well clear of Us on a time of 98.91, with Lilik just 0.01 second back in third.

The women's event was not without drama. Reigning Olympic champion Ricarda Funk had a run she would rather forget, not progressing to the final, while Poland's Klaudia Zwolinska posted the quickest raw time of 95.06 in the final but had two gate touches and four seconds of penalties to drop down to fourth.

Jiri Prskavec had never taken a World Cup gold medal outside his Prague home course before breaking through in Tacen last year. On Saturday he showed the connection with one of the most challenging courses on the world circuit remained, finishing more than four seconds clear of team mate Vit Prindis.

'Last year I was saying this was only once in a lifetime to get such a good run in Tacen and now it is for the second time so it's twice in a lifetime,' Prskavec said.

'It's been a really nice start to the season. In my final I just flew



ICF photographs

Joe Clarke had not expected to be men's cross winner.

through and jumped on a really good wave and kept it until the end pretty much so I was really happy about my run.'

It was back to back gold medals for Prskavec after his K1 win in Prague the previous weekend and he also had a C1 bronze in his debut season in the canoe.

Prindis had a two second penalty for a gate touch but his raw time was still 2.44 seconds behind the Tokyo Olympic gold medallist. Austria's Felix Oschmautz took the bronze.

World champions Joe Clarke of Great Britain and Veronika Vojtova of Czechia showed they are still the ones to catch after winning the kayak cross on the final day.

Clarke was a two time world champion, having won in Bratislava in 2021 and again in Augsburg last year. He showed his love for the new Olympic discipline with another strong performance on the Tacen white water course on Sunday.

'It was a really good day, tough in a couple of the rounds; it's always tough so to come out on top is really fantastic,' Clarke said.

'I wasn't supposed to be doing this World Cup. I decided to do it last minute. It's Father's Day back in the UK so I'm missing my wife and son terribly.'

'This makes it all worthwhile, the last race before we depart from the international circuit for a little bit. I think that was a really good final to watch, kayak cross at its best.'

Clarke took the gold ahead of Frenchman Anatole Delassus with Germany's Stefan Hengst third. It was the exact same podium from last year's world titles.

Covid and a lack of team opportunities had conspired to keep Czech Veronika Vojtova away from international competition since she became the women's kayak cross world champion in 2019. On Sunday she showed she had lost none of her ability or her tactical edge to take another gold.

'It's amazing because it's a new change for me. I'm so happy that I can start in the World Cups and the world championships,' Vojtova said.

'I like kayak cross but it was hard after the canoe slalom because I don't have any energy left. It's especially hard for the final because we don't have a long break before the race.'

Slovenia's Eva Tercelj gave the big home crowd reasons to get excited by taking the silver medal while reigning world champion Jessica Fox took the bronze.

#### ICF

**K1W:** 1 J Fox, Australia, 96.22. 2 V Us, Ukraina, 98.91. 3 E Lilik, Deutschland, 98.92.

18 P Spicer, GB.

**K1M:** 1 J Prskavec, Czechia, 85.02. 2 V Prindis, Czechia, 89.46. 3 F Oschmautz, Österreich, 90.05.

9 J Clarke, GB, 92.69. 15 J Dickson, GB.

**C1W:** 1 E Lilik, Deutschland, 101.197. 2 V Us, Ukraina, 105.27. 3 E Hocevar, Slovenija, 108.00.

5 E Miller, GB, 110.46. 16 S Ogilvie, GB.

**C1M:** 1 L Bozic, Slovenija, 90.29. 2 Z Lokken, USA, 91.43. 3 B Savsek, Slovenija, 93.14.

5 A Burgess, GB, 96.40. 20 P Linksted, GB.

**K1XW:** 1 V Vojtova, Czechia. 2 E Tercelj, Slovenija. 3 J Fox, Australia.

**K1XM:** 1 J Clarke, GB. 2 A Delassus, France. 3 S Hengst, Deutschland.