



German team on the course at Kraków.



French team in action.

## British women and Sam Leaver take U23 titles

### World J/U23 Championships

Kneblova sisters Klara and Tereza stole the show as Czechia dominated the first day of competition in Kraków.

The Czech squad won half of the eight gold medals on offer in the team events, with junior Klara Kneblova part of two gold medal teams and her sister, Tereza, one.

The powerful Czech team also took a silver and a bronze medal to sit well clear on top of the medal table. France picked up two gold medals while Germany and Great Britain also won titles.

The Czechs took gold in both the junior and U23 women's C1 team events as well as triumphing in the women's junior K1 and the men's C1 juniors.

Klara Kneblova took golds as a member of the Czech junior C1 and K1 teams, repeating her performance from the 2022 junior world championships in Ivrea.

In the U23 C1 women the combination of Eva Rihova, Gabriela Satkova and Tereza Kneblova went into the competition as defending champions. They lived up to all expectations by finishing almost four seconds clear of a French team which robbed itself of a gold medal by three gate touches.

It was a fourth consecutive K1 U23 team gold for Czechia.

'We felt pretty good during the run and I'm really glad we made it to first place again,' Kneblova said.

'I think we were a bit nervous because there were some tricky parts of the course but once we started it was really good I think,' Rihova said.

The French men's U23 K1 team of Leo Vuitton, Titouan Castryck and Anatole Delassus also started red hot favourites with Delassus and Castryck having won previous individual world titles but they had to work hard to beat the team from Spain, who finished 0.81 second behind.

'We are really glad to have this win; it is a great opening to these world championships for us,' Delassus said.

'We felt a little pressure because Titouan is junior world champion and Anatole the U23 world champion so it was a bit of a challenge but we managed to put together a pretty good run so we are happy,' Vuitton said.

Fellow Frenchmen Mewen Debliquy and Jules Bernardet successfully defended their U23 C1 teams title, this year teaming up with Yohann Senechault.

In the women's U23 K1 the British combination of Phoebe Spicer, Lois Leaver and Ellis Miller managed to upset the defending champions from Czechia for Great Britain's first win in the event since 2014.

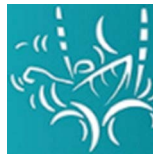
'We're so happy; this is a great way to start the championships. It was nice to be able to put down a run that we were all so happy with as a team,' Miller said.

'As a team we were slightly disappointed with our performance in Bratislava (at the European championships) but we all knew we'd had a great training week prior and we felt good.

Czech paddlers again enjoyed a strong day on the water, posting the quickest times in two of the four heats held on Wednesday.

In the men's U23 K1 Czech paddler Jakub Krejci finished as the fastest qualifier but the quickest raw time was posted by Anatole Delassus, who was also the defending champion.

'It was a good run. I did some good moves but I had a touch at gate nine so I finished in second,' Delassus said.



'I don't feel so much pressure. I'm just trying to enjoy every moment on the water. I don't feel like I should be favourite because there are other paddlers who can be fast so I'll just try and enjoy and we will see.'

Gabriela Satkova began her quest for her first ever women's U23 C1 title in positive style, posting the quickest qualifying time by more than two seconds. Satkova had previously won

two junior C1 world titles and finished second in last year's U23 final.

'I'm glad I only had to do one run and not two like I had to in the European championships, Satkova said.

'It would mean a lot to me to win, of course, but really I am trying not to think about it because I have semi finals first. I don't really think about winning the title now; my goal is to rest tomorrow and then think about the semi finals.

Slovakia's Sona Stanovska was the quickest in the women's K1 U23, even with a two second penalty for a gate touch. The quickest raw time came from Czech Antonie Galuskova, who was the only one to go under 90 seconds but had a massive six seconds in penalties.

Stanovska said she didn't expect to be in the top position after her run but was determined to win a medal at her final appearance in U23 competition.

'It was quite an easy course for me but I did have one touch which surprised me; it was a really physical course so it was hard to be strong,' Stanovska said.

'At the finish line I didn't really sprint so I thought I would be around the fifth to tenth place and there were still some very strong girls to come so it was a bit of a surprise to me.

'This is my last chance to win so I hope I will be good enough to take a medal.'

Italy's Martino Barzon, a junior world champion from 2021, posted the quickest time in the men's U23 C1. Barzon posted a clean run to finish more than one second ahead of Poland's Szymon Nowobilski.

'It's a very strong course because the water is very slow, which makes it very hard,' Barzon said.

'I didn't expect this but that's okay. I felt very confident in the water and I have high hopes for Saturday.'

The top three ranked Frenchmen, Mewen Debliquy, Jules Bernardet and Yohann Senechault caused some anxious moments for the French team when all three needed second runs to qualify through to Saturday's final.

Bernardet hit his best form on the second run, posting a team three seconds faster than Barzon's first run time.

Two from famous slalom families and a paddler who was in line for four medals this week turned in some of the performances of the day on Thursday.

Klara Kneblova, who won in both K1 and C1 team competitions on the opening day, qualified for the semi finals in both individual competitions while Slovenia's Ziga Lin Hocevar, grandson of the 1972 Olympian Tone and son of former European champion Simon confirmed himself as a star of the future with outstanding displays in both the junior K1 and C1 heats and Xabier Ferrazzi, son of the Italian 1992 K1 Olympic champion Pierpaolo, set an electric qualifying time in the men's junior K1, posting a time three seconds faster than Hocevar.

'I felt good. I really like the course here in Kraków; it's really similar to my home course,' Ferrazzi said.