

'I'm a little bit surprised with the time. I wasn't expecting that. Both my parents were paddlers so that's how I got started.'

Hocevar had his chance to shine in his more favoured event, the C1, in the afternoon. After being forced to wait nearly an hour because of a thunderstorm the 16 year old went 1.66 seconds faster than Czech Lukas Kratochvil.

Hocevar is one of the few male paddlers who does both C1 and K1.

'Conditions were really tough with the gap so I'm really happy with the result,' Hocevar said.

'I enjoy doing both but, to be honest, I enjoy the C1 more. I think the K1 is more for my coach because he says it is good for me and my body to paddle both. I try to be fast in both boats; it's hard in the training but, yes, I'm happy.'

Kneblova was in line for four medals this week and, after having to do two runs to qualify for the junior K1, blitzed the C1 field to post a time more than four seconds faster than the rest of the field.

Kneblova revealed she had been struggling with a wrist injury which kept her out of the European Championships.

'I'm so happy; it was such a good run. I just felt good the whole time,' Kneblova said.

'I was really tired after doing two runs this morning. It's been amazing so far. I'm so glad because I skipped the European Championships because of my health problems. It's better than it was but still not completely fine.

'Because I haven't paddled for a while I just wanted to feel good and show that I am still on the level that I was before.'

Kneblova was in line to create history by becoming the first to win more than two gold medals at a single junior or U23 world championships.

Last year Germany's Paulina Pirro took junior K1 bronze and showed she was on track to go even better this year after finishing more than three seconds quicker than the next best paddler in the Thursday morning heats.

'The run was very close and very fast. I had a touch but I love the course here in Kraków,' Pirro said.

France created slalom history, a Slovenian emulated the achievements of his father more than three decades ago, a German who only paddles C1 part time and a teenage veteran took the honours on an eventful day on Friday.

History was created in the men's U23 K1 final when, for the first time ever in the junior and U23 world championships, one country filled all three medal positions.

Tokyo Olympian Evy Leibfarth bounced back to form with a stunning win in the women's U23 K1, Ziga Lin Hocevar won C1 junior 31 years after his father had also triumphed and Paulina Pirro took junior women's C1 gold in an event for which she admits she only trains occasionally.

Of the three French paddlers in the men's U23 K1 final, Leo Vuitton was the least credentialed. Kraków was his first ever world championships but team mates Anatole Delassus and Titouan Castryck were both previous world champions.

It came as no real surprise that the French trio made a clean sweep of the medals, creating ICF history in the process, but the surprise came with the gold medallist, debutant Vuitton.

'I'm still very emotional,' he said after the win.

'It's incredible; it was a dream and now it's a reality so I'm super happy. This year is my first French team of my life so it's a big step. Now I will push hard to continue and to achieve higher goals.'

Vuitton's gold came despite a two second penalty for a gate touch. Silver went to Delassus while Castryck also had a gate touch on his way to the bronze.

American Evy Leibfarth reminded everyone of what she is capable of by delivering one of the runs of the day to win the women's U23 K1. Leibfarth, who was still chasing her first World Cup podium this season, beat a world class field to take gold by more than one second.

It follows on from the junior K1 title she won on the eve of the Tokyo Olympics.

'Some of my best runs are the ones where I'm not thinking about my paddling. I'm just reacting and having a lot of fun out there,' Leibfarth said.

'In this run I was in the third gate and I was just smiling to myself and saying "I'm just going to go out there and have fun," and that's what I did. I kind of had a time in my mind that I wanted and then when I saw it it was better than I even expected.

'For sure I was nervous but I think whatever happened I would have been happy just because of my paddling. It's just crazy that almost all of the girls in this final have been in a World Cup final before and racing on the senior circuit so it's a really tough field.'

In 1992 Simon Hocevar won the junior C1 world title in Norway. In 2018 Eva Alina Hocevar won the K1 junior girls' title in Ivrea and on Friday Ziga Lin Hocevar also became a world champion, finishing more than three seconds clear of his closest rival in the men's junior C1.

'I worked so hard for this; the pressure was so big because I knew all the sacrifices that have gone into this since 2018 when my sister won,' Hocevar said.

'After my dad won in 1992, it is incredible. I put everything that I had in my power to win this. It means so much to me. Now I have two more years to defend the title.'

In one of the hardest fought finals of the day, Paulina Pirro triumphed in the women's junior C1. Pirro was the final paddler on the water and was the only one to go under the 100 second mark. Even with a two second penalty, Pirro still finished more than two seconds clear of the next best paddler.

Pirro said the gold was a complete surprise because she prefers the K1 and rarely trains in the canoe.

'This was not the plan. K1 is my favourite discipline and C1 is my second discipline so this is crazy. I'm a world champion,' Pirro said.

'My training is nearly all in the K1 and just before the races I do one or two sessions in the C1. We'll see how it goes tomorrow in the K1.'

Four first time world champions were crowned and more history was made on the penultimate day on Saturday.

Xabier Ferrazzi, the son of 1992 Olympic K1 gold medallist Pierpaolo, took the men's junior K1 crown while Bara Galuskova emulated her big sister, Antonie, in winning the women's junior K1 title.

In U23 competition Sona Stanovska won her first world title in the women's C1 while Jules Bernardet also collected his first world title by winning the men's C1.

History was made on Saturday when Ziga Lin Hocevar finished third in the men's junior K1, making him the first male to win a medal in both the K1 and C1 at a single world championships at any level.

Ferrazzi went into the junior K1 final as a warm favourite after posting the quickest time in the heats and the second fastest run in the semi finals. He carried that form into the final with an error free run.

'I can't believe it; the run was really good. I had a lot of fun. It's incredible,' Ferrazzi said.

'I was nervous but, compared to the semis, I was pretty calm so I was



Junior winner Xabier Ferrazzi.



Leo Vuitton took the under 23 title.