



Jessica Fox winning C1 again.



Mintalova took the K1 win from Fox.

Two second places for Clarke

La Seu d'Urgell Slalom

Australia's Jessica Fox and Slovenia's Luka Bozic put down the fastest runs in the early rounds of the canoe competition at the World Cup in La Seu, Spain, on Thursday.

Fox, who led the overall C1 World Cup table, posted a time of 107.15, which included a two second penalty for a gate touch. Poland's Klaudia Zwolinska also had a gate touch and posted the second quickest time.

Fox's main rival for the overall C1 World Cup title, Germany's Elena Lilik, needed two runs to qualify for the semi finals after running into trouble on her first run.

In the men's C1 Luka Bozic continued the good form that saw him win at the previous World Cup in Tacen, posting an error free time of 93.65. Bozic currently sat third overall for the C1 season.

Spain's Miquel Trave, who was contesting both the C1 and K1 in La Seu, was second quickest.

The World Cup in La Seu would be the final international slalom event before the following month's world championships and Olympic qualifiers in the Lee valley, London.

Italian Raffaello Ivaldi broke through for the biggest win in his career against a field in which he doubted he belonged while Jessica Fox won her third C1 World Cup gold of the season on the first day of slalom finals.

An emotional Ivaldi said after his C1 win he was always questioning if he would ever be good enough to belong with the world's best paddlers.

'You train hard your entire life, you work hard and you get to the races and the field is just amazing; everybody is so good, everybody is racing so fast and you ask yourself if you deserve to be in the middle of these guys,' Ivaldi said.

'Then you fail and you fail again so you keep going back to work but, in the end, days like today arrive; it is worth it. Many times I felt like I didn't belong. I trained my entire life. I have to thank my entire life. I have to thank my entire team; they are always supportive of me every time after I failed.'

Ivaldi edged out Luka Bozic for the gold. Bozic, who won at the previous World Cup in Tacen, had a two second penalty for a gate touch which cost him the gold medal. Slovakia's Marko Mirgorodsky took the bronze.

In the women's final Jessica Fox continued her barnstorming form of 2023, her third C1 win from four starts. Fox had two gate touches and four seconds in penalties but still finished just 0.08 second ahead of Germany's Andrea Herzog.

Fox, the reigning Olympic gold medallist, said she took risks in her final run because she wanted to test herself.



'I analyzed the risks. I hesitated. I think it's always good to challenge yourself because sometimes you're in a position where you know that that is faster and riskier but sometimes you've just got to try and give it everything and take that risk to try and scrape a few seconds,' Fox said.

'I don't think you can be complacent. It's been a good World Cup season so far; we've only got a couple of weeks to go before the world championships so, hopefully, I can just keep plodding along.'

Great Britain's Kimberley Woods finished with the bronze medal.

Slovenia's Peter Kauzer wound back the clock and Slovakia's Eliska Mintalova won her first ever gold on a thrilling day on Saturday.

Kauzer, who put off retirement after the Tokyo Olympics to try to qualify for a fifth Games, took gold in the men's K1 six days short of his 40th birthday.

'I just wanted to do a good run in the finals. I'd had some difficulties at the first part of the season. I couldn't progress to the finals and now I'm really happy that I could prove that I'm still worthy of being here,' Kauzer said.

'I feel totally different than I did at the first part of the season. I showed that I am still fast even though I will turn 40 in a couple of days so I hope it won't go downhill from there. I'm happy that I am still here and can still show some magic on the water.'

'The competition is getting harder and harder every year and I'm not getting any younger but I proved that if I still do the run I can, I'm not allowed to make any mistakes but I can still be fast and today I proved that.'

The 2016 Rio silver medallist benefitted by posting an error free run which edged him ahead of British 2016 Olympic gold medallist Joe Clarke and Czech reigning world champion Vit Prindis, both of whom had gate touches and two second penalties.

Reigning Olympic champion Jiri Prskavec was the big name missing from the final after the Czech received a 50 second penalty for missing a gate in the semi final. It was the 13th World Cup gold of Kauzer's career.

At the opposite end of the scale Elena Mintalova celebrated the first World Cup gold of her career, posting an error free run in the women's K1 final to deny Jessica Fox, who was aiming for a third consecutive World Cup gold for the season.

The win came at a crucial time for Mintalova as La Seu was also the first leg of Olympic selection for Paris 2024.



C1 winner Ivaldi.



Kauzer wins K1.



Cross winner Elena Lilik.