



Charlotte Henshaw.



Hope Gordon.



Laura Sugar.

Four British paracanoe wins

World Championships

Spain, Poland and China were one step closer to qualifying four competitors for next year's Paris Olympics after all crews won their heats of the women's K4 500 on the opening day of racing at the sprint and paracanoe world championships in Duisburg on Wednesday.

There were ten Olympic boat quotas available in both the men's and women's K4 and all would be allocated this week. The top ten must include boats from at least four continents. Spain, Poland and China were straight into Friday's final.

The biggest names in world sprint and paracanoe paddling all took to the water on Wednesday and, while most cruised through to the next rounds, many also had to work hard to stay in the hunt for coveted Paris 2024 quotas.

New Zealand's Lisa Carrington, Hungary's Adam Varga and Romania's Catalin Chirila were among those who showed they were in good sprint form, comfortably winning their heats in perfect racing conditions.

In paracanoe racing there were strong performances from four of the Tokyo Paralympic gold medallists with Curtis McGrath, Charlotte Henshaw, Peter Kiss and Emma Wiggs all posting fastest times in their qualifying heats.

Carrington was chasing a fourth Olympic Games and already had five gold medals. Her K1 500 time on Wednesday wasn't the fastest but after racing the K4 in the morning she was more focused on getting through the K1 comfortably.

'I felt good; the nerves were good, such a different focus from the K4 this morning. I just really enjoyed being out on the water; it was really beautiful out there,' Carrington said.

'I just think to be able to keep paddling and still be good enough to be here. I'm super grateful for that.'

Germany's Jakob Thorsen posted the quickest qualifying time in a competitive round of men's K1 1,000 heats. Former world champion and Olympic bronze medallist Fernando Pimenta said, while he would love to be world title holder again, his big focus was Paris.

'I think the quota for Paris is the most important thing right now because we have six places and we know there are a lot of good athletes with very good performances and I want to fight for this.'

Catalin Chirila, the defending men's C1 1,000 world champion, easily posted the quickest time in his heats while Cuba's Yarisleidis Cirilo Dubois posted the fastest time in the women's C1 200.

In the women's C2 500 it was the Canadian pairing of Sloan MacKenzie and Katie Vincent who were fastest qualifiers.

McGrath was making his return to paracanoe racing after taking most of 2022 off and showed the break had done him no harm by setting a world best time in his heat of the men's KL2.

McGrath made history in Tokyo by becoming the first paracanoeist to take two golds at a single Games and will be looking to repeat the performance in Paris.

'It's nice to be back; in a way it's hard to get back into it physically but mentally you just want to get back into it again,' McGrath said.

'Time away from something makes you grow fonder of it. I was actually really nervous but it's nice to go straight through to the final; it's a little less work.'

Two time Paralympic gold medallist Emma Wiggs showed she was ready for another big campaign by posting the quickest time in the women's VL2. The British paddler said it was good to confirm she was paddling well after a big lead up.

'I've just gone all out; it felt good. It's been a pretty tough year so



seeing it start to come together in the past couple of weeks is a real boost to my confidence,' Wiggs said.

'It's not getting any easier but I still love it and that's the main thing.'

Hungary's Peter Kiss laid down an early warning shot in the men's KL1, the Tokyo champion posting the fastest time in a competitive field.

'I've been a bit sick but my preparations have been good,' Kiss said.

'I'm really excited and looking forward to hopefully next year but I have a lot of training before Paris. Of course I feel some pressure but I've enjoyed this feeling.'

In other paracanoe races Great Britain's Charlotte Henshaw and Hope Gordon posted the quickest times in the KL2 and the VL3 respectively and Dylan Littlehales was fastest in the men's KL3 while world champion Igor Tofalini pipped his Brazilian team mate and defending Paralympic champion Fernando Rufino with the fastest qualifying time in the men's VL2.

Final fields were starting to take shape as the battle for world titles and Paris 2024 quotas came to a head.

In the women's C2 500 nine boats had now been confirmed for Saturday's final, of which the top eight would earn Paris 2024 quotas. The final fields for the women's K1 500 and the men's C1 and K1 1,000, had also been set.

In paracanoe, where the top six finishers in each Paralympic event would earn Paris tickets, final fields for the men's VL2 and the women's KL2 had also been determined.

Defending Olympic and world champions Shixiao Xu and Mengya Sun showed they would once again be the team to beat in the women's C2 500. The Chinese pair were the fastest qualifiers.

The remainder of the final field included boats from Canada, Moldova, Poland, Cuba, Germany, Spain, Hungary and Ukraine. Only the boat which finished last would miss next year's Games.

Hungary's Tamara Csipes, the Olympic silver medallist in the women's K1 500, set the quickest time in Thursday's semi finals ahead of Olympic champion Lisa Carrington with six quota slots available in the final.

In the men's C1 1,000, where five quotas could be earned in the final, it was Czech Martin Fuksa who was the quickest qualifier.

In the men's K1 1,000 it was Tokyo Olympic silver medallist Adam Varga who set the fastest qualifying time. The nine men in the final would be competing for six Paris quotas.

The early rounds of the men's and women's K2 500 were held with Australian K2 1,000 Olympic gold medallists Tom Green and Jean Van Der Westhuyzen setting the quickest time for the men and Germany's Paulina Paszek and Jule Hake quickest in the women.

In the men's C2 500 heats it was China's Hao Lui and Bowen Ji who were the fastest qualifiers.

In paracanoe Great Britain's Jack Eyers and Laura Sugar and Ukraine's Maryna Mazhula were the world champions who safely progressed to their respective finals in perfect racing conditions on Thursday.

Only Sugar, though, was able to set the fastest time, showing good form to cross first in the women's KL3 as she set her sights on a third consecutive world title.

In the women's KL1 it was Canada's Brianna Hennessy, a bronze medallist at the past two world championships, who set the quickest time. Mazhula also won her heat as she chased a fifth consecutive world title.

Another Ukrainian, Vladyslav Yepifanov, finished quickest in the men's VL3. Jack Eyers, the defending world champion, won his heat and said