

he was surprised by his result after battling an injury which had kept him off the water in the lead up to Duisburg.

Seven paracanoe world titles would be decided on Friday. The top six finishers in each Paralympic event would earn their country quotas for next year's Games.

Australia's Curtis McGrath, Emma Wiggs and Peter Kiss confirmed their standing as among the greatest paracanoeists on the planet while there were several first time world champions on Friday.

Alongside world titles, the first quotas for next year's Paralympic Games in Paris were also earned. Among the highlights, Africa earned its first ticket to a Paralympic Games.

McGrath made a triumphant return to racing after taking 2022 off, the three time Paralympic gold medallist storming to victory in the men's KL2 and securing an Australian quota for Paris.

'It's great to have that box ticked off for Paris. I can go to sleep a bit easier tonight, knowing that's done,' McGrath said.

'I knew I believed in myself and I knew I could come back strong and that's what I've done and I'm enjoying being back.'

Emma Wiggs won her fifth consecutive women's VL2 title and her 11th world championship gold in total, continuing her dominance of a race where she is also the reigning Paralympic champion.

'Maybe I'm like a good wine or a good cheese and I'm getting better with age,' Wiggs said.

'I just love what I do and I work really hard and I'm really supported by my family but I do need to take a bit of credit for the hard work that I put in. I am proud of myself.'

Peter Kiss entered the men's KL1 final as the defending world champion and the reigning Paralympic champion and again showed his strength to win a fourth straight crown.

'It was really good. I have a very special place for this at home,' Kiss said. 'Now I feel perfect. It is so important for me with the Paralympic Games so close.'

The women's VL3, a new addition to the Paralympic programme next year, was thrown wide open with the decision of defending champion, Charlotte Henshaw, to concentrate on her KL class. Her team mate, Hope Gordon, took the opportunity to fill the void, in the process securing her maiden world title.

'Obviously the quota spots were the main thing here but to tick that box and to become world champion at the same time is pretty good,' Gordon said.

'My coach likes to tell me that I'm always the bridesmaid, never the bride, so the first thing he said to me today was that you're finally not the bridesmaid anymore.'

Australia's Dylan Littlehales had been waiting for a paracanoe gold medal since he was 15 years old. On Friday the 24 year old held on in a nail biting finish to take the men's KL3 world title.

'Eight years of competing and just getting closer and closer and today it finally paid off,' Littlehales said.

'It's been a really tough year for my family with my mother going through breast cancer and I moved to a whole different state for this moment so, to be able to actually stand on top of the podium, it really makes it all worth it.'

Algeria's Brahim Guendouz finished third, in the process earning Africa its first ever Paralympic paracanoe quota.

Western Australia's Ben Sainsbury successfully defended the VL1 crown he won in Copenhagen last year, finishing more than three seconds clear of Spain's David Gonzalez and Brazil's Carlos Moreira.

'I'm glad that's over. I felt a lot of nerves at the start line again; it never gets easier,' Sainsbury said.

'To go back to back is a wicked feeling, to establish that it wasn't just a one time thing and to do it again is something I really wanted to do; it's such a good feeling.'

Just one year after taking up paracanoe Italy's Viktoriya Shablova was a women's VL1 world champion. She came to the sport after a career in basketball and swimming.

'I'm so excited with the result. I came to canoeing because I feel free when I'm canoeing,' Shablova said.

'My dream is to be my best every time.'

Three continents shared the medals with India's Pooja Ojha taking silver and Chile's Jocelyn Munoz finishing with the bronze.

Teams from all over the world were celebrating world titles and Olympic quotas after a disrupted day of racing on Friday.

Among those celebrating were the New Zealand women's K4 team after securing their first ever world title and the German men's K4 team, who retook their world crown after being beaten into second last year.

Yarisleidis Cirilo Duboys had a double celebration, becoming the women's C1 200 world champion for the first time and also gaining her country a quota for next year's Olympic Games.

'For me this is amazing,' Duboys said.

'I'm going for more in Paris; it's my dream because I've trained so hard for this competition.'

A total of 25 Paris Olympic quotas were earned on Friday, 10 each in the men's and women's K4 500 and five in the women's C1 200. Joining Cuba in Paris next year in women's C1 will be Spain, China, USA and Chile.

In the women's K4 the ten teams off to the Olympics looked set to be New Zealand, Poland, Spain, China, Australia, Serbia, Hungary, Germany, Norway and Canada.

Lisa Carrington said her country had waited a long time to become world champions.

'Over the many years we as a K4 have learned so much and I think we've been able to work really hard over the last year to figure out what we need to do to get across the line first,' she said.

'I think it just took a lot of belief, breaking mental models and trying to figure out how we as a four can go as fast as we can. We managed to do our best today and that was good enough.'

In the men's, Germany, Hungary, Ukraine, Australia, Denmark, Lithuania, Spain, Serbia, Canada and China finished as the top ten nations from four continents.

Germany's Max Lemke said after a poor result at the European titles they had to find improvements.

'After the European Games we sat together as a team; we talked to the coach. Everyone made some points for themselves to get better as an individual, then we got into the boat and changed some things and everything worked out really well,' he said.

In non Olympic results on Friday, Catalin Chirila warmed up for his defence of the men's C1 1,000 crown with victory in the men's C1 500 while reigning Olympic K1 1,000 champion Balint Kopasz took his first K1 500 crown.

Uzbekistan's Artur Guliev won the men's C1 200, Poland's Martyna Klatt and Helena Wisniewska the women's K2 200, and China's Changwen Shuai and Wenjun Lin took the world title in the women's C2 200.

Olympic champions Lisa Carrington and Shixiao Xu and Mengya



Dylan Littlehales



Rebeiro/Baptista win men's K2 500m.

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