

Broughton edged out

World Championships

After 12 years of trying, Portugal's Jose Ramalho finally broke through for his first world title with a win in the men's short distance final at the world championships in Romania on the Thursday.

Hungary's Vanda Kiszli and Ukraine's Liudmyla Babak successfully defended their world titles from 2019 while Hungary's Balazs Adolf also notched up his first world title with a win in the men's C1.

The 39 year old Ramalho led for most of the men's 3.4 kilometre K1 race before being headed by Denmark's Mads Pedersen at the start of the final lap but Ramalho dug deep, outsprinting his much younger opponent to land his first world title in a career which began in 2009.

'I was very focussed. I've been focussed for the past months since the Europeans so I knew I could do it,' Ramalho said.

'All this year I thought I could do it and I passed all these favourites today so it's a party day now.

'Every time, year after year, I thought maybe I wouldn't be a world champion. I always said "Okay, one more year; let's try again." It was 12 years doing that so in the end I got it and I'm really really happy.'

Pedersen finished second, while Spain's Ivan Alonso took the bronze.

Kiszli won the inaugural K1 short distance final in Shaoxing in 2019 and had also won the past two long distance world titles. After close racing for two laps Kiszli pulled away to post an easy win over Great Britain's Lizzie Broughton and Serbia's Kristina Bedec, the silver medallist from 2019.

Babak has been dominant in women's canoe marathon racing since winning her first long distance world title in 2017. On the Thursday she showed she is still well ahead of the field, defending her short distance title from 2019 and adding to the three marathon titles already to her name.

Hungary's Zsafia Kisban chased Babak throughout the race to take the silver in a repeat of the result from 2019 with Belarus'Volha Klimava taking the bronze.

Balazs Adolf broke through for his first senior world title with a fighting win in the men's C1. The former junior world champion had been focusing more on canoe sprint in recent months but said he was thrilled to be back in marathon and on top of the podium.

Poland's Mateusz Borgiel took the silver and Czech Jakub Brezina repeated his result from two years ago by taking the bronze.

Five years after being told she would never be able to paddle canoe marathon again, Denmark's Cathrine Rask was celebrating becoming a world champion in Romania.

Team mate Nikolai Thomsen took the men's U23 K1, Hungarians picked up two gold medals and there was a popular home crowd win for Romania.

In 2015 Rask severely injured her arms in a junior K2 race at the world championships and 12 months later was given the devastating news that she would never be able to paddle marathon again.

On the Friday she not only paddled again but she also became the women's K1 U23 world champion after almost the perfect race over the 22.6 kilometre course.

'I haven't paddled since I was under 18 so it was a really nice comeback,' Rask said.

'I have had an operation but sometimes I still feel a little pain but I try to do my best. They actually told me I could never paddle marathon again so it's really nice to be back because this is what I want; this is the most fun.'

Hungary's Dorina Fekete stuck with Rask until the final portage and South Africa's Christie Mackenzie battled strongly before fading to third.



Rask had hoped to see her younger brother, Thorbjorn, make it a family double by winning the men's U23 K1 but when he was penalized 30 seconds for blocking another competitor it opened the door for Nikolai Thomsen.

'I was shocked when my mate, Thorbjorn, got the time penalty. I knew he was pretty strong. I thought he would be out there with me,' Thomsen said.

'When I saw he wasn't I knew I just had to paddle all I could. It's definitely harder to go by yourself but I'm pretty confident when I'm by myself because I've really trained hard over the past couple of months. I've got the endurance so I just needed to do my best.'

Argentina's Agustin Rodriguez took second place while South Africa's Ulvard Hart finished with the bronze.

Daniel Laczko won his first individual gold medal after leading for almost the entire 22.6 kilometres of the men's U23 C1. Laczko last won as a junior as part of a C2 and won on Friday after a long run of minor medals.

'It's a really amazing feeling because this is my first world championship in a single canoe, especially as this was my last race in U23, so it gave me a huge boost for the seniors,' Laczko said.

'I thought about this last year, all my bronze medals, and I have finally broken that. In Hungary we are very experienced and there are a lot of people racing which is why I can only participate in U23 because I couldn't qualify for the seniors.'

Spain's Jaime Duro fought hard to keep in touch before fading on the final lap while European champion Sergio Maciel took the bronze medal.

The 16 year olds Sara Fojt and Laura Ujfalvi won the first event on Friday, surviving a tough tussle with fellow Hungarians Evelin Csengeri and Maja Horvath in the women's junior K2.

Ujfalvi said having the second Hungarian boat next to them was a strong help.

'Maybe it made things easier because we can help each other,' Ujfalvi said.

'We are so happy to have won today. It was a very hard race.'

Denmark's Sophie Hansen and Karoline Nielsen took the bronze.

Romanian brothers Adrian and Victor Stepan gave the home crowd plenty to cheer about with an all the way win in the men's C2 juniors. The Stepan's outlasted Hungary's Laszlo Papp and Mark Csanki while Spain's Daniel Grijalba and Juan Gomez took the bronze.

Denmark celebrated another gold medal, Hungary put on a canoe marathon masterclass and Ukraine's Liudmyla Babak continued her dominance of women's canoe events on the penultimate day on the Saturday.

Mads Pedersen and Vanda Kiszli joined Babak in defending the world titles they won in China in 2019 while Balazs Adolf in the men's C1 and Csanad Sellyei in the junior C1 added to Hungary's gold rush.

Hungary's dominance saw them take the gold and silver medals in three of the five races contested, headed by Vanda Kiszli and Zsafia Voros in the women's K1.

Kiszli underlined her class as a women's kayak marathon paddler, winning her third consecutive title. Kiszli looked in control for the entire race and sprinted away from Voros and Lizzie Broughton for the gold.

Despite her dominance the 27 year old said she had a lot of butterflies before the race.

'I did feel pressure and it's not a good feeling. I was so nervous,' Kiszli said.

'I sleep okay but I couldn't eat. I was nervous because if I don't eat then I will be hungry, then I will be more nervous; so it just goes around but now I'm happy.'



Jose Ramalho.



Vanda Kiszli.



Mads Pedersen.



Kristina Bedec leading.