

# Csay takes twelfth win

## World Championships

Canadian teenager Marlee Macintosh, racing in her first ever canoe marathon race, took the junior C1 title on the opening day of the marathon world championships in Prado, Portugal. There was triple gold for marathon powerhouse Hungary with Zsóka Csikós winning the women's junior K1 and Dávid Hodován taking the junior C1 men's title. The easiest win of the day was posted by Denmark's Thorbjørn Rask, who turned down an opportunity to compete at the European sprint championships so he could concentrate on winning the junior K1 marathon in Prado. The 17 year old Macintosh cleared out on the second lap of the 11.8 kilometre race and finished more than 30 seconds ahead of Poland's Adrianna Antos with Ukraine's Maria Honcharova 3rd. 'The portage is really tough. I've never done a marathon competition before,' the Canadian said. 'It feels amazing crossing the line. I could finally breath. I've always done sprint canoeing so this was a new challenge. I feel great. I would definitely do marathon again.'

Hungarians dominated the next three events up for offer with gold and silver medals in the women's junior and U23 K1 events. Csikós was part of a four boat challenge for the majority of the K1 junior women's race before sprinting for home to edge out the fast finishing Dorina Fekete with Great Britain's Emma Russell 3rd. 'It was a very hard race. Dorina is a very good paddler,' Csikós said. The second quinella came in the women's K1 U23 with Zsófia Czéllai-Vörös and Lili Katona making a break on the third lap of the eight lap 22.6 kilometre race with Czéllai-Vörös proving the stronger at the finish. 'I'm so happy to have won. Lili came at me really hard which made it a very good race,' Czéllai-Vörös said. 'She was pushing me so hard; it was our tactic for the race. This was my plan for the day and now I'm looking forward to the K2 this Sunday because I get to paddle with the legendary Renáta Csay.'

In the men's C1 juniors Hungary's Hodován and France's Leo Dunilac swapped the lead on several occasions during the 19 kilometre race before Hodován took control on the final lap to clear out to an easy win. 'I'm really happy because this is my first gold medal in a world or national competition,' Hodován said. 'My strategy was to make a hard start and then save my power until the end. I'm very happy. I can't really believe it.'

Rask finished 2nd in the European junior K1 marathon but went one better on Thursday when he surprised his opponents with a break away after the first lap. 'My plan was to stay with the group as long as I could and, hopefully, move away on the last portage,' Rask said. 'My plan was never to leave on the first one but I just went. I thought they would catch me. I would have been happy with a top 5 finish.'

Portugal celebrated a hometown gold medal and there were also wins for Hungary, Denmark and Norway on a dramatic second day in Prado Vila Verde on Friday. A controversial disqualification in the men's U23 K1 threw that race wide open while Hungary's Olga Bakó and Emese Kohalmi defended their K2 junior world title from 2017 and Denmark's Thorbjørn Rask teamed up with Nikolai Thomsen in the men's junior K2 to take his second gold medal in as many days but the most popular winner on the day was Portugal's Sergio Maciel, a previous U23 and junior C1 world championship silver medallist, who broke through for his first gold medal in front of a big local crowd. Maciel and Hungarians Daniel Laczó and Balázs Adolf cleared out to have the race to themselves but when the Portuguese put the pressure on in the final lap the Hungarians were unable to answer. 'I am very proud to have won a gold after two silver medals,' Maciel said. 'I have had a very complicated season with my club. I felt nervous this morning before the



race, competing at home in front of the fans, but as soon as it started I forget about it.'

Bakó and Kohalmi showed in Pietermaritzburg last year they are a class above the rest of the world junior field and they were even more impressive on Friday. For most of the

race they paddled alongside fellow Hungarians, Zsóka Csikós and Viktoria Tofalvi but then broke away on the final lap to finish almost two minutes ahead. 'I think it was easier than last year because we had the second Hungarian team alongside us,' Bakó said. 'Last year we had to do it alone and it was long and hard. There was some pressure on us, being defending champions. We don't get to train much together because we both do sprint with other partners. We only had one training session before these championships.'

The closest finish of the day came in the men's junior K2 with Denmark's Rask and Thomsen storming to a photo finish victory over South Africa's Hamish Mackenzie and David Evans. The South Africans led for all but the final centimetres of the race but were then relegated to 3rd after incurring a 15 second penalty for a mistake during the race. The 2nd place went to Spain's Luis Alvarez and Oscar Borrego but there was no doubting the winners from Denmark. 'When they broke away I thought we wouldn't be able to catch them and we would have to have the silver medal,' Thomsen said. 'Even with 100 metres to go I didn't think we could do it. I thought it was too late but then my partner said "Go" and we went for it.'

Rask said he was shocked to take double gold. 'It's amazing. I had hoped to fight for a gold so it's amazing to win two gold medals in two days,' he said.

Norway's Jon Vold was an impressive winner of the men's U23 K1 but the win did not come without controversy. Hungary's Mate Gyorgyjakabab was the favourite and looked to have the race under control until he was involved in a minor collision with a Spanish competitor which resulted in the Spaniard falling in the water. After a long deliberation by race officials Gyorgyjakabab was disqualified, clearing the way for a three way tussle which saw Vold triumph. 'I wasn't aware what had happened but I saw the Spanish guy had fallen in,' Vold said. 'But I didn't know it was the Hungarian's fault. He was looking really strong so it would have been a hard finish if he had still been in. My plan was to stay on the wash for most of the race and be confident with my finish. On the second last portage I felt strong in my legs so I knew I had a good chance.'

South Africa's Andy Birkett moved seamlessly onto the world marathon K1 throne vacated by countryman Hank McGregor, winning a thrilling and emotional final. Hungary's Vanda Kiszli won the women's K1, Spain's Manuel Campos the men's C1 and Ukraine's Liudmyla Babak defended her women's C1 title. With seven time world champion McGregor watching from the commentary box, Birkett timed his race to perfection to hold off Hungary's Adrian Boros with fellow South African Jasper Mocke 3rd. McGregor had retired from K1 to focus on K2 and would paddle alongside Birkett on Sunday. It was an emotional race for the capacity Portuguese crowd with local favourite Jose Ramalho damaging his boat early and having to stop for repairs but despair soon turned to ecstasy for the fans as Ramalho clawed his way back from a 2 minute deficit to rejoin the leading group with one lap to go. Although he was unable to match the medallists in the sprint home, Ramalho received a hero's welcome when he crossed the finish in 6th place but the honours went to Birkett, who recently became a father for the first time, making 2018 a memorable year for the South African. 'I've been giving marathons a go for a few years now, trying



Marlee Macintosh in her first marathon.



Zsófia Czéllai-Vörös in women's U23



Bakó/Kohalmi retained their title.