

Woods takes women's C1 title

European Championships

The 2017 European Championships kicked off in Ljubljana, Tacen, with the biggest surprise being the failure of multiple Olympic medallists Peter and Pavol Hochschorner to make the semi finals of the men's C2.

Most of the favourites came safely through to the semi finals and, despite the surprise of the Hochschorner twins, Slovakia still qualified first in the C2M thanks to reigning Olympic champions Ladislav and Peter Skantar.

The Slovak duo were almost two seconds faster than Czechs Ondrej Karlovsky and Jakub Jane while Germans Robert Behling and Thomas Becker finished third.

In the women's C1 event, defending European champion Nuria Vilarrubla of Spain managed to produce the best run to win the heats. She was 1.57 seconds faster than Mallory Franklin (GBR) and more than 7 seconds faster than German Andrea Herzog.

'Some things were good and some not completely good but I am happy with the start. I passed the first step. I need to keep fighting. The course is great. The first drop is amazing. I really like it. I like the water movement,' said Vilarrubla after the first competition day.

In the last event of the day Vit Prindis (CZE) stopped the clock at 90.19 to win men's kayak heats. 2008 Olympic medallist Alexander Grimm finished second and another Czech, who is also a reigning European champion, Jiri Prskavec, was third.

The Polish canoe team had many reasons to celebrate during the third competition day. In the men's kayak final Mateusz Polaczyk and Dariusz Popiela finished in positions one and two and Filip/Andrzej Brzezinski took the silver medal in men's C2 event.

In a very tight final of the men's kayak event Mateusz Polaczyk celebrated his first individual medal at the European championships. The 29 year old paddler already had two individual silver medals and one bronze from world championships in addition to five team



medals from European championships and two from world championships.

'I am really shocked and really satisfied because I always had problems with European championships. I have three medals from world championships and nothing from European so I am really happy to take the gold in Tacen,' said Polaczyk.

Only 0.57 second behind him was Dariusz Popiela and Jiri Prskavec finished 3rd. This is his fifth individual medal from the European championships.

In the women's C1 final Kimberley Woods from Great Britain celebrated her second European champion title. She was the best also in 2015 in Markkleeberg, Germany. Her lead was the biggest of all in the finals we saw this day.

Woods was the best also at last year's World Cup final held on the same course, so she is very fond of the venue.

'Solkan is one of my favourite courses as well. Tacen is one of the best with the big drop at the bottom. Not having trained much at the bottom of this course, it is so big and bouncy, and I train in Lee Valley which is the same as here. So, this is one of my favourite courses.'

Tereza Fiserova (CZE) was 2.59 slower to pick up silver medal and Nadine Weratschnig (AUT) was 3rd.

In the final event of the day French crew Pierre Picco/Hugo Bisso won the European champion title in men's C2.

It is amazing day. This is our first victory in senior [category]. We like the place,' said Hugo Bisso.

Pierre Picco added 'Our run was very very good; it was a great pleasure to practise C2 here. I am very very happy.'

Filip and Andrzej Brzezinski were 2nd and Czechs Jonas Kaspar and Marek Sindler finished 3rd.

ICF

K1W: 1 C Kuhnle, Österreich, 95.37. 2 S Horn, Italia, 96.38. 3 M Lafont, France, 96.94. 4 M Franklin, GB, 99.30. 11 F Pennie, GB. 12 K Woods, GB.

K1M: 1 M Polaczyk, Polska, 83.06. 2 D Popiela, Polska, 83.63. 3 J Prskavec, Ceska, 84.03. 14 C Bowers, GB, 90.70. 19 J Clarke, GB. A Grimm, GB.

C1W: 1 K Woods, GB, 110.31. 2 T Fiserova, Ceska, 112.90. 3 N Weratschnig, Österreich, 116.19. 9 E Gibson, GB, 128.11.

C1M: 1 A Slafkovsky, Slovensko, 88.92. 2 T Koehlin, Schweiz, 91.63. 3 M Martikan, Slovensko, 93.82. 16 A Burgess, GB. 20 R Westley, GB.

K1WT: 1 Slovenija, 122.60. 2 Espana, 125.68. 3 France, 129.39. 6 GB, 136.32.

K1MT: 1 Ceska, 101.28. 2 France, 101.73. 3 Polska, 104.01. 6 GB, 116.67.

C1WT: 1 GB, 153.24. 2 Deutschland, 157.32. 3 Ceska, 158.48.

C1MT: 1 Deutschland, 108.94. 2 Slovenija, 111.13. 3 Italia, 112.98. 7 GB, 123.03.

Balint Vekassy/ICF photographs



Nuria Vilarrubla.



Kimberley Woods.

Woods and Franklin make their mark

Praha Slalom

Rio Olympic medallists took a back seat on the opening day of the slalom World Cup in Prague but the scene was set for thrilling finals action over the weekend.

In the women's K1 the three medallists from Rio were safely through to the semi finals but it was Italian Stefanie Horn, 8th at last year's Olympics, who posted the quickest time in challenging windy conditions.

She finished in 87.65, 1.61 seconds ahead of Slovakia's Jana Dukatova with world champion Katerina Kudajova in third place.

'I was paddling without being nervous because I really like the course,' Horn said, 'but I thought I was in delay because I was listening to the speaker and obviously it was not quite what I was hearing.'

Similarly in the men, it was Australian Lucien Delfour who upstaged the Rio medallists, posting a sizzling 77.73 to finish ahead of Czech Vavrinek Hradilek.



Vit Prindis.



Sideris Tasiadis.

'I was a bit surprised because in the past I haven't done that well on this course,' he said.

'It's the first time I've had a really good run straight away so I'm pretty pleased and it's always hard to beat the Czechs on their own course.'

In the men's C1 it was Slovakia's Alexander Slafkovsky who headed a surprise top three, finishing in 84.88, ahead of Spain's Ander Elosegi in 86.02 and the USA's Casey Eichfeld in 86.41.

'I like Prague. I like to race here,' Slafkovsky said.

'My goal was to finish top 20 so it's worked very well but on Sunday it's a new race, new course, so it doesn't mean anything today.'

Possibly the most impressive performance on Friday was turned in by Austria's Nadine Weratschnig in the women's C1.

She posted a speedy 94.88 seconds to finish 4.55 seconds in front of Mallory Franklin, with fellow GB paddler Kimberley Woods third.

In the men's C2 the Czech pair of Jonas Kaspar and Marek Sindler were the quickest, their time of 93.92 well ahead of Slovakia's Tomas Kucera and Jakub Vrzan in 96.41.

Czech paddler Vit Prindis broke through for a World Cup K1 title on his home course, mastering the windy conditions to edge out his team mate and Olympic bronze medallist Jiri Prskavec for the title.

There were further celebrations for the capacity Czech crowd when the C2 combination of Jonas Kaspar and Marek Sindler won the men's final and Great Britain picked up gold and silver in the women's C1 final with European champion Kimberley Woods sweeping to victory ahead of Mallory Franklin.