

# Fox sees off Franklin

## Augsburg Slalom

The Augsburg canoe slalom course, where the sport made its Olympic debut in 1972, was kind to the Olympic athletes competing on the opening day of the second World Cup.

Fittingly, on International Olympic Day, the 2016 Rio gold medallists all emerged unscathed from the qualifying rounds, although some of the minor medallists had to rely on second runs to guarantee weekend action.

Men's K1 Olympic gold medallist Joe Clarke qualified sixth behind Olympic bronze medallist Jiri Prskavec while, in the women's K1, Spain's Rio champion, Maialen Chourraut, went through in tenth behind Great Britain's Mallory Franklin.

France's Denis Gargaud Chanut was eighth quickest in the men's C1 at his first major international competition since his Rio triumph, with Slovenia's Benjamin Savsek the fastest qualifier.

Slovakia's Skantar cousins, Olympic gold medallists who failed to make the previous week's C2 World Cup final in Prague, finished seventh behind Czech's Ondrej Karlovsky and Jakub Jane, while in the women's C1 Great Britain's Kimberley Woods continued her cracking 2017 form by qualifying first ahead of triple world champion Jessica Fox.

Prskavec finished in 93.28 to head the K1 field from Slovakian speed machine Jakub Grigar, on 93.94, with local hope Sebastian Schubert third quickest on 93.96, following on from his 3rd place at the Prague World Cup.

'I was pretty happy with last week; it was my first medal since 2014 so I was pretty happy to be back on the podium,' Schubert said.

'I'm a bit more relaxed now than the past two years. I did a lot of training and I was sometimes a bit too tired.

'This year it's more fluid; training is a bit more fun.'

Franklin finished just 0.01 ahead of Austria's Corinna Kuhnle in the women's K1 with another Austrian, Viktoria Wolffhardt, third.

Another looking to impress on her home course was Germany's Ricarda Funk, who qualified sixth fastest.

'It's not really easier at my home course because there's so much pressure with everyone expecting me to race well,' Funk said.

'I want to show my skills on the Eiskanal.

'I'm hoping to improve my performance because, so far, in 2017 it hasn't been my best.'

Savsek posted a time of 99.70 to qualify fastest in the men's C1 with Germany's Sideris Tasiadis, a gold medallist in Prague, second fastest in 100.15 and another German, Nico Bettge, third in 100.36.

Great Britain's Ryan Westley qualified seventh.

'I was pretty happy with that run. I'd take two more of those for sure,' Westley said.

'I'm really enjoying my training and love doing these three weeks on different courses.

'I just really want to be in that final again.'

Woods had swept all before her in the women's C1 this year, winning the European title and then the opening World Cup. Her time of 115.22 seconds put her ahead of Fox, on 118.02 with four seconds of penalties, with Spain's Nuria Vilarrubla third in 118.89, also with two gate touch penalties.

Austria's Nadine Weratschnig, quickest in qualifying in Prague, had to rely on a second run on Friday after picking up a 50 second penalty for a gate touch but breezed through in 115.77.

'We had a switch in coaches in the winter so now training is more

professional, which was a good preparation for the season,' Weratschnig said.

'Every time I go down the course I wait for the next mistake but when I go clean it's really good.'

Karlovsky and Jane finished their C2 run in 108.78, ahead of Schroeder and Bettge (110.13) with fellow Germans Behling and Becker third in 110.24.

Czech Vit Prindis made it two wins in a row, Australia's Jessica Fox was back to her best and Robert Behling and Thomas Becker gave the home crowd plenty to cheer about on Saturday.

Prindis was one of the few paddlers to master the tough Augsburg course in the men's K1, finishing ahead of Germany's Hannes Aigner with fellow Czech Jiri Prskavec 3rd. Prindis posted a time of 97.40, just 0.24 second ahead of Aigner with Prskavec in 97.93.

'I'm always happy that I am in the final but I didn't expect that I would win the first two World Cups,' Prindis said.

'I think that I have a good feeling from the water. I've got a good feeling from the paddling and I hope I can do the same next week in Leipzig.'

Fox, a triple world champion in the C1, bounced back from a disappointing weekend in Prague to win Saturday's final easily.

She finished more than 10 seconds ahead of Mallory Franklin with Germany's Lena Stoecklin 3rd. She was one of only two athletes to post a clean run in the final, helping her to a time of 116.86. Franklin's time was 127.07 with Stoecklin 133.88.

'Last week was a bit disappointing but I came here really motivated and pumped,' Fox said.

'My semi wasn't perfect but the final went to plan. I had a lot of energy and attacked it everywhere.'

The big Augsburg crowd was in full voice for the men's C2 with local hopes Behling and Becker finishing ahead of the previous week's gold medallists, Jonas Kaspar and Marek Sindler, with France's Gauthier Klaus and Matthieu Peche 3rd. The winning time was 109.96 with Kaspar and Sindler on 110.89 and Klaus and Peche 111.39.

'Every time it is special to win in front of a home crowd because they have the power to cheer us down to the finish line,' Behling said.

'It's good to make our first win. The last two competitions for us were not the best; we made the finals but then made small mistakes.'

Ricarda Funk sizzled down her home course to claim gold in the women's K1 final and Olympic silver medallist Matej Benus of Slovakia picked up the gold medal in the men's C1, consigning German home town favourites Sideris Tasiadis and Franz Anton to the silver and bronze. Even with a 2 second penalty for a gate touch Funk was too quick for the rest of the field. Her time of 107.67 left her 0.95 seconds ahead of Slovakia's Jana Dukatova, with Slovenia's Ursa Kragelj 3rd on 109.23. 'I'm super happy; it was just awesome in front of all my friends and family,' Funk said. 'After the touch I was worried if it would be enough but I just told myself to go straight and fight. This result means so much for me because last year I messed up the Olympic selections so I just want to show my experience.' German hopes for a double celebration were quashed by lightning fast Matej Benus, one of only two athletes to post a clean run on his way to the gold medal. He finished on 104.90, with Prague gold medallist Sideris Tasiadis on 106.29 2nd and Franz Anton 3rd in 106.84.

'I think it's my third consecutive medal in Augsburg so I like this course,' Benus said. 'I didn't take too many risks. I think I had a little bit of a slower start because I had some little mistakes but the rest was pretty good. It was pretty difficult for me to get back into paddling after the Olympics because I had so much media work and I didn't have time to train a lot after the last World Cups but I think in the winter and the spring in Australia it was pretty good for me.' Benus was the only medallist from Rio to feature in Sunday's finals action. Olympic gold medallist Denis Gargaud Chanut finished 13th and bronze medallist Takuya Haneda of Japan was 18th. In the women's K1 Rio gold medallist Maialen Chourraut finished 13th, silver medallist Luuka Jones of New Zealand was 12th and bronze medallist Jessica Fox was 11th.

## ICF

**K1W:** 1 R Funk, Deutschland, 107.67. 2 J Dukatova, Slovensko, 108.62.

3 U Kragelj, Slovenija, 109.23. 4 M Franklin, GB, 109.57. 5 F Pennie, GB, 109.73.

**K1M:** 1 V Prindis, Ceska, 97.40. 2 H Aigner, Deutschland, 97.64. 3 J Prskavec, Ceska, 97.93.

**C1W:** 1 J Fox, Australia, 116.86. 2 M Franklin, GB, 127.07. 3 L Stoecklin, Deutschland, 133.88.

**C1M:** 1 M Benus, Slovensko, 104.90. 2 S Tasiadis, Deutschland, 106.29.

3 F Anton, Deutschland, 106.84. 17 D Florence, GB.

