

Burgess third on challenging course

Markkleeberg Slalom

Strong wind and a challenging course made life difficult for competitors on the opening day of the third World Cup in Markkleeberg, Germany, but, despite one or two nervous moments, the top competitors were all through to weekend action. Multiple women's C1 world champion Jessica Fox and Rio Olympic K1 gold medallist Joe Clarke were two of the athletes needing second runs to get through to the semi finals in their event but Rio Olympic K1 gold medallist Denis Gargaud-Chanut was back to his best, qualifying first in 95.50 ahead of Slovenia's Benjamin Savsek in 95.86. 'It was a good first run. I enjoyed the wind because I'm quite used to it in Marseille,' Gargaud-Chanut said. 'I think the course is just challenging enough. I was a little bit disappointed in Augsburg because I thought the course was a little bit too easy but that is not why I did not succeed. I just like trickier courses like this.'

Fox made up for a 50 second penalty for missing a gate on her first run by posting a time 3 seconds quicker than the time posted by Spain's Nuria Vilarrubla in the first run of the C1. 'It's quite challenging and there's a lot of stopper moves and, the first drop in the middle section, the water is moving really fast,' Fox said. 'When you've only got one blade it can be quite challenging but stopper moves are also where a lot of time can be made.'

In the men's K1 Germany's Alexander Grimm gave the home crowd reason to cheer by qualifying fastest in 89.92, just ahead of Australia's Lucien Delfour in 90.02. Clarke was 34th after the first run but was



Top: Alexander Grimm.
Left: Giovanni De Gennaro.
Bottom: Michal Martikan.



second quickest on the next run. 'It's not the best of days but to get through is the main thing,' Clarke said. 'To be honest, I'm still not feeling the best, still trying to build back up again after the Olympics. I had a long time off and it's showing in my paddling.' Clarke's Great Britain teammate Mallory Franklin continued her consistent 2017 season by qualifying fastest in the women's K1, her time of 101.38 putting her ahead of the previous weekend's Augsburg gold medallist, Ricarda Funk of Germany. Funk picked up a 2 second penalty to push her time back to 101.56. In the men's C2, local heroes Franz Anton and Jan Benzien took just a long enough break from organizing the weekend's World Cup to qualify fastest for Saturday's semis in 102.61, ahead of the Czech pair of Ondrej Karlovsky and Jakub Jane in 102.78.

Italy's Giovanni De Gennaro and Australia's Jessica Fox waltzed away with World Cup titles in challenging weather conditions at Markkleeberg. Fox finished almost 5 seconds ahead of the next best paddler in the women's C1 while De Gennaro had almost 3 seconds to spare on the rest of the field in the men's K1 final. De Gennaro, a World Cup gold medallist on his home course in Ivrea last year, was the slowest qualifier coming into the final but turned that form on its head to post 92.83 in the final. 'I didn't expect this result. I'd had a really hard week,' De Gennaro said. 'I knew I could be fast but I didn't expect this time. I never take anything for granted and I've been wondering a lot this season if I can be at this level. It's good to be on the top but I know there is still a lot to do.' Germany's Sebastian Schubert was 2nd in 95.78 and Japan's Kazuya Adachi 3rd in 98.29.

Fox was even more impressive in the C1. Nuria Vilarrubla posted what appeared to be a winning time of 106.40 before Fox sizzled down the course in a jaw dropping 101.46. Organizers had decided to remove two gates for the women to fit into the television schedule. 'I was aggressive from start to finish and I got those stopper moves like I had visualized in my head so it's nice when a run comes together like that,' Fox said. 'Two weeks ago we got accepted into the Olympics programme and now we can't do the full course because they don't think we are capable of it. I know that all the girls in that final are capable of doing that course.' Fellow Australian Ros Lawrence picked up the bronze, finishing in 111.46.

In the men's C2 it was a second 2017 World Cup gold medal for the Czech Republic's Jonas Kaspar and Marek Sindler, who finished in 108.95. 'To be perfectly honest, our training here and our qualifications and semi finals were not so great, which was a bit scary, but the finals run set everything okay,' Kaspar said. 'It's only the third race so we have to focus more on our training ahead of the next World Cups and the world championships.'

Ricarda Funk was just three years old when Michal Martikan won his first ever canoe slalom World Cup medal; on Sunday she joined the Slovak veteran in the winner's circle. 25 year old Funk confirmed her standing as the fastest K1 paddler in the world in 2017 and 38 year old Martikan won 22 years after he won his first ever title, on the final day of the third World Cup. Funk was super quick in the semi finals and, outrageously, went even faster in the final, posting a time of 103.85 to beat Jessica Fox by 2.46 seconds with Slovenia's Eva Tercej 3rd in 109.97. The gold followed on from the equally impressive win on her home course in Augsburg one week before. 'It was a good day today. I just felt good and I was very focussed and had fun on the water,' Funk said. 'I don't know what is different now for me. My Europeans didn't go so well so I just wanted to show what I could do.'

Almost two years to the day since Martikan won his last World Cup gold medal, the 19th of his career, he added a 20th on Sunday, beating Germany's Sideris Tasiadis by 0.69 seconds on the difficult Markkleeberg course. Martikan's time was 100.88, with Great Britain's Adam Burgess 3rd in 101.76. 'It doesn't happen every day so this is really a very good feeling,' the five time Olympian said. 'I enjoy paddling every time and it's much better when you can win. I can absolutely say that I love canoe slalom.'

ICF

K1W: 1 R Funk, Deutschland, 103.85. 2 J Fox, Australia, 106.31. 3 E Tercej, Slovenija, 109.17.

7 F Pennie, GB, 114.67. 16 M Franklin, GB.

K1M: 1 G De Gennaro, Italia, 92.83. 2 S Schubert, Deutschland, 95.78. 3 K Adachi, Nippon, 98.29.

C1W: 1 J Fox, Australia, 101.46. 2 N Vilarrubla, España, 106.40. 3 R Lawrence, Australia, 111.46.

9 K Woods, GB, 161.87. 18 J Royle, GB. 20 M Franklin, GB.

C1M: 1 M Martikan, Slovensko, 100.88. 2 S Tasiadis, Deutschland, 101.57.

3 A Burgess, GB, 101.76. 7 R Westley, GB, 105.76. 14 D Florence, GB.