

Fox rewrites record book

World Championships

Great Britain picked up two gold medals and the Slovakian C1 men's team won an incredible eighth consecutive title on the opening day of the slalom world championships in Rio, Brazil. France picked up the fourth gold medal on offer, the women's K1, with Great Britain taking the men's K1 and the women's C1. Britain showed off its depth in slalom with bronze medals in the men's C1 and women's K1. In men's C1, Alexander Slafkovsky, Michal Martikan and Matej Benus have won every men's C1 world championship teams title since the 2008 Beijing Olympics, clocking up their eighth title by just 0.28 second from Slovenia with Great Britain 3rd. 'We are changing the history; it's amazing,' Slafkovsky said. 'It was a very tough race today; the other teams had very strong very good runs and I touched the last upstream gate so I thought it would not be enough. We really are a compact team; everybody knows what to do and even if something goes wrong we are very fast at creating and we think well.'

The 17 year old Bethan Forrow teamed up with C1 world champion Mallory Franklin and former European champion Kimberley Woods to help Great Britain defend the women's C1 team title. Franklin and Woods were part of the successful team in Pau last year and said it was exciting to have Forrow join the team. 'It's so good in Britain that we have this depth and to have Beth be able to come in and paddle at this level,' Franklin said. 'She hasn't had that much exposure yet but she'll get there.'

'I was definitely nervous,' Forrow said. 'My expectations were, like, way above my level. I'm really pleased with the way I paddled and to be able to do it with these two.'

The British K1 men's team added to the gold medal haul a short time later with Olympic gold medallist Joe Clarke teaming with Bradley Forbes-Cryans and Chris Bowers to beat Poland and the Czech Republic. It was the first K1 men's team title for Great Britain since 1997, a year before Bowers was born. 'We've had a really good feeling throughout the whole of the British team in this camp and throughout the year as well,' Forbes-Cryans said. 'We've put in a lot of work to be more of a team and I think that paid off today. Myself, Joe and Chris work incredibly hard back at Lee Valley and I think this is all just testament to that hard work. Everyone's thinking about that one Tokyo boat and there is definitely competition, extremely tough competition, fighting it out for that one position, but we all do our best just to leave that on the water and to get on with it while we are on the team together.'

The first gold medal of the world championships went to the French women's K1 team of Lucie Baudu, Marie-Zelia Lafont and Camille Prigent. 'It's awesome; we are so happy. It's good to start the world championships like this,' Prigent said. 'It makes us confident for the next races. It's good for the team. Everyone was happy this morning and excited to race.' The French finished ahead of Germany and Great Britain.

Five time Olympian Michal Martikan showed what might have been by posting the fastest men's C1 qualifying time. Rio was the first Olympics 39 year old Martikan missed since 1996 but he showed on Wednesday the course held no fears for him. Australia's Jessica Fox, a bronze medallist on the same course in Rio in 2016, took her first step to defending her 2017 world title by qualifying fastest in the women's K1. Martikan, easily the most experienced paddler in the field, showed he is still as strong now as he was when he won the first of his two gold medals 22 years ago in Atlanta. While others struggled to put together smooth runs, Martikan breezed down the course in 88.86 seconds, 1.36 seconds ahead of Rio gold medallist France's Denis Gargaud Chanut, in 90.22. Great Britain's Ryan Westley picked up a 2 second penalty for a gate touch but was still quick enough to finish third in 91.58. Martikan said to finally get a chance to compete on the Olympic course was a special opportunity. 'I think so,' he said. 'I was not paddling in the Rio Olympics. I was sitting in the crowd, watching the race. I dreamed that I would like to paddle at the Olympic Games at this course. It's always special because the Olympics is the best we can paddle at this most beautiful sport in the world. I was surprised about the result today but I was not surprised by the run. After our eighth consecutive gold medal in team events yesterday my feelings are very good and it's the main reason why I was paddling so smooth today.'

Fox continued her outstanding 2018 season with the fastest time in the women's K1, posting a time of 94.14 to finish ahead of Rio 2016

gold medallist Maialen Chourraut of Spain, in 95.96, with Slovenia's Ursa Kragelj third in 96.23. 'It's nice to be back. I had some good memories from here two years ago,' Fox said. 'Obviously, with Rio it was amazing to win a second Olympic medal but I was left a bit frustrated because I felt like it wasn't my best race. That's what I'll be looking for next, just one'

Jessica Fox was two runs away from creating yet another moment in history after qualifying fastest in the women's C1. If Fox could win the C1 title she would become the first slalomist to go through an entire international season undefeated after she won all five World Cup events earlier this year. Czech Ondrej Tunka gave a timely reminder of his abilities, qualifying fastest in the men's K1, 12 months after winning his first world title in Pau. Fox showed there had been no drop in her incredible 2018 form, posting a time of 101.32 to pip Mallory Franklin in 101.61. Team mate Kimberley Woods was 3rd in 108.30. Fox had



Martikan leads the Slovak men's C1 team.



The GB women's C1 team on their way to the title.



Michal Martikan on the one Olympic course he missed.