

the introduction of the age division at the 2012 world championships the German's had won every title. In a repeat of the 2016 result, Germany beat Poland in the final while New Zealand also repeated its performance of two years ago to claim bronze. While it was a fourth consecutive world title for the Germans, it was their eighth major tournament win in succession. 'It was our last year with the team so we definitely wanted to win the gold,' Esra Ozbay said. 'This is what we have worked for all year. We have a great team spirit; we're virtually sisters. We have such a strong club competition in Germany and that really pushes us.'

Great Britain were the defending champions in the men's U21 and repeated their performance of 2016 by beating Germany in a hard fought final. Captain Jack Playford was part of the 2016 team and was instrumental in Saturday's win. 'There was a lot of pressure on us,' he said. 'We had a mentality of taking one game at a time. We said before the championships we had ten boxes to tick, each one being a game, tick each one as we go and don't get ahead of ourselves. It seems to have worked.'

GB coach David Edwards said the gold was just reward for a lot of hard work. 'The lads have worked so hard and we had a few personnel changes this year but the new guys who have come in have bought into everything that we have done for the past four years,' Edwards said. 'They deserve everything they've got; this is just the result of everything they've done before. Germany are a good team so it just shows how hard our guys worked to get this result. All the lads know what I expect; we just try and raise the bar and, hopefully, we can start driving that through to the men's game. Some of the lads will move up this year so, hopefully, they'll push on into the men's and we'll see some success there, which is long overdue, to be honest.'

Incredibly Germany had not won either a senior or U21 men's gold medal in the 24 year history of the competition with Saturday's silver the team's seventh overall and second for the U21's. By contrast, German women had won eight gold medals overall. U21 coach Marc Uhlmann said his team's recent record against Poland was a strong factor in Saturday's win. 'I don't know what we do but every year we have a chance to be first,' he said. 'We knew that Poland lost their last three games against us and we know that for the head that is very difficult, to say now we want to do that. I think that was our best chance today, to remind the girls that the last three wins were ours.'

The team also paid tribute to Fiete Junge, a member of the German men's team who died suddenly on the eve of the world championships. 'We did this for Fiete as well,' player Esra Ozbay said. 'It's been a big loss. This is what he wished for, I guess, so we all played for him. He was so young. We all miss him and he was such a good player as well.'

Germany broke through for an emotional men's gold medal and immediately dedicated their win to team mate Fiete Junge. It was a double celebration for the Germans with the women's team winning their sixth world championship with a 3-1 result over Great Britain to add to the men's 4-1 win over defending champions Italy. It was Germany's first world championship gold medal in the senior men's competition. Adding to the emotion for the team was the sudden

death of Junge as the team prepared to travel to Welland. Coach Bjorn Zirotzki could barely contain his tears as he waved Junge's number ten vest to the crowd as soon as the final whistle was blown. 'It's a very emotional win for us,' Zirotzki said. 'All the circumstances, all the bad things that happened, it's unbelievable that we were able to make it. We are not a team of superstars; we are a superstar team. The last time we met with Fiete we talked about how we wanted to be world champions. He would say all the time "Hey guys; let's do this," so we did it for Fiete. We did it for us; we did it for the team. It's unbelievable what these guys made; it's unbelievable what has happened to us in the past couple of weeks. Normally it's not possible to do it but we did it.'

German captain Jonas Vieren said his team was under enormous pressure after taking five silver medals and also dealing with the emotional circumstances but he said those pressures also spurred the team on. 'We fought for this for several years,' he said. 'Finally we have won the world championships. We had won all the other championships but we could never win this one. With all the events before the championships it's a special and very emotional moment. It was a tough time before the championships but the team came closer together. We just tried to play polo here and paddle for him as well and it was enough to win the world championships and we won it for him.'

The German women's team was able to wrest back the title they lost to New Zealand two years ago with a win over Great Britain which added to the U21 title the country won 24 hours earlier. Captain Elena Giles said her team always copes well with the pressure of expectation that comes with being the best in the world and she attributed her country's dominance of women's canoe polo to a strong work ethic. 'It's been like this for as long as I've played; that's just how it feels and it's no different for us,' she said. 'We have a coach who is a big thinker and we talk about tactics. We have two or three very good players in defence and I think we are forgiving for what is going wrong. We don't focus on that too much; we've been taking on new younger players on the team every year and that allows us to develop them into our culture and into the game we are playing and it's been working really well.' Italy also made history on Sunday, securing their first ever women's medal when they beat France 4-1 for the bronze. Spain took a third consecutive men's bronze medal when they beat France 5-4.

## ICF

**WU21:** GB 6, Taiwan 3. GB 8, España 1. GB 4, France 3. Deutschland 7, GB 2. France 1, GB 4. NZ 7, GB 4. **SF:** GB 3, Deutschland 4. **3/4:** NZ 3, GB 2. **F:** Polska 1, Deutschland 5.

**O/A:** 1 Deutschland. 2 Polska. 3 NZ. 4 GB.

**W:** GB 17, Australia 0. GB 7, Danmark 0. France 5, GB 6. GB 10, Taiwan 3. GB 7, Schweiz 2. GB 7, Nederland 3. GB 14, Danmark 0. Deutschland 3, GB 1. **SF:** Italia 1, GB 3.

**F:** GB 1, Deutschland 3. **O/A:** 1 Deutschland. 2 GB. 3 Italia.

**MU21:** Schweiz 0, GB 4. GB 6, Ireland 0. GB 6, Nederland 3. GB 5, Italia 3. GB 6, Schweiz 2.

GB 5, Nippon 0. GB 6, Danmark 2. GB 2, France 3. **SF:** GB 9, Polska 3. **F:** GB 3, Deutschland 2.

**O/A:** 1 GB. 2 Deutschland. 3 Polska.

**M:** GB 9, Brasil 3. Schweiz 3, GB 4. GB 5, Iran 6. Italia 6, GB 1. Taiwan 4, GB 5. Deutschland 4, GB 1. Polska 2, GB 2. Danmark 2, GB 2. **5-8:** Nederland 4, GB 3. **7/8:** Taiwan 3, GB 8. **3/4:** France 4, España 5. **F:** Italia 1, Deutschland 4. **O/A:** 1 Deutschland. 2 Italia. 3 España. 7 GB.

# Clean sweep evades Dragon

## British Open

Although there were plenty of entries for the British Open at Holme Pierrepont, there was only one female team, TS Doncaster, who became national champions by default.

Similarly, there were only two youth teams but they did at least have a match to decide the winner.

There were several mixed teams, however, and all played in the three divisions into which the tournament was split. In fact, Division 3 was won by one of the youth teams, St Albans.

The Division 2 final saw Trentham with the one goal of the first half and another after the break before opponents Dragon B came back with three goals to take the win 3 - 2.

The youth final saw Dragon with most of the possession and an early goal but shots which were high, low or wide of the net. St Albans put one in off a paddle, Dragon responding in like fashion, before sinking another half a minute before the interval.

In the second half a St Albans shot wedged between the frame and the paddle of a Dragon defender, who held it, looked up assessed the situation and carefully rolled the ball out to safety. Dragon scored what was to be their last goal 3 minutes into the half. St Albans were there 1 min 20 secs from the end and again a minute later for a 6 - 3 win.

The Division 1 all Welsh final was controlled by Dragon but Bridgend were effective at blocking shots and then passing well when breaking out to attack. Bridgend scored their first three goals in the first 5 minutes, the third a long shot down the pitch, to which Dragon



Dragon play Trentham in the Division 2 final.