



Slovakia scores two golds, Spain breaks medal drought at Kayak Slalom Worlds

La Seu D'Urgell, Spain – While Slovakia won two of the four team events at today's International Canoe Federation Canoe Slalom World Championships, perhaps the happier news here today was Spain winning its first-ever medals in a World Championship.

Gold medalists in today's team competitions were Slovakia in C2 and C1 men, Great Britain in K1 Women and Czech Republic in K1 men.

Spanish fans erupted in cheers, applause and even tears as Team Spain's first bronze medalists realized they had earned Spain's first-ever medal in a World Championship. The C1 team, comprised of Jordi Domenjo, Jon Erguin and Ander Elozegi was mobbed by fans as they took their boats out at the finish line. A similar scene erupted when in K1 team action, top-seeded France incurred a 50 point penalty moving that country into ninth place and Spain up to third. The K1 team was comprised of Joan Crespo, Guillermo Diez Canedo and Carles Juanmarti.

Even Slovakian C1 Team gold medalist Michal Martikan said during his media interview that it's great Spain has a medal. Martikan was joined at the top of the podium by teammates Alexander Slakfkovsky and Matej Benus. While Martikan is used to wearing gold medals, today was Benus' first gold as a senior. When asked how it felt, Benus's one-word reply was "awesome." Smiling and joking, 21-year-old Benus added, "I just won a World Championships, so I must be awesome."

The other Slovakian gold medalists were the C2 team comprised of the ever-imposing Hochschorner brothers, Peter and Pavel, as well as cousins Peter and Ladislav Skantar and Tomas Kucera and Jan Batik. The C2's team win was dramatic as the Slovaks shaved eight full seconds off the semifinal time to deny top-seeded Czech Republic the gold. The Czechs settled for second, and Great Britain took third.

In men's K1, Czech Republic won gold by choosing the "middle way," a way focused on a little more room between the boats to avoid incurring penalties in the three-way weaves around the gates. All three of the top seeds in finals – France, Italy and Slovenia – suffered heavy penalties helping the fourth-seeded Czechs hold onto first. The Czech team was comprised of Ivan Psivejc, Vavrinec Hradilek and Michal Buchtel.

In Women's K1 action, the conscious decision to commit to winning K1 and training as a team to do so paid off for the team from Great Britain. Though just her first trip to a World Championships, Louise Donnington said that winning the European championships, gave her and teammates Elizabeth Neave and Laura Blakeman confidence that they'd win a medal here, just not sure which color. Veteran paddler



La Seu d'Urgell • Spain
9 - 13 SEPTEMBER



Blakeman, 30, said it was pretty special to finally win her first gold in five World Championship outings.

Slalom action continues tomorrow with semifinal section in C2 starting at 09:00, followed by K1 Women, C1 then K1 Men. Finals are slated to start at Noon. For up-to-the-minute schedules and results visit <http://www.worldseu09.parcolimpic.com>