



2009 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships: Ones to watch

La Seu d'Urgell, Spain – The 1992 Barcelona Olympics slalom course is once again host to the world's top slalom athletes as the International Canoe Federation Canoe Slalom World Championships get under way here in the Spanish Pyrenees mountains today through Sept. 13.

In all, more than 300 athletes representing 55 countries will be vying for world titles on the spectacular whitewater slalom park located in the heart of La Seu. New this year are the addition of the fruits of the ICF's development program, notably the addition of Nepal and Uganda on the heat sheets as well as a demonstration event comprised of C1 women. Of the core, traditional classes, the following is a quick cheat sheet of athletes to watch in each of the classes.

K1 Men

A number of strong World Cup and Olympic champs will be vying for this year's title. Insiders are laying heavy odds on current World Cup Champ Peter Kauzer of Slovenia. But Kauzer will face still competition from the French who are eager for their country to retail the World title despite the absence here of defending champ Sebastien Combet. Favorites among the French include Julian Billaut, Fabian LeFevre and Boris Neveu. But slalom watchers caution that any of a handful of other heavyweights could also take a place on the podium at the end of this week including Olympic champion Alexander Grimm (GER), World Cup 2 winner from Tacen, Campbell Walsh (GBR) and Daniel Molmenti (ITA) the European Champion who is also ranked second in World Cup standings.

K1 Women

It's anybody's guess as to who will stand atop the podium in a deepening field of women paddlers. Current Olympic champ Elena Kaliska (SVK) would like to add to her collection of medals. Equally eager to add a World Championship title to their resumes are this year's World Cup title-holder Jana Dukatova (SVK) and veteran Stepanka Hilgertova (CZE) who won Worlds here in 1999 as well as other titles in between. A new threat is Austria's Corinna Kuhnle who's looking for her first world title as is Germany's Jasmine Schornberg.

C1 Men

Expect fireworks at this much anticipated showdown between multiple Olympic and World Cup champion Michal Martikan (SVK) and Frenchman Tony Estanguet who will undoubtedly be looking to avenge his disappointment in Beijing, where despite being heavily favored, he failed to advance to finals. Other strongmen in this class include Martikan's Slovakian teammates Alex Slafkofsky and Matej Benus, not to mention Olympic silver medalist David Florence (GBR).

C2

Paddling with big targets on their backs will be the ever-dominant duo of Slovakian brothers and triple Olympic champs Peter and Pavel Hochschorner. Cousins and countrymen Peter and Ladislav Skantar pose a threat, as do Frenchmen Fabien LeFevre and Denis Chanut. Making their campaign more interesting is the fact that both Frenchmen are doubling down on their quest for medals: LeFevre also competing in K1, while Chanut gears up for C1.

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