



Jiri Prskavec.



Giovanni De Gennaro.

Setchell's dilemma for Olympic team selectors

Praha Slalom

Heavy upstream rain threw a curve ball for organizers of the World Cup in Prague.

The Troja River reached heights which made the usual slalom course unrecognizable. As a result, organizers scrapped Thursday's competition and would abbreviate the kayak and canoe competitions.

On the Friday there would only be one heat of the men's and women's kayak with the top ten in each heat qualifying directly for the final. It would be the same format for the canoe on the Saturday.

The kayak cross competition on the Sunday, which also doubled as the final Olympic qualifier, would be run as usual but would also introduce a repêchage round. It would be a similar format when kayak cross made its Olympic debut in Paris.

Brazil's three time Olympian, Ana Satila, said the shortened format would make racing more challenging.

'You only have one run to do and you need to do it at the time,' Satila said.

'The big difference is we don't have that warmup that we normally have and that is really important.

'Unfortunately this is the first time we have seen the water like this during a race preparation but of course it is hard for everybody. We don't have the last part of the course so we can't train there.'

A total of 45 nations representing every continent entered this World Cup. Paris bound competitors from Czechia, Spain and Slovakia, who sat out the previous weekend's season opener in Augsburg, would be back in action.

Czech Olympic champion Jiri Prskavec and Spanish Olympic champion Maialen Chourraut would both line up for their first World Cup of the year.

Paddlers from 38 nations would be competing in the kayak cross. There would be three Olympic quotas up for grabs in both the men's and women's events and only those who had not yet earned their country an Olympic quota would be eligible to compete.

Italy's Giovanni De Gennaro broke through for his first ever win



while France's Emma Vuitton collected her maiden gold medal on the Friday.

It was De Gennaro's final international before he competed at his third Olympics later this year and he'd take winning K1 form to Paris after breaking a run of minor placings on the Czech course.

The event opened up for De Gennaro when the top two Czech paddlers, Olympic champion Jiri Prskavec and World Cups winner Vit Prindis, missed the final.

'I'm really happy, I've been waiting for this run for the last four years,' De Gennaro said.

'I was always so close to getting a win but the Czech guys were always really really fast so today I'm just happy that I was able to put down a solid run.

'I usually don't look at the start list for the final. I just focus on me. I know with them in the final it would be much harder to take the win but today was like this and I won't complain about the fact they weren't there.'

He finished more than two seconds clear of Poland's Mateusz Polaczyk, who secured Olympic selection for his country with his silver, while Jakub Krejci gave the home fans reason to celebrate with a bronze.

In the women's K1 event 20 year old Emma Vuitton picked up the biggest win of her career, finishing ahead of four time world champion and three time Olympic medallist Jessica Fox and reigning Olympic champion and two time world champion Ricarda Funk.

'It's crazy for me because they are two paddlers I watched when I was younger on TV,' Vuitton said.

'I'm super happy about my final; it was not perfect but I tried to push hard in the bottom of the course and I'm happy with the result. This year I'm feeling really good on the water but I've found it hard in the finals to push for the finish line so I'm happy today I could do that. I just need to concentrate on my paddling and try and do a good run every race.'

Vuitton proved the importance of remaining error free. Both Fox and



Emma Vuitton.



Gabriela Satková.