

500m 4th for Cawthorne

World Championships

Welcoming 66 countries to Dartmouth, Canada, the 2009 sprint world championships opened with a magical mixture of Canadian culture, including aboriginal drums as a backdrop for local silk paint artist Holly Carr and a spellbinding performance that exhibited Canada's rich cultural heritage. With speeches from Canada's Minister for Sports, chair of Canoe '09 Chris Keevill and the ICF president, the world championships opened with real sporting spirit and, in true Canadian style, a respect for the history and culture of the canoe was displayed as Mi'kmaq chief Deborah Robinson of Acadia First Nation blessed the competition with a traditional smudging ceremony.

As per the ICF's slogan, Always Moving Forward, the event saw the introduction of a few new events including the 200m relay, women's C1 and C2 events and Paddleability racing, the biggest sprint event of the ICF for 2009.

Jose Perurena, ICF president, commented 'The venue is spectacular and the organizers have done an excellent job preparing these championships.'

The sun put his hat on as Lake Banook got set for a gripping day of semi finals. The big news came from the British and New Zealand teams. Rachel Cawthorne (GBR) made it into the final of the K1 500m while the British men's K4 1,000m and women's K2 500m crews stormed into the finals. From the NZ camp, Steven Ferguson, son of New Zealand's most successful Olympian, Ian Ferguson, continued the family tradition and landed a place in the K1 1,000m and 500m events. Troy Burbridge and Scott Bicknell, New Zealand's K2 1,000m boys, also won a place in the final. It was a great day for the home team; Canadian athletes had a presence in finals across the board. Cuba also put in a great performance.

The day started with Adam van Koeverden (CAN), just as it the previous day. He repeated his success and won his semi. Meanwhile, in other semi finals, Max Hoff (GER), Anders Gustafsson (SWE) and Ken Wallace (AUS) each took 1st place, ensuring that the final would be an absolute scorcher with all the big guns battling for gold. The Cook Island's Josh Utanga, an athlete from the ICF's Talent Identification Programme, also made it into the semi final after just 10 weeks in a sprint boat. He reached his goal of breaking the 4 minute mark.

Attila Vajda (HUN) showed that the previous day's lacklustre performance was nothing to worry about. He won his semi in the C1 1,000m. In the other heat, though, both Menkov Vadim (UZB) and Mathieu Goubel (FRA) achieved faster times.

In the men's K2 1,000m, Spanish boys Emilio Merchan and Diego Cosgaya came out top. They had to be the hot favourites for the final. The men's K4 1,000m was dominated by the Czech Republic crew, Ondrej Horsky, Jan Soucek, Jan Sterba and Jan Andrlík, as well as France's four, Guillaume Burger, Vincent Lecrubier, Philippe Colin and Sebastien Jouve.

In the men's C2 1,000m Cuba joined the final, as did the Canadians, who were piped by Cuba by just half a second.

Superstar Katalin Kovacs (HUN) won her semi final in the K1 1,000m but her opponents Franziska Weber (GER) and Henriette Engel-Hansen (DEN) achieved faster times in each of their races. It was all set for an excellent final.

The afternoon's 500m events were just as exciting. In the men's K1 500m Ronald Rauhe (GER), Adam van, Ken Wallace and Anders Gustafsson would meet in what would be one of the most exciting races of the competition. Others to watch were Steven Ferguson and Sebastien Jouve, who had had an excellent season, performing well in the World Cups earlier this year.

Their female counterparts held an equally gripping show, Katalin Kovacs, Josefa Idem (ITA), Katrin Wagner-Augustin (GER) and Henriette Engel-Hansen all going through to the finals, as did Britain's rising star, Rachel Cawthorne. This would be a final not to miss.

In the men's K2 500m Hungary's Zoltan Kammerer and Gabor Kucsera achieved the fastest time with the Spaniards Saul Craviotto and Carlos Perez getting a close 2nd. Sweden's athletes Josefín Nordlow and Sofia Paldanias won their heat to make it to the final, as did the Austrian team's Yvonne Schuring and Viktoria Schwarz.

It was another great day of racing and it was clear right from the start of the day that things are really hotting up for the weekend's finals. It was crunch time for the world's best sprint athletes.

The day broke over Lake Banook as hundreds of athletes began

their preparation for a full day of gripping finals. Adam van Koeverden kicked off the third day in a row in the K1 1,000m. The home crowd were going nuts for their golden boy; however, it was not gold this time for the Canadian. Max Hoff stole the show in 1st place with Anders Gustafsson coming 2nd, leaving the bronze for Adam.

The biggest shock of the morning and perhaps of the whole competition was that Attila Vajda failed to achieve 1st place or even a medal. In fact, Vajda was not even close, coming in a staggering 8th place. Uzbekistan's Menkov Vadim (UZB) triumphed with top spot, Mathieu Goubel (FRA) was 2nd and Sebastien Brendel (GER) took 3rd. Of his performance, Goubel explained how he knew he had to work hard in the day's race and how he managed to focus just on himself; 'I raced alone and saw nothing else of the race. It was only when I crossed the line that I saw the result.'

In the men's K2 1,000m Emilio Merchan and Diego Cosgaya lived up to their favourite tag, taking gold in the K2 1,000m. Australia's Luke Morrison and David Smith took silver with the Cubans Carlos Montalvo and Reinier Torres taking a well deserved bronze.

The German and Azerbaijan men's teams battled it out in a very close C2 1,000m final. In the end gold went to Erik Leue and Tomasz Wylenzek of Germany. They beat Sergey Bezugliy and Maksim Prokopenko by just eight hundredths of a second. The Russian pair Victor Melantsev and Nikolay Lipkin took the bronze spot.

Belarus won their first gold of the day in the men's K4 1,000m. They fought hard to beat France and Slovakia. France picked up their second silver of the competition.

Katalin Kovacs started her day of races with a gold alongside her team mates in the K4 500m. Germany's K4 team took silver and Spain took bronze. Just an hour later Katalin was back on the water to take her second gold of the day in the K1 1,000m. She breezed through to the finish, leaving Franziska Weber in 2nd and Bridgette Hartley to take third, a great day for the South African. Bridgette had an excellent season in the 2009 World Cup series.

Another Belarus team pocketed the gold in the C4 1,000m, the Germans taking silver and the Romanians bronze. Poland got their first medal of the competition with Beata Mikołajczyk and Malgorzata Chojnacka claiming gold in the women's K2 1,000m. Germany took silver. Hungary took bronze.

Exhibition races rounded up the morning activities with the women's C1 500m. Then two Paddleability races (men's K1 200m and women's K1 200m) were contested for the first time at the world championships with great support from the crowd. The afternoon saw the heats for the 200m events.

The finals were shown live on Eurosport, Universal Sports and CBC Television. It could also be followed live on the ICF website.

With over twenty medal presentations the final day of the championships proved to be a spectacle of canoeing excellence. All eyes looked to Adam van Koeverden in the first final of the day. The crowd went wild but it just couldn't help Adam, who came a somewhat disappointing 5th. Ronald Rauhe came in fastest with a time of 1:37.6, Anders Gustafsson took 2nd and Ken Wallace came in 3rd. Wallace said of his performance he achieved what he 'came here to do' and proved that his Beijing gold was not a one off performance.

Mathieu Goubel gained his second medal of the championships, coming in 3rd in the C1 500m. In front was Belarus giant Dzianis Harazha and Nikolay Lipkin.

One of the day's biggest finals came from the girls in the K1 500m. Katalin Kovacs seemed utterly unstoppable as she took gold, coming in nearly half a second faster than Katrin Wagner-Augustin. Seasoned professional Josefa Idem took the bronze spot while Britain's young star, Rachel Cawthorne, did well, coming in 4th place. It was extremely close with the top three crossing the line within seven hundredths of a second of each other.

Belarus took their second gold medal of the day with teammates Raman Piatrushenka and Vadzim Makhneu in the men's K2 500m, Zoltan Kammerer and Gabor Kucsera took silver and Germany's Marcus Gross and Hendrik Bertz took bronze.

In just four races the Germans had a spot on each level of the podium. As if that wasn't a big enough achievement they went on to win another gold in the men's C2 500m with Robert Nuck and Stefan Holtz completing the distance in a quick 1:41.31. Evgeny Ignatov and Ivan Shtyl of Russia took silver while Sergey Bezugliy and Maksim