

Australian duo Jaxon Merritt and Rosalyn Lawrence, and American pairing Casey Eichfeld and Devin McEwan recorded victories on the final day of racing at the 2014 Canoe Slalom Oceania Championships in Penrith.

Penrith Whitewater Stadium produced some fantastic racing with the 18 gate technical course providing a challenge for all.

Melbourne Canoe Club kayaker Jaxon Merritt produced his best career result to win the highly competitive K1M event.

The U23 paddler upstaged a strong international field which contained former Olympic and World Cup champions Alexander Grimm and Etienne Daille to win in a score of 91.90.

"I didn't really have a lot of expectations coming into this race, I was just more trying to race for selection and make the team", Merritt said.

The 22 year old achieved exactly that and will represent Australia on the Senior and U23 teams in 2014.

Merritt also contested the C1M event on Saturday finishing fourth in the U23s.

"I think the C1 is good to relax a little bit and get into racing mode and clear your head but it also gives you a bit of a run of the course which is nice."

Merritt next assignment will be to prepare for the U23 World Championships from 23-27 April where he will be looking to improve on his ninth placing in Slovakia last year.

"I will try and peak a bit more and get a bit better and do a bit more aerobic training and taper again for the Worlds."

Armidale's Will Forsythe finished second 0.44 seconds behind Merritt in a one-two for Australia.

"It was a tough day out there for me and I think I paddled well. I had two clean runs under pressure which was good and I cannot complain about the result", Forsythe said.

Many athletes struggled on the main drop at gate 10.

"Yeah it was pretty tough, you had to get into that eddy which is not so easy with the placing of the gate and a get a big turn, ten was definitely a tough move. The bit under the bridge, six, seven and eight was tricky too."

German Paul Boeckelmann finished third 2.64 seconds behind Merritt with two gate touches proving costly.

Merritt also clinched the U23 title ahead of American Michael Smolen and German Fabian Schweikert.

The Junior K1M Oceania title was won by Callum Gilbert of New Zealand.

The Kiwi teenager produced a fantastic semifinal run of 94.51, narrowly missing out on a spot in the final by 0.36 seconds.

Gilbert and his fellow New Zealand internationals have spent the past six weeks in Australia and Gilbert has enjoyed training and competing at the Sydney Olympic venue.

It has been really good to paddle at this course, I really like it and after such a long trip you can really see your development from the race towards the start and then the race we did towards the end", Gilbert said.

“Overall I am pretty happy with how I raced and I definitely improved in training.”

Penrith Valley kayaker Angus Thompson won the silver 2.73 seconds behind Gilbert.

Gilbert and Thompson will be two of the main junior athletes to watch at the ICF Junior and U23 World Championships to be held at the same venue in April.

Rosalyn Lawrence upstaged fellow NSWIS kayaker Jessica Fox to win the C1W Oceania title.

The 24 year old went one better after finishing second the past two years.

“I was really happy with the way I paddled and to see it pay off with a result is really satisfying”, Lawrence said.

On the back of a fast run to win the semifinal earlier in the day Lawrence recorded a clean run of 109.56 to win the final 3.92 seconds ahead of Fox.

Slovakian Katarina Macova took home the bronze in 114.69.

Lawrence will represent Australia in the K1W and C1W senior teams in 2014 and is focused on the Olympic discipline.

“I think I will continue focusing on the K1, there are a few things I am trying differently in the C1 that will hopefully pay off but K1 is the Olympic event so that is the priority”, Lawrence said.

Fox claimed the U23 title ahead of fellow Penrith paddler Alison Borrows.

Western Australian Georgia Rankin finished third.

Noemie Fox won the Junior Oceania final to secure her place in the Australian team ahead of K1W Junior winner Kate Eckhardt of Hobart.

The C2M event rounded out the program with American duo Casey Eichfeld and Devin McEwan winning the gold in 104.50.

The Slovakian crew of Peter and Ladislav Skantar paid the price for a gate touch to finish 0.10 seconds behind the Americans.

Robert Behling and Thomas Becker of Germany took home the bronze.

Australian C2 senior pairing Ethan Hodson and Robin Jeffery finished sixth.

The pair will represent the senior team in 2014 and want to use this year as a building block looking ahead of the 2014 Olympic Games.

“That is where we want to go with it and we want to try and get up to medal contention over the next couple of years and build on our base at the moment”, Hodson said.

Visit www.canoe.org.au for the official Senior, U23 and Junior Team announcements.

Please follow the links below for more news and results.

Links

Oceania Championships – www.oceania.canoe.org.au
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