

WWC Development Camp Solkan

ICF Development – Downriver canoeing

Solkan/Slovenia – 28th of June – 6th of July



1. Participants

The ICF Wildwater Canoeing Development Camp, held during the Junior & U23 World Championships in Solkan, welcomed an inspiring group of 11 young athletes from six countries spanning four continents:

Hungary 

New Zealand 

Romania 

United States 

Senegal 

Ukraine 

These athletes, born between 2003 and 2009, brought with them prior experience in canoeing—many with racing backgrounds in both sprint, flat water and slalom. Though some were stepping into wildwater racing for the first time, others were building on existing international exposure. Regardless of experience level, every participant showed a genuine passion for the sport and a desire to push their limits.

What quickly became apparent was the incredible team spirit that formed within the group. Athletes supported each other in training, offered encouragement during races, and celebrated each other's progress. Language barriers and national flags faded in the face of shared goals and mutual respect.

The group was guided by a highly skilled coaching team composed of four experienced coaches—two women and two men—from Italy and Czechia. Their expertise spanned every discipline, including K1M, K1W, C1M, C1W and C2. Beyond technical coaching, they also played vital roles in equipment repair, emotional support, and team coordination.

Despite limited racing experience for some athletes, each one showed measurable improvement throughout the camp—technically, physically, and mentally.

Name	First name	Category	Nation
Nováková	Alexandra	ICF coach	CZE
Retková	Marie	ICF coach	CZE
Baldan	Francesco	ICF coach	ITA
Migliosi	Alberto	ICF coach	ITA
Ballagi	Bendegus	MK1, C2	HUN
Weber	Barna	MK1, C2	HUN
Rozsa	Julianna	WK1, WC1	HUN
Martley	Paige	WK1, WC1	NZL
Molnar	Cristian	MK1	ROU
Abrudan	Sara	WK1	ROU
McCracken	Allan	MC1, MK1	USA
Harchak	Ava	WK1, WC1, WC2	USA
Ndiaye	Wally	MK1, MC1	SEN
Kasatskyi	Denis	MK1, MC2	UKR
Voronezhskyi	Konstantyn	MK1, MC2	UKR



2. Venue

The venue for this year's development program was in Solkan, at the beautiful Soča River in western Slovenia. Known for its striking emerald cold waters, the Soča offered a stunning setting for both training and competition.

The river provided an ideal environment for learning and competition. It featured:

- Calm stretches ideal for foundational technique
- Playful rapids for refining reaction and control
- A well-marked sprint course with artificial lights
- Safe access points and coach visibility

However, the most memorable part of the venue was undoubtedly the classic race course, which tested athletes to their core.

The Classic Race: The True Battle

This year's classic course could be summed up in three words: hot, flat, and brutal.

- The course was longer than expected, seemingly endless for junior athletes.
- It ran fully exposed under a blazing sun, with no natural shade to offer even a moment's relief.
- Combined with the calm water surface, this created a physically draining and mentally grueling challenge.

Still, every athlete pushed through. The support they gave one another after the race—through high-fives, cold water splashes, and shared sighs of relief—spoke volumes about their determination and character.

The sprint course, by contrast, allowed athletes to enjoy the technical parts of the river, offering a welcome balance to the week's demands. There were some rapids as well as flat parts so athletes got to experience every part of downriver canoeing.



3. Accommodation

Accommodation was provided at Dijaški dom Nova Gorica, a well-equipped student residence just a 5-minute drive from the river course. This convenient location gave athletes and coaches flexibility in their schedules and easy access to both the river and shared training spaces.

Athletes stayed in comfortable shared rooms, typically with one or two roommates. This setup further encouraged bonding and allowed for a healthy balance of social energy and rest.

Catering and Meals

Nutrition was an important part of the program. Meals were served on-site and included:

- Hearty breakfasts to start training days strong
- Warm lunches and dinners, carefully timed around training and race schedules
- Lunch boxes prepared on days with tight schedules or remote training sessions

Athletes were well-fed, hydrated, and energized throughout the event.

Community and Recreation

In addition to physical training, downtime and community events played a major role in the success of the camp. Key moments included:

- Evening meetings in outdoor and indoor spaces for reviewing race footage and refining techniques
- Basketball games on the dormitory playground

- A heartfelt guitar-led picnic by the river, with singing and laughter echoing through the trees
- Spontaneous swims in the cool Soča River—refreshing after long, hot training sessions

These moments created a relaxed, joyful atmosphere that balanced the intensity of the sport with the beauty of shared human experience.



4. Equipment

Thanks to international cooperation and generous contributions from several national federations, athletes had access to all essential equipment.

Boats

- Boats were loaned by Italy, Czechia, Slovenia, and Great Britain
- Some athletes brought their own boats
- Loaned boats were rotated and adjusted as needed for fit and performance

Paddles

- Most athletes brought their own paddles
- C1 paddles were supplied by Czech coach Alexandra Nováková

Safety Equipment

- Airbags were installed in every boat and checked before every session
- Life jackets and helmets were mandatory, without exception
- Coaches monitored all training sessions closely for safety and technical oversight

Coaching Tools

- Italian coach Alberto Miglioni provided an iPad for recording sprint sessions and conducting video feedback meetings
- Coaches reviewed footage with athletes in small group settings, focusing on posture, paddle entry, rhythm, and line choice

In addition, coaches doubled as mechanics, repairing damaged airbags and boat components between sessions with efficiency and care.

5. Results

Though this camp emphasized development over competition, many athletes achieved personal milestones and set the foundation for future international success.

Highlights:

- Rozsa Julianna (Hungary) – 19th, WK1 Junior Classic
- USA WC2 U23 – 6th, Classic – a promising result for a growing wildwater community
- Denys Kasatskyi (Ukraine) – 14th, MK1 Junior Sprint – a strong performance on the world stage

Beyond these, every athlete gained critical experience in:

- Race-day preparation and mental management
- Adapting to environmental challenges (heat, fatigue, river features)
- Team collaboration and cross-national communication

Full results available at: [2025 ICF JUNIOR & U23 WILDWATER CANOEING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS | ICF - Planet Canoe](#)



6. Conclusion

The Solkan ICF Development Camp was a shining example of what the Wildwater community can achieve when passion, preparation, and people come together.

Athletes arrived as individuals—nervous, excited, unsure. They left as a unified force: stronger, wiser, more confident, and already dreaming of the next start line.

This camp didn't just teach them how to paddle faster. It taught them how to:

- Overcome fear (and sunstroke)
- How to use sunscreen
- Trust in a team
- Face long flat rivers under open skies
- Use laughter as recovery
- Cheer in languages they don't speak
- Love the sport—no matter the result

The coaching team delivered a safe, enriching, and joy-filled experience. The logistical support from local organizers was exceptional, and the ICF's commitment to development was clearly felt by everyone.

We look forward to tracking these athletes' journeys at future events. If Solkan was the seed, we can't wait to see the forest that grows from it.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	SCHEDULE OF THE DEVELOPMENT CAMP AT THE 2025 ICF WWC JUNIOR&U23 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS SOLKAN										
2		SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	
3	date	28.6.	29.6.	30.6.	1.7.	2.7.	3.7.	4.7.	5.7.	6.7.	
4	morning		1st training sess: separation into two groups intermediate: Denis, Wally, Ava, Allen, Barna, Alberto+Ale; beginners: Chloee+Mia, Su+JILLI	SCHEDULED TRAININGS	SCHEDULED TRAININGS + BOAT CONTROL	INDIVIDUAL CLASSIC RACE	TEAMS CLASSIC RACE	INDIVIDUAL SPRINT HEATS	INDIVIDUAL SPRINT FINALS		
5											
6	afternoon	coaches are arriving	everyone sprint course	SCHEDULED TRAININGS	SCHEDULED TRAININGS + BOAT CONTROL				TEAM SPRINT FINALS		
7		gathering the boats									
8	evening	boats tryout for athletes		TEAM LEADER MEETING + NATIONS MEETING	OPENING CEREMONY		MEDAL CEREMONY CLASSIC		MEDALS CEREMONY + CLOSING CEREMONY		
9		evening walk around the course + introduction activities									
10											
11											