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Slalom K1 semi-final and final report and photographs

Beijing - 21 year old German Alexander Grimm blitzed the challenging white water course at the Shunyi Olympic Canoeing Park on his final run to snatch the gold medal away from Frenchman Fabien Lefevre, and the competitions surprise package Togo's Benjamin Boukpeti.

Grimm clocked a staggering clear run of 84.39 seconds, at least two seconds faster than any other athletes has been able to cover the 280 metres of churning white water, to leapfrog from his semi-final fourth place to the top of the leaderboard, and then anxiously watched as as Lefevre, Australian Warwick Draper and finally Boukpeti failed to match his Herculean effort.

"I had such a good feeling today. I was feeling strong, and it helped me to fly above the water," said Grimm.

His performance was best summed up by Lefevre, who was quick to concede that the best man had won the gold medal. "To win Olympic gold you need that special edge, that magic, some spice," said Lefevre. "I didn't have it but Alexander (Grimm) had it. he was flying above the waves, while I felt I was fighting the waves."

Grimm's medal crowns a meteoric rise to fame. The athlete from Augsburg, the home of the first ever Olympic slalom competition, dramatically beat established German K1 star Stefan Pfannmöller in the race for the German K1 berth, after announcing his international presence by winning the World Cup on his home course at Augsburg in 2007.

The bronze medal for little known Boukpeti is a fairytale. The son of a French father and Togolese mother, the Toulouse based athlete has been training with the South African squad's coach Jean Jerome Perrin, and earned Togo's first ever Olympic medal.

Boukpeti is a Frenchman in all but nationality, and has only once visited the nation that he represents, and said that he was looking forward to extending his competition with the Frenchmen whose team he had been unable to make, forcing him to turn to his mothers homeland to keep his slalom dreams alive.

"I just did my best!" enthused the year old, who promptly broke his paddles across the front deck of his kayak when he realised that he had won a medal. Boukpeti was the fastest man in the semi-final and started the final with the top seeding, and with the French speaking crowd bellowing support for him.

In the heat of the final both Robert Bouten of the Netherlands and Italian Daniele Molmenti missed gates, Bouten at 15 and Molmenti, when his challenge disintegrated in the final three gates of the final.

Athens 2004 Silver Medallist Campbell Walsh crashed out of contention in the semi-finals with a disastrous first thirty seconds. After making a meal of the tricky upstream gates two and three, and the downstream gates that follow immediately after that, he missed gate six and blew his medal chances as he turned to renegotiate the gate.

The semi-finals saw the demise of Slovakian Peter Kauzer, who touched two gates, each costing two-second penalties that ruled him out of contention for the final after leading the standing going into the semi-final.

RESULTS MENS SLALOM K1 FINAL





- 1.Alexander Grimm GER 171.70
- 2.Fabien Lefevre FRA 173.30
- 3.Benjamin Boukpeti TOG 173.45
- 4.Eoin Rheinisch IRL 176.91
- 5.Warwick Draper AUS 176.98
- 6.David Ford CAN 178.75
- 7.Helmut Oblinger AUT 178.83
- 8.Dariusz Popiela POL 179.68

SEMI-FINAL RESULTS

- 1.Benjamin Boukpeti TOG 86.08
- 2.Warwick Draper AUS 86.09
- 3.Fabien Lefevre FRA 87.21
- 4.Alexander Grimm GER 87.31
- 5.Robert Bouten NED 88.40
- 6.David Ford CAN 88.46
- 7.Dariusz Popeila POL 88.49
- 8.Daniele Molmenti ITA 88.56
- 9.Helmut Oblinger AUT 88.69
- 10.Eoin Rheinisch IRL 88.85

DID NOT QUALIFY

- 11.Vavrinec Hradilek CZE 88.97
- 12.Peter Cibak SVK 89.41
- 13.Peter Kauser SLO 89.42
- 14.Guillermo Diez Canedo ESP 90.06
- 15.Campbell Walsh GBR 95.74

<i>Photo</i>	<i>Caption</i>	<i>Photographer</i>	<i>Click to download the hi-res pic</i>
	German Alexander Grimm crosses the line to win the Olympic Gold medal in the men's K1 slalom competition.	Pic:Balint Vekassy / ICF	HERE
	German Alexander Grimm of Germany in action on his fast final run in the men's K1 slalom competition.	Pic:Balint Vekassy/ ICF	HERE
	Benjamin Boukpeti of Togo.	Pic:Balint Vekassy/ ICF	HERE
	Olympic Medallists Fabien Lefrvre (France, left, silver), Alexander Grimm (Centre, Germany, gold) and Benjamin Boukpeti (Right, Togo, Bronze)	Pic:Balint Vekassy/ ICF	HERE

For further images please contact info@canoeicf.com

For any further information, or if you cannot access these images, please contact:

Dave Macleod

ICF Media Officer

dave@gameplanmedia.co.za

Mobile 086 135 22187252