

# ICF FREESTYLE DEVELOPMENT CAMP

Plattling, Germany - June 10-22 2025



## OVERVIEW

**Dates:** 10<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>th</sup> of June 2025

**Location:** Plattling, Germany

**Discipline:** Canoe Freestyle

**Organizers:** Host Organizing Committee (HOC), International Canoe Federation (ICF)

**Financially supported by:** Host Organizing Committee (HOC), International Canoe Federation (ICF)

**Participants:**

- Number of athletes 8
- Number of guest athletes/organisers 2
- Number of host coaches 3
- Number of ICF Coaches 2
- Number of NF attending 7

## PARTICIPANTS (see Appendix I)

### Athletes

A total of eight athletes attended this year's camp. They came from Peru, Argentina, Kenya, Uganda, India and Slovakia. Attendants were all aged 16 to 26 and were already very good whitewater athletes, but none of them were doing freestyle. Most had a rafting and a river running background, and everyone had a sturdy roll. They were used to spending a lot of time on the water and we could easily hold 1,5-2 hours-sessions without a problem.

By the end of the last week, two Kenyan guests also joined our program; both slalom-athletes, and one of them being an activity-leader for whitewater disciplines in Kenya. Although not officially part of our registered Development Camp athletes, we gave them a warm welcome, in hopes that our hospitality and the sharing of knowledge would help further developments of freestyle kayaking in Kenya.

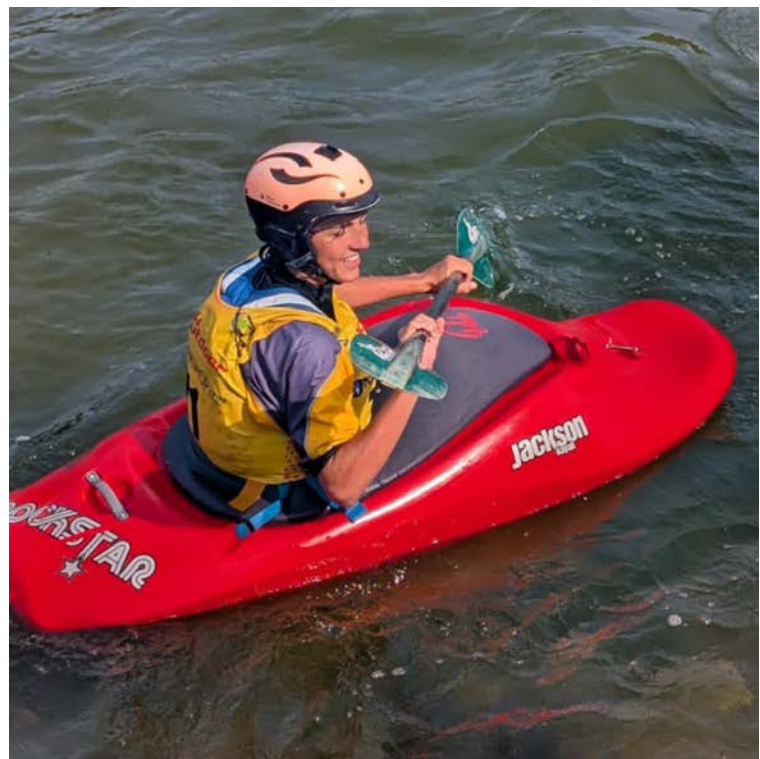


## Evaluation

Participants were very thankful for the opportunity and showed great respect to fellow athletes, coaches, ICF and Organizing Committee. Their shared expectations towards the Development Camp included to get to know the sport and the community and to increase their personal skills. They were also interested in topics such as injury prevention and how to train physically and mentally as athletes.

## Results

Since none of these athletes really had been sitting in a freestyle kayak before, we kept focus on personal development and inclusion into the sport. We started everyone on spins and shuvits, added cartwheels and the roll-over entry, and some even dared going for loops even though rocks kept getting closer. The end-number on the score list was never a priority to them; and the none 0-rides became a challenge everyone embraced and in the end managed. We also had one athlete competing in squirt for the first time.





# COACHES

## ICF Coaches

Head coach **Valérie Bertrand** has a master's degree in Sport Education and works as a coach (kayaking and gymnastics) and a teacher on a daily basis. She started competing internationally at the age of 18, at the time representing Canada in freestyle and other disciplines of whitewater. She moved to Norway in 2004 and has been competing for the Norwegian team since. She has multiple podiums from World Cups and World Championships from between the years 2001 to now. She is also a multiple World Champion in freestyle-squirt and surf kayaking.



**Maxi Montoya** is an Argentinian born kayaker that runs the Playa Las Tapias and whitewater activities in San Juan. He did his debut in a surf kayak at the age of 15, and got introduced to freestyle kayaking at the age of 18. He represented Argentina in freestyle at several international events from 2012 to now. He has hosted Development Camps in USA, Argentina and now Germany.

## Evaluation

Both coaches have slightly different strengths and the combination of Valerie's organizational and pedagogical skills and Maxi's ability to demonstrate skills and his laid-back style completed each other well. The complicity of both coaches is unmatched as they have known each other for a long time; making the logistics and planing easy. Communication between them was easy and efficient both on-site and via What'sApp. Time spent with the crew was extremely enjoyable; as both coaches share a genuine respect for our guest athletes, and simply wished the best for them.

## PROGRAM (see Appendix II)

Daily meet-ups took place each morning in the big white tent at the basecamp and served as a starting point for the day. An active What's App group chat for participants, coaches and an ICF representative was created to ensure easy communication and to notify everyone in the event of a delay or a change on the schedule. This group chat was also used to share info, pictures, training tips and the likes.

### Training Sessions

The daily schedule included an average of two training sessions. Sessions had focus on the basic skills of freestyle kayaking and were tailored to the level of each participant. We combined on-water and on-land sessions to drill body movements, better comprehend each technical skill, work on physical and mental preparation, gain flexibility and mobility, and learn more about injury prevention. See Appendix II for the full schedule.





## Seminars and hosts

**Interview dinner with Seth Chapelle (USA):** An improvised Interview-dinner with one of all times best C1 paddlers. Everyone got to share their story on how they began to kayak and what motivates them to keep going. Seth shared his over 20 years of competing internationally; how he coped with work-family-training and what keeps the flame alive for him.

**The art of freestyle kayaking with Bartosz Czauderna (Poland):** We invited Bartosz for dinner one night, as a surprise guest, to add insights on learning to freestyle kayak. He shared his book and showed his free resource-videos on YouTube where he breaks down skills into digestible pieces and suggests exercises to easier achieve them.

**Learning to squirt boat with the squirt boating community:** A spontaneous yet planed gathering of squirt boaters and Development Camp athletes, right after squirt finals. Participants got to sit in squirt boats and paddle around the main eddy alongside of some of the world's best squirt boaters.

**Learning to C1 with Lucia Hacker (Germany):** Lucia joined us for a flat-water session in which we worked on basic skills and balances. Lucia brought hers and her sister's C1 for participants to try at the bottom eddy and beach. Participants learned about C1 outfitting and basic rolls.



## Socials

The social aspect of these camps is extremely important to help participants feel that they are a part of a bigger community. Introducing them to other athletes, sharing the eddy with the people they follow on Instagram, blending in with other nations at the folk fest in town at night, as well as camping by the river like most freestyle competitors have also been important for their inclusion into the freestyle community. The group also shared a very special bond together, whereas each individual played an important role. As temperatures rose and water levels sank, we got creative and used it as a good excuse to go swimming at the pool, spend a few hours at the beach, eat ice cream in town, and arrange a movie night. One of the participants, Naina from India, had recently won the Kayak Session awards for best short film (Ganga girls); a perfect excuse for a quiet movie night.





## Interviews and media attention

This year's participants had very special stories to tell about their journeys into kayaking and the difficulties they have met along the way. Poor economy, next-to-none access to gear, being a girl in a men's dominated sport, far travels to get to features and training spots... are just a few of the challenges they face regularly. The media-assigned group very quickly gained an indisputable interest for them and their stories; video-interviews, written interviews, podcasts and photoshoot became part of the daily schedule! The ICF-freestyle has already posted short versions of some of these, but there is still a lot more to publish in the near future.





# LOGISTICS

## Pick up and Local Transportation

Athletes had to cover own transport to Germany. Local trains from Munich Airport were easy to use, accommodating bigger luggage pieces such as kayaks and paddles, and reliable. The coaches welcomed participants upon arrival to Plattling; some also got picked-up by an ICF representative at the train station in town.

## Accommodations

The HOC provided a simple set-up with individual tents, blown-up mattresses and sleeping bags. They also provided one common tent, a white tent bigger than the one we had the previous year, with two long tables and benches for food and cooking. Although simple and rustic, these accommodations served well and made the stay cozy and somewhat more authentic. The common tent quickly became the gathering point for everyone and provided shade during the day.

## Catering

Breakfast and lunch were kept simple and available, mainly: bread/buns with a simple choice of toppings, sliced meat and cheese, eggs, rice, and vegetables and fruits. The HOC did the shopping for us which was great, although came often late during the day. Participants seemed to enjoy the simplicity and accessibility of these meals, but lacked protein based food and were really hungry when dinner came. Dinners at night were at My Dream, a Turkish restaurant that had a few options of pizzas, kebabs and salads. The owners took good care of us, often bringing small extras to the menu, even stayed with us to share a drink at night. The same owners had a restaurant in town and a booth at the main feature; we used both locations.



## Training facilities

The Development Camp used the main feature, the wave across, the eddies above and below, and the grass field next to the basecamp. The extreme low water levels made it extra challenging for the athletes to learn tricks without risking to hit bottom and hurt themselves. Luckily, we could adapt by prioritizing certain tricks over others (flat tricks over loops and variants, for ex.) and got even more creative on flat water and eddy lines.



## Meeting facilities

The common tent served as a gathering point to discuss the daily plan, eat and analyze video after sessions. We had no big screen nor fancy equipment, but the small group size also made it possible.



# EQUIPMENT

## Boats, Paddles, Spray skirts, PDF's and Helmets

To our big surprise, none of the participants had a complete kit, and about half of them inquired about boats the very last week prior to start. Luckily with the help of Denk Outdoors, GuiGui Production, Pyranha kayaks and several friends (Bartosz, Quim, David, Thomas and the two Slovak girls from the camp), we managed to gear up everyone at the last minute.

## Coaching tools

The head coach used her personal I-Pad for filming. Videos and pictures were shared with participants via AirDrop.

## Help from the Freestyle Community

After sharing the participants' stories, the coaches and most people who followed on social media, got to know how difficult it was for the Development Camp athletes to buy gear in their home countries. We then asked to use the main info-channel on What'sApp to ask the community for help with equipment of all kinds. The response was unreal: within a few days, brands such as Spade and Pyranha, retail stores and distributors such as Denk Outdoors and Paddle People and many paddlers gathered kayaks, spraydecks, helmets, paddles, paddling jackets, PFDs and layers of all kinds that were shared between the athletes of countries that most needed, mainly of Africa, India and South America. This overwhelming response shows once more the human side of sporting events and the warm-welcoming community that Freestyle kayaking is so lucky to have.



# REPORTING

## Participants' comments

Participants reported at the end of the camp that their skill improvement and nevertheless their motivation for their own further progression had increased exponentially as days went by. This was easily noticeable on the water, just as much as in everyone's ability to blend in in such a short period of time. During the last talk before the camp ended, participants were sharing their plans on how they could incorporate freestyle more in the months to come, both in terms of personal skills they wanted to improve, and in sharing their (new) passion with others in their respective countries.

## ICF Coaches' comments

The Development Camp in Plattling was a massive success; one that will indeed be hard to beat. We are very impressed by the personal growth each athlete has had during the week and mind-blown by the efforts they put in to make it happen. We all quickly made bonds on a personal side and continue to share good memories and accomplishments. But what made this year's edition even more special, was the enormous media attention that the Development Camp received and the unbelievable help we got from many actors from all corners of our little paddling community. Emotions ran wild for the whole duration of the camp; memories that will never be forgotten. Nevertheless, the participants were all heroes and role-models in their own way, and we have absolutely no doubt that the participants will keep encouraging others to kayak in their own county, and that this year's camp will continue sparking the growth of Freestyle kayaking worldwide.





# Appendix I

## List of participants

Country	Last name	First name	Date og birth	Gender	Category
Argentina	Betancourt	Thibault	08/11/2008	M	K1 junior
India	Dada	Devi	10/17/2001	F	K1 senior
India	Adhikari	Naina	03/22/2000	F	K1 senior
Kenya	Reblin	Arno	10/05/2006	M	K1 senior
Peru	Soldevila de Ugarte	Gabriel	07/11/1999	M	K1 senior
Slovakia	Solovicová	Renáta	01/25/2007	F	K1 junior
Slovakia	Solovicová	Petra	02/05/2004	F	K1 senior
Uganda	Biyinzika	Martha	10/05/2007	F	K1 junior
<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Montoya</b>	<b>Maxi</b>	<b>08/22/1992</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Coach</b>
<b>Norway</b>	<b>Bertrand</b>	<b>Valerie</b>	<b>12/27/1978</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Coach + Coordinator K1 senior/master, squirt</b>
Kenya	Ernest Wambui	Michelle		F	Guest -organiser
Kenya		Samuel		M	Guest -athlete

## Appendix II

### Camp's schedule (updated version)



#### ARRIVAL DAY: TUESDAY JUNE 10

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
09:00-11:00 16:00-18:00	*Accreditation opens today (bring passport!)	Bürgerspittal in town
11:00-...	Setting up the base camp	Campground
12:00-13:30	Lunch for those on site	Basecamp
14:00-14:30	Welcome + general information about the camp	Basecamp
14:30-16:30	On-water session: Getting familiar with equipment and the main feature	Main feature
18:00-19:30	Dinner	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro

#### DAY 1: WEDNESDAY JUNE 11 -official training starts

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
09:00-11:00 16:00-18:00	*Accreditation opens today (bring passport!)	Bürgerspittal in town
08:30-09:00	Breakfast	Basecamp
09:00-10:15	Accreditations!!	Clubhouse
10:30-12:00	On-water session: Flat water drills (balance + edge control) + surfing basics and placement	Flat water + Wave across
12:00-13:30	Lunch	Basecamp
15:30-17:00	Official training On-water session: Learning the feature + placement	Main feature
18:30-20:00	Dinner	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro



## DAY 2: THURSDAY JUNE 12

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
09:00-11:00 16:00-18:00	*Accreditation opens today (bring passport!) (Gabbo, Arno)	Bürgerspittal in town
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
10:00-11:30	On-land session: mobility and stretching (loops!)	Grass next to basecamp
12:00-13:30	Lunch + video review	Basecamp
12:30-13:45	Official training squirt (Naina, Val)	Main feature
13:30-15:30	Official training On-water session: Basic rotations	Main feature
15:30...	IceCream in town -social	EisCafe
18:00-19:30	Dinner	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro

## DAY 3: FRIDAY JUNE 13

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
09:00-11:00 16:00-18:00	*Accreditation opens today (bring passport!) -Arno!	Bürgerspittal in town
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
10:00-12:00	On-land session: mobility training + injury prevention Official training On-water session: placement + spins and shuvits	Grass next to basecamp  Main feature
12:00-13:30	Lunch + video review	Basecamp
	Interviews with Jez 14:15 Slovakia 15:00 India 16:00 Kenya, Uganda, Norway 16:30 Argentina, Peru	Bürgerspittal in town
15:30...	IceCream in town -social	EisCafe
18:30-19:30	On-water session: Spins and shuvits	Right side wave
20:00-21:30	Dinner interview -with host Seth Chapelle from USA	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro
20:30-21:30	Future of Freestyle Meeting	Bürgerspittal in town

## DAY 4: SATURDAY JUNE 14

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
07:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
8:30-10:00	<b>Official training</b> on-water session: working on individual tricks and scoring them	Main feature
11:30-13:00	Lunch + video review	Basecamp
13:00-14:30	Choose: On-water session with Maxi On-land session with Val	Right side wave Grass next to basecamp
15:00-15:30	<b>Squirt meeting (Naina, Val)</b>	White tent besides the main feature
15:30-17:45	Swimming Pool -social	Stadtwerk Plattling Pool
18:00-19:15	Dinner learning tips -with host Bartosz from Poland	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro
19:30-20:30	<b>Team Leaders Meeting</b>	Bürgerspittal in town

## DAY 5: SUNDAY JUNE 15 -official training ends

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
07:00-8:30	<b>Official training</b> On-water session: competition practice	Left and right side
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
09:30-10:30	Theory session: competition format + personal routines (aka game plan)	Basecamp
10:30-...	On-water session: squirt (Naina, Val)  ADEL anti-doping course (for those who haven't done it yet!)	Lower eddy right side
12:00-13:30	Lunch	Basecamp
13:45-14:30	<b>Official training</b> On-water session: squirt (Naina, Val)	Main feature
15:00-15:30	<b>Team leader meeting -update on schedule</b>	Bürgerspittal in town
15:45-20:00	<b>Opening Ceremony + pizza party</b>  Remember to bring your country's uniform and flag, a water bottle and sun protection!!!	Meet-up point to be announced on the What's App group Parade back to the wave

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DAY 1: MONDAY JUNE 16

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
	<b>Competing today:</b> <b>K1 sen W</b> Heat 1 Petra Heat 2 Devi Heat 3 Naina Heat 6 Val  <b>Squirt M/W</b> Heat 1 Naina Heat 3 Val	Main Feature
12:00-13:30	Lunch	Basecamp
14:00...	<a href="#">On-water session for those not competing today</a>	Right side wave
16:00-16:30	Interview ICF Development Camp (Val)	Next to judges tent
19:00-21:00	Dinner + video review	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DAY 2: TUESDAY JUNE 17

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
06:00-07:30	<a href="#">On-water session: competition rides</a>	Main feature
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
	<b>Competition today:</b> <b>K1 men</b> Heat 3 Arno 08:50 Heat 8 Gabbo 10:55  <b>K1 jun ladies</b> Heat 1 Martha 13:40 Heat 2 Renata 14:00  <b>K1 jun men</b> Heat 4 Thibault 16:25	Main Feature
09:45-10:30	<a href="#">On-land session: stretching and mobility</a>	Grass next to basecamp
12:00-13:30	Lunch	Basecamp
13:00-13:30	Interview ICF India	Next to judges tent
18:00-20:00	Dinner + video review	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro
20:00-21:30	<a href="#">On-water session: cartwheels</a>	Right side wave



## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DAY 3: WEDNESDAY JUNE 18

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
07:00-08:30	On-water session: work on individual tricks	Right side wave
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
	<b>Competition today:</b> <b>K1 master women</b> Heat 3 Val 11:00  <b>Squirt women</b> Heat 1 Val 14:40	
11:30-13:00	Lunch	Basecamp
13:00-14:30	On-water session: work on individual tricks	Right side wave
16:45-17:30	On-land sessions: stretching	Grass near the basecamp
17:30-18:30	Beach -social	Eddy right side below the wave
18:30-20:00	Dinner	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DAY 4: THURSDAY JUNE 19

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
06:00-07:30	On-water session: work on individual tricks	Right side wave
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
11:30-13:00	Lunch	Basecamp
13:00-15:00	On-land session: freestyle tricks explained + tools for future progress + stretching (bring your paddle!)	Basecamp Grass next to basecamp
15:00-16:30	Ice cream!	Eis kaffe
18:00-19:00	On-water session: learning to squirt boat -with the squirt boating community (Anna, Tamsyn/David)	Eddy below the Main feature
19:30-21:00	Dinner	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro
21:00-21:45	Movie night with Naina (Ginga Girls)	Basecamp

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DAY 5: FRIDAY JUNE 20

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
07:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
	<b>Competing today: cancelled</b> (Cadets Heat 1 Alicia 12:40)	Main Feature
10:30-12:00	On-water session: flat water drills	Eddy right side below the wave
12:00-13:30	Lunch	Basecamp
15:00-18:00	Swimming Pool -social	Stadtwerk Plattling Pool
18:00-19:30	Dinner	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro
19:30-...	Folkefest	Volksfestplatz Plattling

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DAY 6: SATURDAY JUNE 21

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
	<b>Competing today: cancelled</b>	Main Feature
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
09:00-11:30	Video crew is coming + photograph	Basecamp + Main feature
11:30-12:45	Lunch	Basecamp
12:45-14:30	Medal/Closing Ceremony	Main feature
15:00-17:00	On-water session: flat water drills + learning to C1 -with host Lucie from Germany	Eddy top of the wave to eddy right side below the wave
18:00-19:30	Dinner + video review	My Dream -Kaffee & Bistro

## DEPARTURE DAY: SUNDAY JUNE 22

TIME	WHAT	WHERE
08:30-...	Breakfast	Basecamp
09:00-11:30	Packing basecamp and own gear Last goodbyes	Basecamp
12:00-13:30	Lunch	Basecamp