

Benoit Peschier claims the gold



SPECIAL REPORT ATHENS, Greece –

In the men's single kayak slalom, Frenchman Benoit Peschier, who entered the Olympics ranked 12th in the world, put together a pair of clean, fast runs for a comfortable win.

Benoit Peschier claims the gold medal for France.

Moving smoothly through the whitewater course with the supreme coordination they've demonstrated repeatedly on the World Cup scene since winning gold at Sydney, the Hochshorners even celebrated in unison as they crossed the finish line, simultaneously pumping their right fists in the air.

Their final time was 207.16, 3.82 seconds ahead of Germans Marcus Becker and Stefan Henze. The Slovaks had the race all but won with five gates left to go, and the packed amphitheater style grandstand started roaring in acknowledgment. Then the pair made a rare slip and touched the third-to-last gate for a two-second penalty that prevented them from building on their semifinal lead but was otherwise inconsequential.

Frenchmen Philippe Quemerais and Yann Le Pennec were second after the semifinals, but slipped to fifth after touching two gates for a combined four seconds in penalties.

In K1, Benoit Peschier had a combined time of 187.96 seconds. He trailed Britain's Campbell Walsh by .25 of a second after the semifinal run, then beat him by 2.46 on the final run through the whitewater course. Walsh had a clean run but got hung up in several spots, which cost him momentum.

Defending world champion Fabien Lefevre of France took bronze, 3.03 seconds behind Pecheir.

A timing error caused by foaming whitewater that falsely tripped the start timer before Walsh had actually crossed the line caused the scoreboard to initially show Walsh finishing out of the medals to the disappointment of a sizable, flag-waving British crowd. But Walsh ended up on the podium after all.