



**Press Release of May, 9<sup>th</sup>**

**World Paddle Awards – „Oscars“ of Paddlesports  
Winners of the year 2014 announced**

The winners in seven categories have tonight been revealed at the first ever World Paddle Awards (WPA) held in Augsburg, Germany only a stone-throw away from the 1972 Olympic canoe slalom venue, the Eiskanal.

**2014 double World Champion in canoe marathon Hank McGregor named as 'Sportsman of the Year', 'Sportswoman' goes to ocean-paddler and continent-circumnavigator Freya Hoffmeister, canoe freestyle Eric Jackson takes home 'Lifetime Achievement' award.**

**In other categories, 2014 winners are: GBR Paracanoeing – 'Team of the Year', Emma Aastrand Jorgensen – 'Sports Junior', Steve West – 'Media Ambassador', Expand and Extend – 'Paddlesports Professional', and 21-year old Jessica Fox receives special recognition with the 'Academy Award' for exceptional achievement.**

The seven main award-winners were presented with The Golden Paddle, a symbol of their achievements in paddlesports, in front of a highly-excitable audience of 500.

Athletic legends who attended were Germany's Birgit Fischer – 8 Olympic golds and 27-time World Champion in kayak sprint, and tenfold K1 slalom World Champion Richard Fox [both of whom are also WPA Academy members]. Other distinguished guests included President of the German Olympic Committee Alfons Hormann and Thomas Konietzko, President of the German Canoeing Association (DKV).

WPA Director Rob Van Bommel humbled by how far along paddlesports has come he said:

**“After two years of planning, I am most proud of the diversity of people that we have brought together from all types of paddlesports and different countries around the world to have conversations. It has been an absolute pleasure to see how strong the community is.”**

**Summary of results**

- **Sportsman:** Hank McGregor (RSA) – canoe marathon (K1, K2), downriver, surfski, ocean-racing
- **Sportswoman:** Freya Hoffmeister (GER) – ocean expeditions, sea kayak, surfski, marathon
- **Lifetime Achievement:** Eric Jackson (USA) – canoe freestyle (K1), canoe slalom (K1) and extreme kayak
- **Sports Team:** Great Britain, Paracanoeing (GBR) – **disability canoe sprint (kayak, va'a)**



- **Sports Junior:** Emma Aastrand Jorgensen (DEN) – canoe sprint (K1, K2, K4)
- **Media Ambassador:** Steve West (GBR) – stand up paddling, outrigger, surfski, ocean-paddling
- **Paddlesports Professional:** Expand and Extend (NEP) – women and canoeing
- *Academy Award for outstanding achievement:* Jessica Fox (AUS) – canoe slalom (K1, C1)

---

## Results

Presented by record Olympic Champion Birgit Fischer, South Africa's [Hank McGregor](#) claimed [Sportsman of the Year](#) with 56.53% of the overall results tallied from both Academy and the public vote.

Hank narrowly pipped finalist C1 World Champion slalom-paddler Fabien LeFevre (USA) to the post with Germany's canoe sprint paddler Sebastian Brendel in third. He won back to back World Championships in K1 marathon from 2013, adding the double World-title with K2 in 2014.

**“Thanks to the Academy, it's a true honour to receive this from Birgit Fischer who is an absolute legend in our sport. When it comes to paddling and being successful in your sport it comes from your support group; my mother is here, my father is my coach. All the people who voted for me back home, without you I wouldn't be here. Paddling is more than just a sport, it is my way of life. Thank you.”**

In the women's category, known as 'Fearless' and leading superbly from the offset in the public voting with a total 4200 votes, ocean-expeditionist [Freya Hoffmeister](#) takes home the [Sportswoman](#) award for Germany with 56.70% of the amalgamated Academy-public vote – practically the same percentage as male counterpart Hank!

Her incredible round-continent paddle of South America (in stages) only concluded in May this year. Receiving her award from Thomas Konietzko, President of the German Canoeing Association, she said:

**“As a sportswoman not being able to participate in an Olympic discipline, I'm very thankful to everyone who has been supporting me around all of those islands, and thanks to god I'm still alive, it could have been different, many times.”**

Giving a little back to the man who has given so much of his athletic and personal life to canoe freestyle, with a standing ovation the USA's [Eric Jackson](#) received The Golden Paddle for [Lifetime Achievement](#), presented by 1992 Olympic K1W gold medalist and Augsburg City



3

Counsellor for Sport, Elisabeth Micheler-Jones. Eric stormed the final result with 76.98% collectively.

By right of winning, Eric automatically earns himself a seat on the World Paddle Awards Academy. However, he has decided not to accept as he is not done yet paddling, as 'Lifetime' might suggest!

**“Wow this is awesome, Lifetime Achievement is something I didn't really expect at such a young age, it's an amazing sport, I wrestled with it in college, it was hard to imagine as a 20yro that kayaking would change my life. The secret to success is constancy to a worthy purpose, kayaking was my worth purpose, there are many people committing their lives to paddlesports. I look forward to what the next 25-30 years will look like! Thank you.”**

The WPA Academy introduced an additional category; the 'Academy Award', to highlight what one individual has achieved outside of the seven principle awards – only Academy members can vote. It was unanimously decided that, with the highest number of Academy votes overall, [“Jess” Fox](#) would be honoured; she too received a Golden Paddle this time presented by WPA Director Rob van Bommel.

In 2014 Jess won the senior and U23 World Championships in both K1 and C1 slalom – winning the double double in the same year has never been done before in history! Only a couple of weeks ago in Foz do Iguacu, Brazil Jess retained her U23 world title in K1W. Her extensive list of international medals includes K1W silver at the London 2012 Olympic Games when she was only 18.

**“I've always wanted to win an Academy Award thank you. It is such an amazing initiative, seeing so many people here supporting canoeing, I am definitely inspired by everyone I have met tonight, if I can inspire people in my country and round the world, its a job well done.”**

With a surprise win over Women's K4 Sprint Hungary who were leading the public vote at the Christmas half-way point, [Team of the Year](#) goes to [GBR Paracanoeing](#); they won by 72.74% to 64.03% overall.

Head Coach, Steve Harris and 9-time World Champion Jeanette Chippington proudly collected the accolade from Augsburg Sports Director Dirk Wurm on behalf of teammates Anne Dickins, Andrea Green, Ian Marsden and Martin Teedie, Jonathan Young and Emma Wiggs.

At the 2014 Worlds in Moscow, testament to how strong a nation they currently are in paracanoeing, GBR won 6 golds and 3 silvers, topping the medal table for third time in consecutive years.



4

**“When you're on the start it is a very lonely place, I would never have got there without the backing of your team, the physios, the trainers, all family and friends back home [in the U.K] we are so honoured to receive this award, thank you.”**

2014 '[Sports Junior](#)', Denmark's 19-year old canoe sprint dynamo [Emma Aastrand Jørgensen](#) was nearly teary-eyed on receiving her award from Andre Santos, CEO of Nelo, canoe manufacturer and WPA partner.

Emma caused a stir by winning the consolidated vote 58.03% over public-favourite and fellow Scandivanian; Sweden's Max Karlsson. At her first Senior World Championship in Moscow she came away with gold in K2W 1000m with crewmate Henriette Hansen.

**“It means a lot to me, thank for you to the sport that I have my home, my family and training partners and sponsors. It means a lot. Thank you so much.”**

[Media Ambassador](#); where competition was fierce as every nominee in this category has done so much to raise the profile of their paddlesport(s) to date, on the night there was only one clear winner.

With a staggering 85.81% overall; for his plethora of instructional publications and contribution to the development of the UK (and global) stand up paddling scene; Mr [Steve West](#). Augsburg Mayor Dr Kurt Gribl welcomed Steve to the stage.

**“Thank you to the Academy for this Award, I would like to dedicate it to all of the people I have worked and paddled with, in the Pacific.”**

It was President of the German Olympic Committee Alfons Hormann who did the honours for [Paddlesport Professional](#); ultimately a two-contender race right up to the end between canoe freestyle's multiple World Champion Claire O'Hara and Expand and Extend: Women and Canoeing in Nepal.

Humble, Anu Shrestha collected the Golden Paddle for [Expand and Extend](#) who were rewarded for the fantastic work being done to encourage women into sport and to develop canoeing across the five continents – their joined Academy-public vote came to 73.46% overall.

Anu demonstrated incredible courage by attending tonight's ceremony in wake of the recent earthquake that caused widespread destruction across her home country, Nepal. She openly spoke of her experiences:

**“Thank you so much to the people who organise the World Paddle Awards. When women are together we are more powerful and thanks to paddling it's possible. Extend and Expand can make it true and it make happen for women all over the world.”**



The 2014 World Paddle ceremony also paid tribute to those from the paddling community who had passed away in the last year, [in memoriam](#): Martin Litton (USA), Mark Feather (RSA), Juanito De Ugarte (PER), Jamie McEwan (USA), Fred Reiger (GER) and John Cooper (GBR).

Nominees for the 2015 awards will be open in September 2015 and details of the 2015 host city will be revealed soon.

---

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **WPA 2014**

- Full list of [finalists](#) and [nominees](#) for the 2014 Awards
- History of paddlesports: 2014 host city [Augsburg](#)

### **About the WPA**

- A full explanation of the [voting process](#) (public voting + Academy vote over two rounds)
- Meet our [Academy Members](#)
- An overview of the seven [awards](#) and the [The Golden Paddle](#)
- What types of [paddlesports](#) are there?
- Host city selection bidding and procedure
- The WPA's [partners and sponsors](#)

The World Paddle Awards (WPA) were started because there has never been an institution and international event that celebrated the most remarkable men and women from the world of competitive paddlesports along with their extraordinary achievements.

Founded in 2013 by Rob van Bommel (ex-athlete for The Netherlands in canoe slalom and Director of SportsScene Media House), the WPA recognises the diversity of people and organisations in the paddlesports community honouring the hard work they put into our sports.

The WPA aims to celebrate and tell the world about the incredible feats that have been accomplished by athletes or services provided by coaches, volunteers, the media, event organisers, manufacturers, officials and so on during the past year(s).

There are 7 awards in total of which the winners will receive The Golden Paddle; a symbol of how each discipline, even though different in sensation to many, requires a paddle used from a boat on water. The Golden Paddle depicts our mission to unite all people and paddlesports. The



6

'Academy Award' is a bonus category selected for, by merit of outstanding achievement, only by the Academy.

Furthermore the awards reflect the fact that there are many different paddlesports within the community. Besides the Olympic disciplines of canoe sprint and canoe slalom, the WPA also respects and celebrates non-Olympic paddlesports, about 15 in total.

### **Social Media**

[Facebook](#)

[Linkedin](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Instagram](#)

### **Contact**

Rob van Bommel, Director, The World Paddle Awards [rob@worldpaddleawards.com](mailto:rob@worldpaddleawards.com)