**PRESS RELEASE - 16th May 2019**

*Australia takes charge on the first day of racing*

Today marked the first day of competition of the 2019 IRF World Rafting Championship, powered by Experience Co. on the River Tully.

Tully is playing host to over 400 competitors and support crew from 19 different nations.

The excitement was electric as teams hit the river to compete in the Sprint discipline.- the winner is determined by the fastest team from start to finish. Competitors and spectators alike lined the banks to cheer on teams with the loudest cheers for the home nation crews.

Australia Masters Women came first in their division, eight and a half seconds ahead of Costa Rica.

Australian Under 19 Men tamed the Tully river by taking first place followed by Indonesia and Czech Republic.

Australian Under 19 Women showed the country how it is done competing in a division above in under 23s and still placed first ahead of the highly anticipated to win New Zealand and Indonesia.

Costa Rica Open Men team captain Alex Sagura said, “We’ve been waiting for this to happen in Australia for the last 20 years, finally here we are. It was a really good race, nice place, nice river, nice people, Australians are amazing.”

The afternoon saw the Under 19 and Under 23 divisions teams tackle the Head-to-Head. Head-to-Head sees teams battle it out 1:1 over the sprint course but this time with buoy navigation mandatory - full contact is permitted in a knockout competition where the winner is decided not necessarily on who is fastest but who plays their tactics the best. If you’ve seen BoaterX - increase the contact and obstacles and you’ll understand Head-to-Head.

In the Under 19 Men final, Australia took the battle right to the finish line with some strong tactics in play by Costa Rica. Australia were able to pull through from the core to push the Costa Ricans back and take on the win with a narrow margin.

In the Under 23s, the Indonesian women took the battle and used tactics right up to the line with a neck and neck final with New Zealand. The Under 23 men’s races saw Czech Republic take home the medal over New Zealand.

Racing continues tomorrow with Head-to-Head for the Open and Masters categories in the morning and Slalom for the Junior and Youth categories in the afternoon.

For further information visit [www.wrc2019.com](http://www.wrc2019.com/), or follow us on Facebook (@IRFWorldRaftingChamps) and Instagram (@internationalrafting) or join in the conversation #raftersareawesome

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Raft racing takes place over several days and at the continental and world level is held in four disciplines:

* Sprint: fastest from top to bottom
* Head-to-Head: teams battle it out 1:1 over the sprint course but this time with buoy navigation mandatory - full contact is permitted in a knockout competition where the winner is decided not necessarily on who is fastest but who plays their tactics the best. If you’ve seen BoaterX - increase the contact and obstacles and you’ll understand Head-to-Head
* Slalom: very similar to canoe/kayak slalom with the best of two runs counting but more complex with a larger craft and more heads to pass through the gates in the correct direction
* Downriver (Endurance): a gruelling test of working together as a team - race rules dictate this should be more than 20 minutes but less than 60 minutes

**EVENT SNAPSHOT:**Event Title: IRF 2019 World Rafting Championships Powered by Experience Co.Dates: 13 – 20 May 2019Free event to attend.Who will compete at the event: The World’s best White-Water Raft Racing athletesThe event is an Official International Rafting Federation sanctioned event.Website: [www.wrc2019.com](http://www.wrc2019.com)
IRF Facebook: [@IRFWorldRaftingChamps](http://www.facebook.com/IRFWorldRaftingChamps)
IRF Instagram: [@internationalrafting](http://www.instagram.com/internationalrafting)

About the International Rafting Federation: The International Rafting Federation is recognised as the world governing body for Rafting Sport.  Every year, the IRF organises the World Rafting Championship (WRC), a top tier competition between the most recognised and celebrated rafting athletes in the world who gather together to represent their respective nations.  The IRF also organises or oversees a tremendous variety of continental, regional and local rafting competitions and championships.  IRF competitions closely follow the Olympic model and IOC recommendations, while remaining true to the traditions and history of our sport that has made it so popular.

The IRF is about bringing the world of rafting together so we can all benefit from our interaction.  This interaction may involve anything from competing at the world championship level to being part of a local grassroots event in your home town.  Or it could be that once-in-a-lifetime experience of going on a commercial raft trip locally or around the world, whether it be for 1 hour or 16 days.

The IRF is in the forefront of raft safety worldwide.  Recognised as the world body which oversees the certification and training of professional river rafting guides, the IRF works closely with national organisations and government bodies by offering the only rafting guide certification program accepted worldwide.

The IRF is deeply committed to protecting the rivers of our planet from senseless destruction, and to preserve them for future generations. We recognize that mankind are not the owners of our planet, but instead are its caretakers and stewards.

**Social media:**

International Rafting Federation: @internationalrafting (Facebook, Instagram)

IRF World Rafting Championship: @IRFWorldRaftingChamps (Facebook)

**About the Author:** Sean Clarke is the Head of Media & Marketing for the International Rafting Federation, and Chair of British Rafting, the rafting discipline committee of British Canoeing.