



For Immediate Release

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Inje, South Korea: With the start of the monsoons came the start of third and final event of the International Rafting Federation's World Championships, held on South Korea's raging upper Naerinchon River. Taking full advantage of the rapidly rising water for the downriver event was the Czech Republic, followed by Russia in second and Japan in third, with just seconds separating the top boats on the dynamic 45-minute course. But it was Brazil finishing fifth who rode the cascading rapids to first place overall, following a first-place showing in sprint and a fifth in slalom for 783 overall points. "It is our dream to win the World Championships," says Brazil captain Lucas Pauleno. "We've been training very hard for this all year, and it finally paid off."

The Czech Republic ended up in second overall just two points behind with 781, followed by Japan in third with 778 points. An errant rock in the downriver race sidetracked the New Zealand women from laying claim to the overall crown, with Czech taking first in the downriver event, followed closely by Canada and Slovakia. The downriver win moved Czech into the overall winner's seat, retaining the title they wrestled away from four-time champion New Zealand at the 2005 Worlds in Ecuador. "It was a bit of bad luck," says New Zealand captain Nikki Kelly, whose team now heads to China for an invitational rafting competition. "They passed us early and we could never regain the lead." The downriver was the highlight to the three-day event, with rains the night before bringing the river up more than a foot over the previous two days of competition. The precipitation allowed the race to be moved upstream to the notorious Upper Naerinchon, whose huge crashing waves tested the big water prowess of the teams from 30 countries on hand to compete in the event. "It was a great, great place to stage the final event," says Race Director Mark Joffe. "We weren't sure we'd be able to hold it there until the morning of the event, but it rose more than a foot during the course of day. The race run was quite a bit pushier than competitors' practice runs."

The event celebrated the 10th anniversary of the IRF, with more entrants than ever before. At the IRF's annual meeting, board members voted on Bosnia to host the next World Championships in 2009. "It's great that so many countries came to Korea, and the Bosnia event should be even bigger and better," says IRF President Rafael Gallo, thanking sponsors UniOne Communications, Inje County, Gangwon Province, and ESPN Asia.