

25 JUN 2017

UIPM 2017 WORLD CUP FINAL: ICE-COOL IRELAND RETAIN MIXED RELAY TITLE



- Coyle and Lanigan-O'Keeffe repeat 2016 success in Vilnius
- Individual champion Prades (FRA) adds silver with partner Belhamri
- Savkin (RUS) helps Gubaydullina to win her second bronze

Ireland's Natalya Coyle and Arthur Lanigan-O'Keeffe created a special double by winning gold in the Mixed Relay at the UIPM 2017 World Cup Final.



The Irish duo retained the title they won in

2016 in Sarasota (USA) and proved that they are the world's leading Mixed Relay specialists with a commanding performance.

"We were strong from start to finish and it was one of those days that you don't get very often in pentathlon," said Lanigan-O'Keeffe (IRL). "

"It was a seriously good field and we performed well in all events so we're delighted."

Coyle (IRL) added: "We had a great Swim and then won the Fencing and the Riding and Laser-Run went well so it was a perfect day – fantastic.

"It's a great feeling to be able to stand on top of the podium and hear the national anthem of Ireland."



Behind them, Valentin Prades added a silver medal to his individual gold as he teamed up with Julie Belhamri to win silver for France.

Gulnaz Gubaydullina was another athlete celebrating a second medal as she added relay bronze to her individual bronze for Russia with Alexander Savkin.

Ireland (Coyle/Lanigan-O'Keeffe) started the Laser-Run with a lead of 23 seconds over France (Belhamri/Prades) and 39 seconds over 3rd-placed Lithuania (Ieva Serapinaite & Justinas Kinderis).

Coyle (IRL) protected their advantage but when Lanigan-O'Keeffe (IRL) came under pressure from one of the best Laser-Runners in the world, their special double came under threat.

The athletic Prades (FRA) closed the gap on Lanigan-O'Keeffe (IRL) in the first 800m lap but the Irishman held his nerve superbly at the final shoot and set off at pace, leaving Prades (FRA) with no option but to settle for silver.

The day began with Swimming and it was Hungary (Sarolta Kovacs & Gergely Demeter) who completed their 200m fastest (1:56.08) ahead of Russia (Gulnaz Gubaydullina and Alexander Savkin), Ireland (Coyle/Lanigan-O'Keeffe) and Lithuania (Serapinaite/Kinderis), all of whom went under 1:57.

Ireland (Coyle/Lanigan-O'Keeffe) continued to make a strong defence of their title in the all-important Fencing Ranking Round, where they scored 19V/7D ahead of France (Belhamri/Prades) 17V/9D and Egypt (Morsy/Hefny) 16V/10D.



The Fencing Bonus Round at Vingis Park

featured good performances by Czech Republic (Natalie Dianova & Jan Kuf) and Egypt (Morsy/Hefny), who knocked Ireland (Coyle/Lanigan-O'Keeffe) off the top of the elimination ladder.

However, that defeat was only a momentary setback for the Irish and they resumed control of the competition on the Riding course. In fact there were four clear rounds before the Irish took to the course, from Poland, Russia, Egypt and France. But the pressure did not deter Coyle and Lanigan-O'Keeffe and they made sure they would go into the Laser-Run with a strong lead.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Today we enjoyed another excellent Mixed Relay and it was again a very impressive performance from the Irish who have really embraced this event.

"The organisation of this World Cup Final has been excellent and the crowd have been very respectful, giving great support to the Lithuanian athletes but also those from other countries."

The next major event on the UIPM calendar is the 2017 Junior World Championships from August 7-14 in Székesfehérvár (HUN) followed by the 2017 Senior World Championships from August 21-29 in Cairo (EGY).

Like the World Cup Final, the Senior World Championships will be televised on Eurosport as well

as other TV networks to be announced nearer the time.