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UIPM 2018 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP LOS ANGELES: LEE (KOR) STAYS OUT IN FRONT



Lee Jihun of **Korea** scorched his way to a scintillating gold medal as he dominated the field to win the Men's Individual Final at the UIPM 2018 Pentathlon World Cup Los Angeles.



The world No.21 made a mockery of his outsider

status as he produced a near-perfect performance across all disciplines to claim his first World Cup gold medal and ensure that the day's climax — the Laser Run — was all about the battle for silver and bronze.

That would prove to be a hugely dramatic conflict as **Ukraine** icon **Pavlo Tymoshchenko** hauled himself up from a starting position of 11th to fight all the way to the finish line for a medal.

However, a sensational sprint finish went the way of his two rivals from Hungary. Silver was won by **Bence Demeter** with compatriot **Balazs Szep** narrowly claiming bronze in the second competition of the UIPM Modern Pentathlon season.

The heroic efforts of **Tymoshchenko (UKR)** earned him fourth place while the top six was rounded out by **Jun Woongtae (KOR)** in 5th ahead of **Shohei Iwamoto** of **Japan**, whose performance will continue to raise anticipation ahead of the next Olympic Games in his home country at Tokyo 2020.

Indeed, with three Asian athletes among the top three, Los Angeles provided further evidence of the growing strength of the continent's top competitors.

"Today everything was good: Laser-Run, Riding, Fencing and Swimming," said **Lee (KOR)**. "For the Korea team it was a great day, with Jun Woongtae also finishing in fifth.

"This is an important year for us with the Asian Games in Jakarta as well as all the UIPM competitions and we are very happy to perform well here in Los Angeles where the conditions have been perfect."



Swimming

The day began well for the host nation as **Amro Elgeziry** of the **USA** was joint-fastest in the pool, exactly matching **Joe Choong's** time of 1.59.38 with Choong's **Great Britain** teammate **Jamie Cooke** back in third. In a sign of what was to come, three Koreans — **Jung Jinhwa, Jun** and **Lee** — were among the top seven.

Fencing



As the action moved indoors, **Lee (KOR)** began

to really take command with his score of 25V/10D only matched by the Olympic champion **Alexander Lesun** of **Russia**. The class of **Tymoshchenko (UKR)** was also beginning to show with his score of 24V/11D and **Demeter (HUN)** was not far behind with 23V/12D.

While **Elgeziry (USA)** and **Choong (GBR)** enjoyed early success in the Bonus Round, it was **Demeter (HUN)** who racked up two victories before **Lee (KOR)** came out on top on the piste, his lead stretching after two events.

Riding

A total of 12 athletes recorded perfectly clean rounds to rack up a maximum of 300 points. Unfortunately for his rivals, **Lee (KOR)** was amongst them.

The other riders to take a maximum score from the course were **Szep (HUN)**, **Kirill Belyakov (RUS)**, **Sergio Villamayor** of **Argentina**, **Giuseppe Parisi** of **Italy**, **Pierre Dejardin** of **France**, **Esteban Bustos** of **Chile**, **Pavel Ilyashenko** of **Kazakhstan**, **Li Shuhuan** of **China**, **Patrick Dogue** of **Germany**, **Martin Vlach** of **Czech Republic** and **Thomas Toolis (GBR)**.

Laser-Run



Lee (KOR) started with a lead of 12 seconds but

in truth it felt like much more than that as he continued his blistering pace to stay out in front of **Lesun (RUS)**, who was next to leave the starting blocks with **Demeter (HUN)** just three seconds behind and home favourite **Elgeziry (USA)** a further 14sec back.

But while **Lee (KOR)** stayed comfortably ahead of the field — shooting with unerring accuracy — things started to get very interesting very quickly behind him. **Tymoshchenko (UKR)**, the silver medalist from the Rio 2016 Olympics, chewed up the handicap to put himself right into contention and with lots of impressively composed performances on the shooting range the pack bunched up into an unmissable final lap.

In the exhilarating sprint finish, **Demeter (HUN)** managed to force his way to silver while youth got the better of experience with **Szep (HUN)** just pipping **Tymoshchenko (UKR)** to bronze, the first World Cup medal of his promising career and Hungary's third of the week in Los Angeles after **Tamara Alekszejev (HUN)** took bronze in the Women's Final.

"It was an amazing competition," said **Demeter (HUN)**, who had recently recovered from a hip injury and thoroughly enjoyed his return to Los Angeles, where he won Pentathlon World Cup gold in 2017. "Last year we were here three extra days after the competition and you could see the city. It was amazing for me. I enjoyed it a lot."

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "The men's final was one of the most exciting finishes we have seen in many years. That drama shows that the athletes will always give their all. It was a very exciting moment today.

"We had a high level, like yesterday and new faces, like the young Hungarian athlete in third. I underline again that our federation is preparing athletes for the future. Not only for 2020 in Tokyo but already focusing on 2024.

"Thank you again to all the people who have been helping in Los Angeles, the 2028 Olympic Summer Games host city. The organizing committee here at Fairplax have recruited great volunteers."

UIPM 2018 Pentathlon World Cup Los Angeles concludes tomorrow (March 30) with the Mixed Relay. Tune in to UIPM TV for live coverage and visit the UIPM website for all results.