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UIPM 2018 JUNIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS: ELENA MICHELI (ITA) IS BRIGHTEST STARLET IN THE SKY



The smiles of three teenage starlets beamed down from the podium on an evening when the future of Modern Pentathlon lit up the horizon.

Elena Micheli of **Italy** continued an unforgettable summer by adding Women's Individual gold to the Women's Relay bronze she collected earlier in the week and the Women's Individual gold she took home from the 1st FISU World University Championships in July.



The 19-year-old was followed closely across the line by 18-

year-old rivals **Laura Heredia** of **Spain** and **Zhong Xiuting** of **China**.

The UIPM Junior World Championships is open to athletes aged 21 and under, so it was remarkable that three athletes so young should prove to be the strongest in the field. And the invasion of the teenagers did not end with the top three.

Zoe Davison of **Great Britain** finished 4th, ahead of **Emma Riff** of **France** in 5th and Micheli's team-mate **Aurora Tognetti** (**ITA**) in 6th. Davison (**GBR**) and Riff (**FRA**) are 19 and **Tognetti** (**ITA**), the 2017 silver medallist, is still only 17.

There was a touching moment in the final moments of the Laser-Run when **Tognetti** (**ITA**), noticing that **Micheli** (**ITA**) looked certain to win, reached across the markers of the running course to high-five her team-mate.

The pair had already teamed up on Tuesday to win bronze in the Women's Relay following a silver medal in the same event in 2017, and today they joined forces again to celebrate the team gold medal, along with **Maria Lea Lopez** (**ITA**).

Team silver went to **China** (**Zhong** / **Gu Yewen** / **Zheng Lishan**) and bronze was won by **Hungary** (**Blanka Guzi** / **Michelle Gulyas** / **Luca Barta**).

Individual bronze was a good mark of progress for **Zhong** (**CHN**), the 2014 Youth Olympic Games gold medallist who won silver alongside **Gu** (**CHN**) in the Women's Relay four days ago. Silver was a huge breakthrough for **Heredia** (**ESP**).

The recent form of **Micheli** (**ITA**) suggested that a successful week could be on the cards here in Kladno (CZE). Her university gold in Budapest (HUN) came on the back of a 9th-place finish at UIPM Pentathlon World Cup Los Angeles (USA) in February.

Micheli (**ITA**) said after receiving her gold medal: "It has been amazing, unforgettable. There are many things that I can't explain at the moment because I have never felt like this, it's really fantastic.

"Last year I was 2nd in the Under 19 World Championships and this is my first [individual] medal at the Junior World Championships. I've been working for this a long time, for all the days I have been training."



Swimming

Gulyas (HUN) recorded the fastest time in the pool (2:13.25), although she was only a fraction of a second quicker than **Micheli (ITA)**, who timed 2:13.54. Next fastest was **Misaki Uchida** of **Japan** (2:15.30).



Fencing

It was on the piste that **Heredia (ESP)** catapulted herself into contention. In the Ranking Round she scored 26V/9D, two more victories than her nearest rival **Zhong (CHN)**. Four athletes managed 22V/13D: **Micheli** and **Tognetti (ITA)**, **Anastasia Chistiakova** of **Russia** and **Anna Matthes** of **Germany**, who added three points in the Bonus Round.

Riding



Micheli (ITA) continued her exceptional day with a clear round

on horseback that confirmed she would start first in the Laser-Run. **Gulyas (HUN)** and **Yoo Sumin** of **Korea** also scored a perfect 300.

Tognetti (ITA) faded out of medal contention when she picked up 21 penalty points, as did the top-ranked **Ilke Ozyuksel** of **Turkey**. It was also a disappointing round for **Germany**, as **Matthes** failed to finish and her team-mate **Rebecca Langrehr** was eliminated.

Laser-Run

Starting 10sec ahead of **Heredia (ESP)** and 11sec ahead of **Gulyas (HUN)**, **Micheli (ITA)** knew she had the momentum of a strong season behind her and she duly protected her lead with great composure, ultimately winning by 8sec from **Heredia (ESP)**.

Behind them, the only major change to the order took place when **Zhong (CHN)** overtook **Gulyas (HUN)**, who subsequently finished 7th ahead of **Karolina Krenkova** of host nation **Czech Republic** in 8th.



The best Laser-Run time of the day came, unsurprisingly, from

Ozyuksel (TUR), but she had lost far too much ground to the leaders and finished 12th despite a time of 12:03.41.

Ardak Akhidullayeva of **Kazakhstan** was second-fastest around the Kladno course in 12:31.83, ahead of **Guzi (HUN)** in 12:37.60.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: “This was a very exciting day. In these hot conditions we witnessed a great competition, and the juniors showed that they are on the way to a higher profile in the direction of the seniors.

“In the Laser-Run we saw the Italian, Spanish and Chinese athletes earn their places on the podium, but behind them we saw all the other athletes running very hard for their own places and for a good team ranking.”

The UIPM 2018 Junior World Championships continue on August 5 with the Men’s Individual Final, before the Mixed Relay closes proceedings on August 6.

All results are available at the UIPM website and updates will be published on the UIPM’s Twitter page and on Facebook, where you can watch live coverage of the Laser-Run.