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UIPM 2021 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP FINAL: GERMANY SAVE BEST FOR LAST IN MIXED RELAY



- Schleu and Zillekens (GER) combine to win team's first gold of 2021 season
- Silver service again for Belarus as Silkina and Palazkov return to podium
- Guatemala grab bronze after heroics from Hernandez and Fernandez

Germany saved their best for last as **Annika Schleu** and **Christian Zillekens** won the Mixed Relay at the UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Final.

On the final day of the Pentathlon World Cup season, an impressive Laser Run pursuit enabled the German team to win their first gold medal of the campaign and deny **Belarus** the same accolade, as reigning individual world champion **Volha Silkina** and **Ilya Palazkov** collected their team's third silver medal of the season.

That said, there was no sense of disappointment anywhere on the podium and there was unbridled joy for **Guatemala** as they got their names on the medal table after a super Laser Run double act from **Sophia Hernandez** and **Charles Fernandez**.



For the German team it was a satisfying end to a season where their athletes, especially on the men's side, have been constant fixtures at the business end of the racing but never quite turned the power into plaudits.

That all changed on Friday when Schleu (GER) surged to an individual silver medal, setting up a dramatic finale in which she and Zillekens (GER) overcame a 37sec deficit to Belarus (Silkina/Palazkov) to snatch the title by 4sec.

Swimming

A really tight competition in the pool ended narrowly in favour of **Russia (Gulnaz Gubaydullina & Alexander Lifanov)**, whose time of 1:57.93 was fractionally faster than **Lithuania (Ieva Serapinaite and Justinas Kinderis)** in 1:58.14. Belarus (Silkina/Palazkov) also scraped under 2min.



Fencing

With a team comprising the reigning women's world champion and a male athlete who won medals in both of April's UIPM Pentathlon World Cups in Sofia (BUL), Belarus (Silkina/Palazkov) lived up to expectations as the top performers in Fencing.

The duo scored 32V/16D in the Ranking Round and added the only two points available to them in the Bonus Round to move into the overall lead.

Alice Rinaudo and **Valerio Grasselli** of **Italy** also stood out with 30V/18D, with Lithuania (Serapinaite/Kinderis) next in the ranking on 26V/22D.



Riding

All of the medal contenders stayed in contention during Riding, but Belarus (Silkina/Palazkov) gave rivals hope after dropping 21 penalty points.

The highest scorers with 288 points were **Anna Maliszewska** and **Lukasz Gutkowski** of **Poland**, one more than **Mohanad Shaban** and **Haydy Morsy** of **Egypt** and two more than **Eliska Pribylova** and **Ondrej Polivka** of **Czech Republic**.



Laser Run

With a 21sec lead over nearest challengers Italy (Rinaudo/Grasselli), Belarus (Silkina/Palazkov) started confidently but a slower second lap and 24sec shoot by Silkina (BLR) left the door ajar. Not least to Schleu (GER) who attacked and finally overtook Rinaudo (ITA) to move from 5th to 2nd and hand over to a grateful Zillekens (GER).

Not that the men's side of the pursuit was a formality – far from it. Palazkov (BLR) was 5sec faster on the opening shoot and kept a clear distance between himself and Zillekens (GER), at least until the second shoot when Zillekens (GER) hit his five targets in 11sec and set off for the final lap with single-minded intent: to catch and overpower his rival.

If the race for gold was intriguing, the battle for bronze was even more dramatic. With Grasselli (ITA) tiring, Lifanov (RUS) set the early pace on the final lap but Fernandez (GUA) looked even hungrier to win that elusive first medal of the season and he kept pace with his rival before finishing the stronger of the two, securing bronze by 2sec.

Behind them, Italy (Rinaudo/Grasselli) took 5th and Poland (Maliszewska/Gutkowski) completed the top six.



Medallists' reaction

Schleu (GER) said: "It's just amazing. I didn't know we were going to make it but Mixed Relay has its own rules. We're super happy in the end."

Zillekens (GER) added: "It was amazing, great fun to fight with the other countries and I'm very happy about the last 800m. I knew from two years ago how to take off in the corner, and the result was the same."

Palazkov (BLR) said: "That was so hard - so, so hard. We didn't rest from the individual finals and after my running yesterday, to get second place was nice for us."

Hernandez (GUA) said: "That was amazing - I can't believe it. I almost had a heart attack when we won the medal."

"We had a really good swim and won our heat, but in the Fencing we struggled - mostly me. Our horse was eliminated and we had to change, but in the end we did OK. The Laser Run was amazing, we both did a goob job and Charles smashed the run."

Fernandez (GUA) added: "We started the Laser Run in 7th and it was definitely a tough competition. We have a great team behind us and they got us ready to go after two days of individual competition."

"To come here and take the bronze medal home is absolutely amazing. Yesterday I started 7th and dropped back four places, which was a little bit difficult for me, but today was a nice turnaround."

"Hopefully this will be good preparation for me for Tokyo and will help Sophia in her bid to qualify for the Games. We're looking forward to the World Championships in Cairo."

President's reaction

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Today we had 13 teams from worldwide competing in the World Cup Final Mixed Relay, and like the previous days we saw a change of placings and an exciting sprint for medals between Belarus and Germany, as well as a strong run from Guatemala.

"This ensured that we would have more than one continent on the podium, same as yesterday when China won a medal. An important part of Laser Run is that you should never give up until the last shooting is finished.

"At the end of this World Cup Final I can underline again how important it is to have strong organisers with excellent facilities, good horses and volunteers and fair referees. This competition has shown which way our Union is going in future, with high-profile athletes supporting the whole movement.

"We are looking forward now to Cairo in June and the UIPM 2021 Pentathlon and Laser Run World Championships, which will be the last qualification competition for the Olympic Summer Games Tokyo 2020 taking place in 2021.

"I would like to thank all media and sponsors as well as the volunteers who have assisted us in staging a showpiece competition. In the centre, I always underline, are the athletes - highly motivated and still looking to qualify for Tokyo, which will be a great Olympic Games that we are all optimistically looking forward to."



Watch and follow

The UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Final has now concluded but there is one final stop on the road to the rescheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

The UIPM 2021 Pentathlon and Laser Run World Championships will take place in Cairo (EGY) from June 8-14, when Olympic quota places will be on offer to all individual medallists.

Details of TV networks broadcasting the competition will be available at the UIPM website, with live streaming available on UIPM TV.

Follow World Pentathlon on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in the meantime for additional content.

Rank	Team	Nation	MP Points
1	SCHLEU Annika ZILLEKENS Christian SILKINA Volha	GER	1447
2	PALAZKOV Ilya HERNÁNDEZ Sophia	BLR	1443
3	FERNÁNDEZ Charles GUBAYDULLINA Gulnaz	GUA	1437
4	LIFANOV Alexander	RUS	1435

5	RINAUDO ALICE	ITA	1433
	GRASSELLI Valerio		
6	MALISZEWSKA Anna	POL	1430
	GUTKOWSKI Lukasz		
7	SERAPINAITE Ieva	LTU	1422
	KINDERIS Justinas		
8	MORSY Haydy	EGY	1386
	SHABAN Mohanad		
9	RIFF Lisa	FRA	1380
	PATTE Christopher		
10	PRIBYLOVA Eliska	CZE	1371
	POLIVKA Ondrej		
11	JURT Anna	SUI	1099
	DÄLLENBACH Alexandre		
12	ARCEO Mariana	MEX	732
	SANDOVAL Alvaro		
13	RETI Kamilla	HUN	497
	BERECZKI Richard		