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UIPM 2016 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS – RUSSIA WINS MIXED RELAY IN FAIRYTALE FINISH



Aleksander Lesun returned to the top of the world as he and Donata Rimsaite teamed up to win gold in the Mixed Relay at the 2016 UIPM World Championships.

Their success was greeted with glee by the home crowd, who had been waiting with anticipation for their pentathletes to turn silver and bronze into gold all week.

Lesun (RUS) was one of those who had already stood on the podium as the winner of Men's Individual silver, so this was the perfect way to close the championships for himself, the Russian team and the organizers.

There were scenes of unbridled joy at the finish line as Lesun (RUS), who has won an individual medal at every World Championships since 2010, crossed first. He performed a lap of honour draped in Russian flags before embracing his teammate, Rimsaite (RUS).

China (Xiaonan Zhang & Jiahao Han) cemented a solid performance with a well-earned silver,

while Belarus (Anastasiya Prokopenko & Ilya Palazkov) staged a blistering comeback from 8th position to take the bronze medal.

Latvia (Elena Rublevska & Pavels Svecovs) could justifiably feel disappointed after starting the Combined Event in 2nd but they never recovered after a difficult second shoot to finish in sixth place overall.

Rimsaite (RUS) said: "We're very happy. It was a perfect day and we would like to say a big thank you to the fans and to the crowd."

In the early stages, it was Latvia who powered through the Fencing Ranking Round, taking 34 wins. Russia won 29 bouts to finish equal with Czech Republic in second position, but no other team came close to Palazkov and Prokopenko (BLR).

In the swimming event, Eanna Bailey and Sive Brassil (IRL) finished ahead of the pack with a time of 1:56:90, narrowly beating China at 1:57:59 and joint third-placed Japan and Germany at 1:58:48 and 1:58:61 respectively.

It was a temperamental ride for some, with a number of athletes falling off their horses and a particularly nasty fall into the posts for Natsumi Tomonaga (JAP).

Russia (Rimsaite/Lesun) finished in 1st place in the Riding, with Poland and Belarus following behind in 2nd and 3rd respectively.

Rimsaite (RUS) led the pack going into the Combined Event with an 11-second lead over Rublevska (LAT) and 12-second lead over Xiaonan Zhang (CHN).

Rublevska (LAT) lost valuable seconds at the first shoot, trailing behind Russia and allowing them to maintain a nine second lead over China, who shot into second place.

Beginning the second lap, Russia were again able to leave the range quickly but required seven shots, allowing the experienced Anastasiya Prokopenko (BLR) to leave alongside Rimsaite (RUS) and move into second position.

It was a typically strong comeback from Prokopenko (BLR), who had gone into the Run/Shoot in 8th place, 54 seconds behind Russia.

As the male competitors began to enter the fray for lap 3, former world champion Lesun (RUS) set a blistering pace by leaving the range in 6.94 seconds, all but confirming a gold medal for the home team.

Han (CHN), whose team were now lying in second position, struggled with the shoot, allowing Ilya Palazkov (BEL) to narrow the gap as Latvia continued to chase.

Italy too struggled to perform in the range, effectively dropping out of the race for a podium spot, as Lesun (RUS) lapped Laura Leidis Moya (CUB) going into shoot 4.

The final lap for Lesun (RUS) became nothing more than a lap of honour, with the Russian leaving the arena before China or Belarus could even pick up their pistols. China managed to leave the range 10 seconds before Belarus, confirming the final podium positions.

Lesun (RUS) signalled to the crowd as he completed his final victorious lap, collecting Russian flags as he headed into the final stretch. As he crossed the finish line, far ahead of second-placed China or bronze-medallists Belarus, he and teammate Rimsaite (RUS) embraced as newly-

crowned world champions.

Dr Klaus Schormann, President of UIPM, said: "We could not have had a better final to finish off the 2016 World Championships here in Moscow. This has been one of the best performances we have seen over the last few days and there has been such drama.

"Russia invested a lot and, in the end, there was a gold medal. I think they deserve this and the athletes have shown that they like the relay and it gives us a very different kind of performance."

2016 UIPM World Championships, Moscow, RUS

Mixer-Relay Final Standings:

- 1 RUSSIA 1509
- 2 CHINA 1488
- 3 BELARUS 1474
- 4 KAZAKHSTAN 1468
- 5 ITALY 1458
- 6 LATVIA 1449
- 7 GERMANY 1448
- 8 UKRAINE 1446
- 9 CZECH REPUBLIC 1436
- 10 HUNGARY 1434
- 11 POLAND 1432
- 12 KOREA 1432
- 13 ARGENTINA 1409
- 14 UNITED STATES 1405
- 15 MEXICO 1398
- 16 GUATEMALA 1381
- 17 IRELAND 1355
- 18 CUBA 1348
- 19 SPAIN 1337
- 20 JAPAN 1171
- 21 TURKEY 1143
- 22 CHILE 1092
- 23 LITHUANIA 792

