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UIPM 2016 CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS: ANNIKA SCHLEU RETAINS TITLE



Annika Schleu of Germany came from behind to earn her title of UIPM Champion of Champions for the second year in succession.

World No.5 Schleu (GER) started the Combined Event in 8th place with a deficit of 64 seconds to make up on the leader, Samantha Murray (GBR). But the German showed incredible determination to work her way through the field and claim gold ahead of silver medallist Murray (GBR) and bronze medallist Kim Seehee (KOR).

"I was not pushing too hard in the first three laps because I was not very confident about my fitness," said Schleu (GER), who finished 5th at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. "Then in the last round I was in 3rd and I said to myself I had to run at my best and then I tried and then it worked.

"Last year here in Doha was the beginning of a good year and finally I had the best season of my life. I wanted to have a really good end to the season and I hope I can do the same in the coming years.

"It is my third time here in Doha and I love to be here. The venues are amazing and we also hope

to have World Cups and World Championships here. All the people are so nice in Doha and the organization has been always well done.

"I am very thankful for all the support I've been receiving from my family and friends this year. I am very happy."

Murray (GBR) said of her strong form: "I want to keep this moment I am having now. I will keep training hard for the next season and try to improve my abilities, especially in Fencing and Shooting and stay happy.

"I have a great team around me and I am already looking forward to the 2017 World Cup #1 in Los Angeles.

"Doha is a great venue for Modern Pentathlon with top-class facilities, and I'd love to see a World Cup or World Championships come here in the future."

Alice Sotero (ITA) set a high standard in the Swimming pool, finishing fastest ahead of Sarolta Kovacs (HUN) and Natsumi Tomonaga (JAP).

But it was Murray (GBR) who topped the standings after two events, having emerged as the best performer in Fencing, ahead of Kovacs (HUN) and Lena Schoeneborn (GER).

As world No.1, Schoeneborn (GER) looked a likely contender at this point but her day fell apart during the Riding when, as at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, she suffered elimination. The same fate befell Leydi Laura Moya (CUB), Anna Maliszewska (POL) and Haydy Morsy (EGY).

Leading duo Murray (GBR) and Kovacs (HUN) managed to avoid such difficulties, resulting in a Combined Event start list of Murray going first, Kovacs (HUN) 13 seconds behind and Tomonaga (JAP) and Kim (KOR) also close enough to the leader to be in contention. Schleu (GER), at this point, looked very much an outside bet.

The Combined Event was a thrilling contest where the lead changed hands numerous times. It began with Murray (GBR) and Kovacs (HUN) exchanging top spot, before Kim (KOR) took the initiative briefly.

In the meantime, Schleu (GER) was working her way through the field and before long she was in 4th place in a pack chasing the leaders. At the final Shooting range, it was Kim (KOR) who left first but by now Schleu (GER) had caught up and she soon overtook the 20-year-old Korean, and with her fitness and running strength there was only going to be one winner after that.

Murray (GBR) also summoned the stamina to get past Kim (KOR) in the battle for silver.

Dr Klaus Schormann, the UIPM President, said: "Today we saw a dramatic finish through the combined 'Laser-Run' with the winner Annika Schleu retaining the title she won in 2015. All athletes gave their all to reach the podium or achieve a good finishing place.

"The set-up of the field of play in the fantastic Al Shaqab Arena gave this Champions of Champions the hallmarks of a real event.

"Our thanks go to Mr Eng Fahad Saad Al Qahtani, President of the Qatar Modern Pentathlon Federation, the Event Director Mohammed Al Naimi and all of their staff and volunteers who have prepared a wonderful platform for our world class athletes at the end of the Olympic season."

Tomorrow (Sunday November 13) that season will come to an end with the Men's Individual

competition.