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UIPM 2017 WORLD CUP I: LENA SCHOENEBOURN (GER) KICKS OFF TOKYO CAMPAIGN WITH GOLD



- World No.1 signals intent for 2020 Olympic bid with 9th individual World Cup success
- French (GBR) defeats Khuraskina (RUS) in thrilling battle for silver
- Tomonaga (JAP) impresses with career-high finish in 2024 Olympic candidate city Los Angeles

Lena Schoeneborn (Germany) shook off her Rio 2016 Olympic Games setback with a stylish victory in the Women's Individual Final at the opening event of the UIPM 2017 World Cup season.

World No.1 Schoeneborn, 30, claimed her 9th individual World Cup victory and set the pace for the season just as she did in 2016 when she won gold at World Cup I in Cairo (EGY).



Here in the 2024 Olympic Games candidate city of Los Angeles (USA), the 2008 Olympic champion delivered a signal of intent to her rivals aiming for Tokyo 2020 glory.

Schoeneborn (GER) began the Laser-Run with a 21-second deficit to Natsumi Tomonaga (Japan), but she dropped the leader on the third 800m lap and never looked back.

In cool and windy conditions it was a commanding performance from a modern pentathlete who has been a model of consistency and excellence in recent years, and whose Rio 2016 medal quest ended with an unfortunate Riding experience.

"It was difficult, but I knew I could still make up the time on the Laser-Run and I didn't have to go all out, and that was nice," said Schoeneborn (GER).

"It's always nice to be able to chase and catch someone instead of leading from the front - mentally it's easier. I had a good couple of rounds of shooting and I caught [Tomonaga], and after that it was up to me."

The 2016 World Cup Final winner was joined on the podium at Fairplex by Kate French (Great Britain) and Ekaterina Khuraskina (Russia), both of whom caught Tomonaga (JAP) on the 3rd lap and engaged in a private duel for silver, won narrowly by French (GBR).

The British athlete was delighted with her first World Cup silver medal, while bronze medallist Khuraskina (RUS) could also be pleased with her first World Cup podium finish since 2013.

"I can't quite believe it - it was brilliant," said French (GBR), who had begun the Laser-Run in 8th place, 55 seconds off the lead.



"I just tried to focus on picking people off and I didn't realise until the last lap that it was going to be such an exciting race for silver and bronze.

"I am really pleased with my run. I was just praying for the finish line to come. It's my highest place at a World Cup so I'm very pleased."

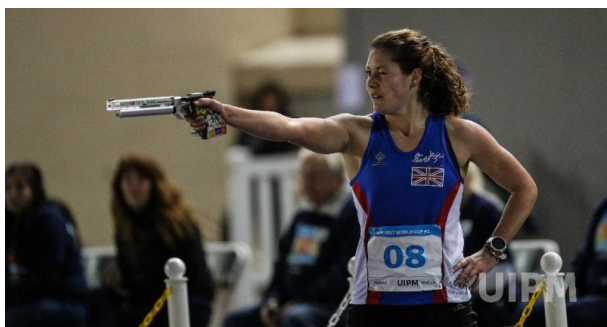
Behind the top four, Russia had two other athletes in the top seven as Gulnaz Gubaydullina came in 5th and Alise Fakhrutdinova in 7th. Ilke Ozyuksel of Turkey continued her progress by finishing 6th. For full results visit the UIPM website.

Earlier, Gubaydullina (RUS) set the pace in Swimming at the Claremont Club with a time of 2:08.84.

Khuraskina (RUS) came out on top in the Fencing Ranking Round with 28/7, one victory ahead of Schoeneborn (GER). Khuraskina (RUS) defeated Tomonaga (JAP) in the final bout of the Bonus Round but only after the Japanese athlete had enjoyed three wins.

World champion Sarolta Kovacs (HUN) also made progress in the Bonus Round but her challenge ended in the Riding arena when her horse Dress Rehearsal fell during the warm-up and lost one of its shoes, leading to the rider's elimination.

Four athletes - Anna Maliszewska (POL), Anna Buriak (RUS), Mayan Oliver (MEX) and Yang Soo Jin (KOR) - managed a perfect score of 300 while Schoeneborn (GER) and French (GBR) lost ground with 11 and 30 penalty points respectively. But they would go on to show their class in the Laser-Run.



UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Today women`s final from the first World Cup stop of the season was a big challenge for many countries. I want to emphasize the Japanese development on high performance. I was very happy to see that Tomonaga came fourth and was very close to getting a spot on the podium.

"The victory by Lena Schoeneborn showed that she kept focused even though she did not achieve her goal at the Olympic Games.

"A special mention has to go to the the organising committee and the Fairplex staff who have delivered this competition to a high standard of organisation and hospitality to the spectators."

World Cup I concludes with the Mixed Relay on February 26, when live stream will be available at UIPMTV.org from the earlier time of 4.30pm (PST - Pacific Standard Time).

Women's final results (Top 18):

Athletes

Points

1 - Lena Schoeneborn (GER)	1346
2 - Kate French (GBR)	1335
3 - Ekaterina Khuraskina (RUS)	1333
4 - Natsumi Tomonaga (JPN)	1326
5 - Gulnaz Gubaydullina (RUS)	1316
6 - Ilke Ozyuksel (TUR)	1307
7 - Alise Fakhrutdinova (RUS)	1302
8 - Oliver Mayan (MEX)	1301
9 - Irene Prampolini (ITA)	1295
10 - Julie Belhamri (FRA)	1282
11 - Annika Schleu (GER)	1277
12 - Elena Potapenko (BLR)	1275
13 - Alice Sotero (ITA)	1273
14 - Soon Jin Yang (KOR)	1270
15 - Marie Oteiza (FRA)	1267
16 - Samantha Achterberg (USA)	1259
17 - Anna Buriak (RUS)	1255
18 - Jessica Varley (GBR)	1254