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UIPM 2017 SENIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS: JUNG JINHWA BECOMES KOREA'S FIRST WORLD CHAMPION



Jung Jinhwa fulfilled his promise and confirmed his status as a major contender for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games by becoming Korea's first individual world champion in the Men's Individual Final.

The 28-year-old, a bronze medallist in Rome (ITA) in 2012 and Moscow (RUS) in 2016, led from the front after the withdrawal of Olympic champion Alexander Lesun (RUS) and made the gold medal his own with a highly composed performance.

Behind him, 31-year-old Robert Kasza of Hungary celebrated the birth of his son this week with a very solid silver medal, while 30-year-old Justinas Kinderis of Lithuania rolled back the years with a battling bronze.

Kasza (HUN) was relieved to secure a first individual medal at this level after many years of near misses. His CV includes two Men's Relay golds at the Senior World Championships as well as two individual victories in the UIPM World Cup Final.



Kinderis (LTU), contrastingly, knew from experience that he could make the podium in Cairo: he won individual bronze in 2010 and went on to become world champion in 2013.

Each of them was resigned to a simple fact today: that there was no catching Jung (KOR), who shot with exceptional accuracy in the Laser-Run to become Asia's second world champion and first since Qian Zhenhua (CHN) in 2005.

"I was thinking of my coaches, my fellow athletes and my country at the end of the race," said Jung (KOR).

"During the day I focused on each event and tried not to overdo it. I am proud of this win and I hope it will help to make Modern Pentathlon more popular in Korea and around the world."

Kasza (HUN), who made up for some of the disappointment of missing the Rio 2016 Olympic Games with an excellent performance, said: "This is the result of 23 years of hard work; too much hard work and too much emotion. Three days ago my second son was born.

"I realised at each shoot that Jung was clear and I couldn't do better than him. After the final shoot I was a bit closer to him but I didn't have fifth gear. The sand is tough; more than tough."

Kinderis (LTU), who is currently training in Korea, made up two places in Laser-Run to get himself on the podium. He said: "I focused on my shooting and tried to find the right tempo with my run. It's really important to have the right tempo or you will make mistakes in the sand and your legs won't really work.

“It’s a good feeling to get back on the individual podium after four years. It’s a much better feeling than the first time, because now I know the price of a medal. When you come back, it’s an unbelievable feeling.”

Earlier, the withdrawal of Lesun (RUS) due to injury appeared to have left the competition wide open. It was the end of an extraordinary run; Lesun had not been missing from the Men’s Individual podium since 2009.

Jung (KOR) and Lesun (RUS) had each scored 25V/10D in the Fencing Ranking Round, with Kasza (HUN) narrowly behind on 24V/11D. Kasza (HUN) added two points in the Bonus Round but Jung (KOR) had the last word, and with the 3rd-fastest swim (2:01.89) he marched into the lead.

The top swimmers were Joe Choong (GBR, 2:00.87) and Arthur Lanigan-O’Keeffe (IRL, 2:01.32).

On to the Riding arena and there were clean rounds from Pavel Ilyashenko (KAZ) and Ilia Frolov (RUS), while the leaders kept their composure: Kasza (HUN) scored 293 and Jung (KOR) 291.

Elsewhere, the course claimed some notable scalps as defending champion Valentin Belaud (FRA) was eliminated after four refusals and 2015 champion Pavlo Tymoshchenko (UKR) conceded 42 penalty points, one fewer than Choong (GBR) who had been in 3rd place overall. Belarus suffered a knockout blow as both Ilya Palazkov and Kiril Kasyanik were eliminated after working hard to get in the top 10.



It meant that Jung (KOR) started the Laser-Run with a 9sec lead over Kasza (HUN), which proved decisive. The other big winners of the Laser-Run were Marvin Dogue (GER), who finished 4th after timing a superb 11:49.70 in difficult conditions, and the Egyptian duo Eslam Hamad and Ahmed Hamed, whose final positions of 5th and 7th respectively allowed the host nation to claim team

gold along with Yasser Hefny. Poland secured silver and Russia bronze.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: “We had an exciting finish and we have a Korean athlete who is individual senior world champion for the first time in history.

“It was also nice to see the team gold medal go to Egypt, who have been waiting for this medal as the organisers.

“Today’s competition was a big success, even though it was not easy for many of our top athletes. This has been a great championships and we are very pleased to have our first champion from Korea.”

The UIPM 2017 Senior World Championships run from August 22-28 and the action continues tomorrow (August 27) with the Women’s Individual Final, which will be available to watch on TV via the continental broadcaster Eurosport, 11 other national TV networks and online at UIPM TV and the Olympic Channel.

The Mixed Relay closes the championships on Monday (August 28).