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UIPM 2017 SENIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS: GULNAZ GUBAYDULLINA IS GOLDEN GIRL FOR RUSSIA



- Decisive Laser-Run leads 25-year-old to long-awaited success
- Silver medallist Foldhazi leads Hungary to team gold
- Bronze medallist Prokopenko (BLR) keeps Schoeneborn (GER) off podium

Gulnaz Gubaydullina ended Russia's 20-year wait for a women's world champion after a commanding Laser-Run display in a hotly contested final.



Russia have rarely been off the podium in

the Men's Individual event in recent years but this was a long-awaited Women's Individual success for one of Modern Pentathlon's most prolific nations. Gubaydullina (RUS) becomes her country's first winner of the title since Elizaveta Suvorova in 1997.

The 25-year-old began the Laser-Run in 4th place, 3sec behind leader Lena Schoeneborn (GER), but she and Zsafia Foldhazi (HUN) moved clear after the first shoot and Gubaydullina's superior accuracy enabled her to take the initiative.

Foldhazi (HUN) did what she could to narrow the gap on lap three, but in the end was content to hold on for silver ahead of Anastasiya Prokopenko (BLR), who with typical character overcame a 42sec deficit to reach the podium.

All three are first-time individual World Championship medallists.

"It was very, very hard," said Gubaydullina (RUS), who has been on fine form this summer, having won bronze in the World Cup Final and Mixed Relay gold at the European Championships. She said she had been surprised and excited to find herself in the lead for most of the Laser-Run. "I think I ran and thought 'Oh my God, oh my God'.



"My Swimming is very good. My Fencing was not

good today. But I'm very happy."

Foldhazi (HUN) was also self-critical, but was just as pleased with her silver medal. "Everything is super," said the 24-year-old, who also won silver in last year's UIPM World Cup Final in Sarasota, United States. "I'm again on a podium. For me it was really bad shooting - not enough - but I'm happy. It's enough, second place."

Foldhazi (HUN) was also hard on herself while expressing satisfaction with her silver medal.

"Everything is super," said the 24-year-old, who was junior world champion in 2014. "I'm again on a podium. For me it was really bad shooting - not enough - but I'm happy. It's enough, second place."

Prokopenko (BLR) understandably celebrated her bronze medal as if it had been gold, having overcome Schoeneborn (GER) with a gutsy run.

It was only on the final lap that Prokopenko (BLR) broke clear of the 2008 Olympic champion but as soon as she went past it was clear she would have the strength to hold on to 3rd place.

She briefly challenged for silver, but Foldhazi (HUN), after an anxious glance over her shoulder, responded with an increase of pace to which Prokopenko (BLR) had no answer.



"I think it's very hard ground, but I have very

strong legs," said 31-year-old Prokopenko (BLR). "I won the European [individual championship] four weeks ago, and now this."

Schoeneborn (GER) had got her bid for a second world title off to an inspired start with 29V/6D in the Fencing Ranking Round, ahead of Natalya Coyle (IRE) who scored 25V/10D and Kim Sunwoo (KOR) with 24V/11D. Coyle (IRE) added two points in the Bonus Round.

Gubaydullina (RUS) made her presence felt in the Swimming with a time of 2:08.90 for 2nd place, behind Sarolta Kovacs (HUN) in 2:08.56.

Kim (KOR) was still in third at that stage, behind Schoeneborn (GER) and Coyle (IRE), but she dropped out of contention in the Riding when she was eliminated for failing to complete the course.

Francesca Tognetti (ITA) was the best rider with a clear round but Gubaydullina (RUS) was right behind her with 299 points after incurring one time penalty, while Kate French (GBR) and Prokopenko (BLR) were next best with 293.

Schoeneborn (GER) conceded 37 penalties and that reduced her Laser-Run advantage to a mere 2sec, with Foldhazi (HUN), Coyle (IRL) and Gubaydullina (RUS) starting almost simultaneously.

The slender disadvantage was overcome by the Russian thanks to her superlative shooting display.

The only consolation for Schoeneborn (GER) was team bronze behind gold medallists Hungary, while Gubaydullina picked up a team silver with Russia to add to her individual gold.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "It was an exciting day. We had such a great final with Laser-Run and we had surprises during the Riding, where some of the top-level athletes could not

achieve their result. But we could see the best athlete winning when we saw a young and dynamic Russian winning followed by excellent athletes from Hungary and Belarus.

“We had a great competition like yesterday in the men’s competition, and congratulations to all the athletes, who gave their best. The running course is not easy here, but when we see how they have been fighting for every place, it was for all of us a great competition today.”

The UPM 2017 Senior World Championships began on 22 August and conclude tomorrow (August 28) with the Mixed Relay.