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TRIBUTES TO LENA SCHÖNEBORN (GER) AS 2008 OLYMPIC CHAMPION RETIRES



The global pentathlon community said farewell to one of its most prolific competitors today as Lena Schöneborn of Germany announced her retirement from the sport.

On the eve of her 32nd birthday, the 2008 Olympic champion decided to move on to a new career in marketing after more than a decade at the top of the sport.

When Schöneborn secured the ultimate prize of individual gold in Beijing, she was the first German to win an Olympic medal since Gotthardt Handrick in Berlin in 1936.

"The modern pentathlon has shaped me for a long time," she said. "I am infinitely grateful for the great experiences, encounters and successes that sport has given me.

"Nevertheless, after a long period of reflection, I decided that the time for the next stage of life has now come. Now I am looking forward to new challenges outside of competitive sports."

Few athletes achieve greatness with such consistency as Schöneborn did throughout her elite career, when the top of the podium became her natural habitat.

The German won individual gold at six World Cups and three World Cup Finals. Five times she stood on the individual podium at the Senior World Championships, culminating in her crowning glory of gold in Berlin in 2015.

She was a great team player, too – there were seven world titles and six European titles in total – and some of the victories demonstrated the strongest character and resolve as well as the skill, nerve and stamina that are the basic essentials for pentathlon.

When the 2017 season began, rather than dwell on her failure to control her horse that led to her elimination from Riding at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, she restored order with a dominant victory at Pentathlon World Cup Los Angeles.

Many people – including her husband, the German pentathlete Alexander Nobis – have played roles in the Schöneborn story but none more influential than the contribution made by Kim Raisner, her coach of 12 years.

"I am happy and proud to have been a sporting companion to Lena since 2006," said Kim, head coach of the German Modern Pentathlon Federation (DVMF). "She is an outstanding athlete who has always been incredibly focused in training and competition. A perfectionist in the most positive sense."

In an ambassadorial sense, Lena also played an important role in growing the popularity of pentathlon in Germany.

"Lena Schöneborn has been the face of our sport for many years and we owe her a great deal," said Michael Scharf, President of the DVMF. "Lena was and is a role model, far beyond the Modern Pentathlon."

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Today one of our best athletes has stepped out of her sporting career.

"Lena is already a role model and delivered a high level of performance over many years at elite competitions. She was and will be a wonderful ambassador.

"Her skills for Modern Pentathlon combined with her discipline, energy, strong willpower and desire led her to become one of the best athletes in our Modern Pentathlon movement and she crowned her successful career with the Olympic victory in 2008 in Beijing.

"As former President of the German federation and as UIPM President, I wish her a successful life in family and business and she will be always a part of the UIPM legacy."