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UIPM 2019 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP SOFIA: PADILLA (MEX) STRIDES TO SUCCESS



Manuel Padilla powered his way through the field to win a rare gold for Mexico in the Men's Final at UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia.

Padilla (MEX) started the Laser Run in 8th place with a handicap of 24sec, but after making gains on the first lap he surged into the lead and left a world-class field trailing in his wake.

It was a truly impressive breakthrough victory for the 27-year-old, whose only previous Pentathlon World Cup medal was a Mixed Relay bronze he won alongside Mariana Arceo in Los Angeles in 2018. Until today his individual career highlight was becoming Pan American champion in 2017 in Santo Domingo (DOM).

Mexico has been enjoying improved results in recent years, highlighted by the Rio 2016 Olympic bronze medal won by Ismael Hernandez Uscanga, who also contributed to his country's most recent Pentathlon World Cup gold in 2015 when he won the Mixed Relay alongside Tamara Vega.

At the end of a thrilling Laser Run, Joseph Choong of Great Britain summoned the stamina to snatch silver from the grasp of Fabian Liebig of Germany, who secured bronze ahead of his compatriot Christian Zillekens (GER) in 4th.

Three continents were represented at the awards ceremony, as Li Shuhuan of China finished 5th while Thomas Toolis (GBR) kept world No.1 Jun Woongtae of Korea out of the top six.

MEDALLISTS' REACTION

Padilla (MEX) said: "I have a strong Laser Run and when I started in one of the first positions I knew I could go on and fight for a medal.

"We had a very competitive field here in Bulgaria with some of the best athletes in the world, and for me to do my work like I did and execute to the best of my ability, this is the result.

"I was pretty happy with my results all day. The Fencing was the best it has been in my whole career, in the semi-final and the final, and I'm very happy with my performance.



"Right now I'm going to do Pentathlon World Cup

Prague and then hopefully look to the Pentathlon World Cup Final and the Olympic test event in Tokyo. After that I will concentrate on the Pan-American Championships where hopefully I can win the [NORCECA] qualifying place for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games."

Silver medallist Choong (GBR) said: "My Laser Run has been one of my weaker events and I've worked hard on it over the winter, so to see the hard work pay off was really encouraging.

"My ride was a bit wild and I didn't get the horse under control, but other than that it was a pretty consistent day and I'm on the podium, so I can't complain.

"The Mexicans are all very strong runners so when he went past me on the second lap I knew it was going to be a big ask to catch him. I've got a quick finish but the gap was far too big.

"My running has been my weaker discipline but it's improving, my shooting has been good and I'm a strong swimmer, so I'm quite pleased with how it's going."

Bronze medallist Liebig (GER) said: "It feels awesome. It was a bit unlucky that Joe caught me in the last metres but I am on the podium and I'm so happy.



“It was a tough season for me last year and I was really struggling with my Fencing and Shooting, and even in the semi-final here I had such a bad shoot, and I only just reached the final.

“My Fencing today started with 0-5, but then I ranked 7th and I thought ‘OK, maybe it’s going to be a good day’. My shooting was awesome and it feels so great to be on the podium.

“We are a team training together near Berlin and it was so nice to see Christian Zillekens finishing 4th today, I’m really happy for him. We are looking forward to next year and the road to Tokyo. I was on the podium in Cairo in 2017 and now I did it again, so I know I can do it.”

SWIMMING

Olympic record-holder Amro Elgeziry of the United States looked as comfortable as ever in the pool, timing 1min 58.08sec to take the early lead ahead of Choong (GBR) in 2:00.08 and world champion Jamie Cooke (GBR) in 2:01.27.

FENCING



Unlike yesterday when Marie Oteiza of France

was so dominant, the action on the piste today gave no clear indication as to who was going to win the Men’s Final.

Zillekens (GER) ended up top-scoring with an excellent 26V/9D, with Alexander Lifanov of Russia only one victory worse off and another German, Marvin Dogue (GER), ranking 3rd with 22V/13D and three points in the Bonus Round.

Padilla (MEX) also scored 22V/13D while Elgeziry (USA) and Choong (GBR) enjoyed 21 victories apiece, keeping themselves in overall contention.



RIDING

A superb demonstration of equine control was provided by China, with perfect rounds from Li and Zhang Linbin and only one penalty point conceded by Luo Shuai – all three athletes are aged under 25.

There were also clean rounds for Gergely Regos of Hungary and Marek Grycz of the Czech Republic, while Lifanov (RUS) scored 297 to give himself the chance to start first in the Laser Run alongside Elgeziry (EGY).

A cluster of athletes starting within 30sec of the leaders, and with the world champion and world No.1 lurking just outside that group it promised to be an enthralling climax.

LASER RUN



Lifanov (RUS) was the early leader, but on the

first lap Padilla (MEX) moved all the way from 8th to 2nd, and the tall athlete used his long stride to great effect on the second lap, at the end of which he passed Lifanov (RUS) and took control.

Behind him, Elgeziry (USA) and Zillekens (GER) remained in the hunt but there was more momentum behind the progress of Choong (GBR). It was Liebig (GER) who looked to have seized the silver medal with a sub-10sec shoot at the last visit to the range, but Choong (GBR) kept him in his sights and passed his rival as they negotiated the final bend.

By then, Padilla (MEX) had already completed a victory procession having demonstrated a high degree of comfort in the lead role. His second visit to the range had been a prolonged stay but two finals shoots under 12sec secured his breakthrough win on the world stage.

Padilla (MEX) recorded 11:06.80 for his Laser Run, a time bettered only by Pierre Dejardin (FRA) in 11:04.00 and the outstanding Li (CHN), who completed the course in 10:56.80.

PRESIDENT'S REACTION

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Today, we have seen such an exciting final, the like of which we have not seen in some years. The Riding event was really wonderful, with an excellent parkour and a very high standard of riding. In fact some riding people said it was the best level they had ever seen in Pentathlon.

"We are happy that the Riding performances are getting better and better, and this has shown us that we are going to continue having a great season of competition highlights.

"It was super for our Union to have a Mexican athlete on top of the podium, because we are used to having winners from Europe and Asia, Africa and Oceania. To have all the continents on the podium demonstrates that the Pentathlon is a global sport.

"We are seeing winners coming from all over the world and new blood is coming and refreshing our sport.

"I congratulate the organisers of Pentathlon World Cup Sofia and I know that tomorrow's Mixed Relay will be another glorious day for our movement."

WATCH AND FOLLOW

Pentathlon World Cup Sofia concludes with the Mixed Relay on Sunday, April 14.

Live stream of the finals is available on UIPM TV and the World Pentathlon Facebook page while up-to-date results of all competitions are available at the UIPM website.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35
36

Rank	Name	Nation	MP Points
1	PADILLA Manuel	MEX	1452
	CHOONG Joseph	GBR	1448
	LIEBIG Fabian	GER	1446
	ZILLEKENS Christian	GER	1438
	LI Shuhuan	CHN	1438
	TOOLIS Thomas	GBR	1435
	JUN Woongtae	KOR	1432
	SVECOVS Pavels	LAT	1426
	GRYCZ Marek	CZE	1426
	ELGEZIRY Amro	USA	1424
	LIFANOV Alexander	RUS	1418
	LAWRYNOWICZ Daniel	POL	1415
	DOGUE Marvin Faly	GER	1411
	KHAMTSOU Ivan	BLR	1410
	PETRONI Pierpaolo	ITA	1409
	COOKE James	GBR	1404
	ZHANG Linbin	CHN	1402
	HAMAD Eslam	EGY	1401
	DEJARDIN Pierre	FRA	1400
	LUO Shuai	CHN	1397
	JUNG Jinhwa	KOR	1393
	ELGENDY Ahmed	EGY	1389
	BUSTOS Esteban	CHI	1388
	CARRILLO Duilio	MEX	1388
	DE LUCA Riccardo	ITA	1383
	REGOS Gergely	HUN	1382
	SWIDERSKI Jaroslaw	POL	1377
	BARANOV Serge	RUS	1376
	ILYASHENKO Pavel	KAZ	1371
	SUKHAREV Vladislav	KAZ	1366
	FERNANDEZ Charles	GUA	1358
	MOURCIA Jean-Baptiste	FRA	1350
	NAKONECHNYI Ruslan	LAT	1344
	PAVLYUK Denys	UKR	1333
	LEE Jonghyeon	KOR	1321
	GUTKOWSKI Lukasz	POL	295