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UIPM 2016 WORLD CUP #4 - GOLDEN GLORY FOR GUATEMALA



KECSKEMET, HUNGARY: April 18, 2016 - Guatemala's preparations for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro were given a real boost in Hungary when their leading duo of Isabel Brand and Charles Fernandez won Mixed Relay gold at the fourth round of the 2016 UIPM World Cup. On the final day of competition in Kecskemet, the powerful Central American pairing timed their campaign to perfection as they surged to the front of the field with a near faultless Riding performance. The Guatemalans never looked back, finishing clear of Egypt (Sondos Aboubakr & Sherif Nazeir) in second with Germany (Alexandra Bettinelli & Alexander Nobis) stealing into the bronze medal position at the end as Spain's medal challenge fell narrowly short.



Host nation Hungary, which had won three

medals in the individual events, had to settle for 5th with Mexico and Argentina rounding out the competition. But for Guatemala, this was a dominant victory that will raise expectations for Fernandez and Brand, two precocious talents aged just 20 and 19 respectively, who are proving youth can prosper at the very top of the sport. Brand said: "It's my first World Cup medal and I am really, really pleased. "I was really happy with my Fencing and I had a good horse - I loved him. "It's amazing. Shooting was also really good and Swimming, too, so I happy with it. I'm getting there." It was over the fences that Guatemala hit the front, overtaking Spain with a faultless display. Brand, from a strong family Riding background, led the way but this was a gold medal victory secured with great teamwork with Fernandez, individual gold medallist at last summer's Pan American Games in Toronto, equally impressive. Fernandez said: "We're just very happy with the performance, especially Riding which made us really, really happy. After that we were able to maintain our lead in the Combined Event. "Overall it was a great competition, we learned a lot and we are just looking forward to the next competitions, especially the Olympic Games."



The final day's action began in the pool where Marta Garcia-

Miguel got Spain off to the perfect start in the women's leg, storming home ahead of Brand (GUA) with Tamara Alekszejev (HUN) third. In the men's 100 meters, Christobal Rodriguez confirmed Spain's Swimming superiority, comfortably winning ahead of Fernandez (GUA). With a great finish Nazeir (EGY) took third place to move into the top three as action moved to the piste. In the Fencing, Guatemala had the best start and after three rounds they had 11 wins, ahead of the Hungarians. Spain found their form and in the next three rounds won 12, with only six defeats taking the lead with 21 wins. Egypt was close behind with 19 wins, and finished in 2nd place.

However the leaderboard was rapidly tightening with four other teams ending the discipline with 18 wins. Garcia-Miguel and Rodriguez then confirmed Spain's position at the top of the field as they were the last team standing in the Fencing Bonus Round. However things were soon to take a significant turn when fortunes were very mixed in the Riding. Argentina (Pamela Zapata & Sergio Villamayor) and Mexico (Mayan Oliver & Ismael Hernandez Uscanga) picked up penalties. Egypt had been ultra-impressive with a pair of speedy clear runs. However Aboubakr picked up a very costly time penalty for leaving the transition area. In came Brand & Fernandez (GUA) with an exhibition of clean riding that put all the pressure on the leading Spanish. It told as Rodriguez's mount refused the first fence and Guatemala were clear. It was to stay that way as Brand (GUA) laid all the groundwork with a supreme performance in the Combined Event, putting on an exhibition of Shooting. Aboubakr made amends for an earlier error as Egypt moved into second before the changeover. Fernandez was clear of the field and while there was a slight wobble on the second round of shooting, Guatemala finished clear of Egypt, with a stirring final leg performance by Nobis helping Germany to win bronze. All eyes now turn to Sarasota-Bradenton (USA) for a highly anticipated World Cup Final (May 5-8), which will be streamed live on uipmtv.org. The line-up will be announced in the coming days on pentathlon.org.