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UIPM 2016 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS – SAROLTA KOVACS IS THE NEW WORLD CHAMPION



Modern Pentathlon has a new world champion and Hungarian pentathlon a new hero after Sarolta Kovacs won Women's Individual gold at the 2016 UIPM World Championships.

World No.15 Kovacs (HUN) started the Combined Event with a slender lead of 9 seconds but stunned her more celebrated rivals by stretching out in front with every lap of Moscow's Olympic Stadium and holding her nerve at all of the Shooting ranges.



It was a

major surprise, especially as Kovacs (HUN) had competed sparingly this season due to an injury that required surgery. Her only World Cup appearance was in Kecskemet (HUN) in April where she finished 11th.

But she did have pedigree at this championships, and at this particular venue. As an emerging starlet she won a silver medal at the 2011 World Championships in Moscow, so there was a sense of symmetry about her success today.

The 25-year-old said afterwards: "I can't believe it. This year has been hard for me with injury, and I had an operation two months ago.

"It's a big competition and I like Moscow. In 2011 I was here and I was first to start the Combined Event and second to finish it. So I like Moscow!

"I just wanted to have a good competition and show what I could do. But I am so happy to have won, and now I believe in myself.

"I felt very strong all day, and when it came to the Shooting and Running I didn't care about the others; I just concentrated on myself."

With double points on offer in the Rio 2016 qualifying process, the race to join Kovacs (HUN) on the podium was intriguing. A host of athletes were within reach of the leader at the start line but they ended up being hunted down by top-ranked rivals who were lurking further back.

Namely, Lena Schoeneborn (GER) and Laura Asadauskaite (LTU).

In the end, neither of them was able to displace either Kovacs (HUN) or world record-breaker Elodie Clouvel (FRA), a strong silver medallist, but it was not for a lack of trying. When Schoeneborn (GER) realised she was not going to retain her title, she looked over her shoulder to make sure Olympic champion Asadauskaite (LTU) would not deny her a place on the podium.



(FRA) set a new Swimming world record for Modern Pentathlon in the morning as she timed 2:06:59.

She said later: “My Fencing was not so good, but my Horse Riding is getting better and in the Combined I saw Sarolta Kovacs take off and I said ‘Elodie, go, go, go!’

“It’s a very amazing day, and now I am focused for Rio. I wanted a medal, and I worked very hard for this medal.”

Schoeneborn (GER) said: “I am happy with the position, but I’m not happy with how I got it because my Ride was very bad and at the warm-up for the Combined I was still very frustrated, and I just wanted to get it over with.

“I didn’t shoot very well in the first two series, so there is room for improvement, and in the last lap I didn’t have my usual kick.

“I hope I stay healthy, don’t get any injuries and I hope I am as lucky at the Games as I was here, finishing with a medal despite one very bad discipline. That’s pentathlon for you.”

The performance of Clouvel (FRA) in the pool set the tone for a day of high-class pentathlon befitting the stage.

She swam 2:06.59 to set a new world standard, and remarkably the second-placed swimmer was not much slower: Gulnaz Gubaydullina (RUS) gave the home crowd plenty to get excited about with a swim of 2:07.24, while Samantha Murray (GBR) also went under 2:10 with 2:08.40.

On to the piste and there was more excitement for Russian supporters as Donata Rimsaite proved her Fencing ability with an exceptional Ranking Round performance of 26-9, one ahead of Schoeneborn (GER).

Rimsaite (RUS) went on to be the last fencer standing in the Bonus Round too.

As supporters began to fill the stadium, there was high hopes for Russia especially in the shape of Rimsaite (RUS) but it was Kovacs (HUN) who scored highest on Zefir and this put her in pole

position overall.

The Hungarian enjoyed one of seven clean rounds, and when Soo Jin Yang (KOR) also went clear, after a strong Fencing performance, she set herself up as the main threat to the leading lady, starting 2nd in the Combined Event. Schoeneborn (GER) picked up 35 penalties and Asadauskaite (LTU) 25, meaning the title was really up for grabs.



The climax of

a major Modern Pentathlon event rarely respects starting positions but the one exception today was the No.1 position, which was expertly protected by a deserving champion.

After the dramatic attempts by Schoeneborn (GER) and Asadauskaite (LTU) to catch the top two,

there were two strong finishes for Chinese athletes with Qian Chen in 5th and Wanxia Liang in 6th. Rimsaite (RUS) crossed the line in 7th place with Kovacs' compatriot Zsofia Foldhazi (HUN) in 8th.

Dr Klaus Schormann, UIPM President, said: "Today was an extremely interesting final. We had excellent horses, the atmosphere was great and I think we had a wonderful final. Tomorrow also we will see a great fight for the medals on the men's side.

"For us it was also an honour that the Russian Minister for Sport, Mr Vitaly Mutko, visited us to see this excellent fight in the final today."

2016 UIPM World Championships, Moscow, RUS

Women's Individual Final Final Standings:

- 1 KOVACS Sarolta 1386
- 2 CLOUVEL Elodie 1374
- 3 SCHONEBORN Lena 1373
- 4 ASADAUSKAITE Laura 1368
- 5 CHEN Qian 1364
- 6 LIANG Wanxia 1360
- 7 RIMSAITE Donata 1359
- 8 FOLDHAZI Zsofia 1357
- 9 YANG Soo jin 1357
- 10 ZHANG Xiaonan 1351
- 11 SOTERO Alice 1350
- 12 KIM Sunwoo 1346
- 13 MARQUES Yane 1342
- 14 MALISZEWSKA Anna 1341
- 15 KOHLMANN Janine 1340
- 16 MURRAY Samantha 1337
- 17 ALEKSZEJEV Tamara 1337
- 18 PROKOPENKO Anastasiya 1335
- 19 VENCKAUSKAITE Gintare 1332
- 20 SCHLEU Annika 1329
- 21 GUBAYDULLINA Gulnaz 1327
- 22 SHIMAZU Rena 1325
- 23 OTEIZA Marie 1323
- 24 FRENCH Kate 1322
- 25 TOMONAGA Natsumi 1318
- 26 PRASIANTSOVA Iryna 1311
- 27 VAKALIS Donna 1308
- 28 RUBLEVSKA Elena 1295
- 29 YELIZAROVA Tatsiana 1290
- 30 POTAPENKO Elena 1268
- 31 MCCANN Melanie 1256
- 32 BURIK Anna 1239
- 33 GARCIA-MIGUEL Marta 1204
- 34 CESARINI Claudia 1189
- 35 OZYUKSEL Ilke 984
- 36 BELHAMRI Julie 474

The Combined Event of all finals at the 2016 World Championships is available to watch via live stream at UIPMTV.org whilst a full results service is available at pentathlon.org.