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UIPM 2016 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS: RUSSIA CONQUER HEAT TO WIN WOMEN'S RELAY



An abundant sunshine from early in the morning welcomed athletes and their support teams to the UIPM 2016 Junior World Championships.

Temperatures rising to 35C also issued a warning to the junior athletes to conserve their energy and stamina. Under these weather conditions 14 teams embarked on the road to glory in the Women's Relay to mark the first day of competition on African soil.

Korea (Kim Sunoco / Kim Sehee) got on with their business at the Swimming event, timing 2:04.48 ahead of Russia (Alena Popova / Sofia Serkina, 2:05.10) and Italy (Alessandra Frezza / Irene Prampolini, 2:06.68).

The Fencing proved that the world's best young pentathletes are putting an arduous level of discipline into their training and confirmed that the final standings would be very tight. The top-ranked Italian and Belarusian teams ended the Ranking Round drawing with 16 victories and 10 defeats, scoring 234 points in total. Only three victories separated the 1st duo and the pair in 8th.

When the Bonus Round began, Rebecca Langrehr (GER), who set a new Fencing world record of 298 (26V, 3D) at the UIPM 2016 Youth A World Championships in Limerick (IRE) started to play catch up and, with her team-mate Anna Matthes (GER), achieved six victories in a row to grasp the Bonus Round and moved up the standings.

In spite of this recovery, Germany (Langrehr/Matthes) were unable to sustain this performance in the Riding and they suffered an elimination, as did France and Great Britain.

Amid the drama the script seemed to be winding towards a happy ending for Russia (Popova/Serkina), who were solid in Riding and entered the Combined Event in 1st position. Not far behind, Poland, Belarus and Italy were strong candidates for the podium starting respectively in 2nd, 3rd and 4th.

The Combined Event was largely uneventful, except for the arrival of one unexpected guest. The Hungarian team (Sarolta Simon / Alexandra Boros) made a strong bid to break up the party and at certain point stayed neck and neck in combat with Russia (Popova/Serkina).

It was the final Shooting series that decided the outcome after Russia, Italy and Belarus arrived practically together in the range. It was Alena Popova and Sofia Serkina (RUS) who held their nerve to become UIPM 2016 Junior World Champions in the Women's Relay, leaving Frezza and Prampolini (ITA) with the silver and Belarus (Iryna Prasiantsova / Volha Silkina) with bronze.

The championships continue with the Men's Relay on Tuesday, September 13 and continue through to Sunday, September 18.