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UIPM 2017 WORLD CUP IV: BIRTHDAY GIRL SOTERO (ITA) TAKES GOLD

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Alice Sotero (ITA) earned herself the perfect birthday present as she took home a Women's Individual gold medal from World Cup IV.

A day that began with Sotero (ITA) turning 26 years old ended with the Italian national anthem playing - and it was a very appropriate soundtrack because three of the 'Azzurri' athletes had finished in the top five.

In fact there was the possibility of an Italian clean sweep at the start of the Laser-Run, when Sotero (ITA) started 12 seconds ahead of Francesca Tognetti (ITA) and 23 ahead of Gloria Tocchi (ITA).

Sotero (ITA) held on to her advantage to enjoy a convincing victory - it was her first major gold medal and delivered on the promise of her silver at World Cup II in Cairo (EGY) - and it took two very special Laser-Run performances to deny her compatriots silver and bronze.

It was typical that Laura Asadauskaite (LTU), the 2012 Olympic champion, should make up so much ground from 17th place to claim the silver medal, but the bronze medallist was earned by a

display of incredible guts that the great Asadauskaite herself would have been proud of.

Ilke Ozyuksel (TUR) had secured her first World Cup medal earlier in the season and she made an even greater impact here, breaking the world junior Laser-Run record with a time of 11.57 to secure another podium. She kept Asadauskaite (LTU) in her sights as they marched through the field and recorded a time only 0.01 secs slower.

"I am so pleased to break the world record because I know the course and I set a world record here before; I tried again and managed to improve it by three seconds," said Ozyuksel (TUR).

The Fencing Ranking Round took place on the evening of May 26 and it was Francesca Summers (GBR) who took an early lead after a strong performance on the piste.

Summers (GBR) collected an impressive haul of 28V/7D and her nearest contenders were Tognetti and Tocchi (ITA), who scored 24V/11D and 23V/12D respectively.

Sotero (ITA) was only one victory behind her compatriots on 22V/13D, while Asadauskaite (LTU) scored 18V/17D.

Elodie Clouvel (FRA) built on a decent fencing performance with the fastest time in Swimming (2:10.06), ahead of Salma Abdelmaksoud (EGY) in 2:11.44.

Summers (GBR) confirmed her Fencing form with victory in the final bout of the Bonus Round to halt the momentum of Tocchi (ITA), but it was in the Riding arena that the competition really changed direction.

Eighteen riders managed a score of 290 or more, and seven enjoyed a perfect 300, with Natalya Coyle (IRL) recording the quickest time of 65.00. Sotero (ITA) was among that group on the maximum score and this ensured that she would start the Laser-Run first, while Asadauskaite (LTU) made sure she stayed in touch.

Three potential contenders moved completely out of contention, however, due to difficulties suffered in the arena.

Clouvel (FRA) suffered a fall on Atletico and was unable to finish. Annika Schleu (GER) incurred 72 penalty points, but her experience was a cruise compared to the plight of Summers (GBR), who racked up 105 penalties that undid all of her good work in Fencing and served as a reminder of the unique unpredictability of Modern Pentathlon.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Drzonkow was established as a centre of our sport 40 years ago and today, with the best weather conditions, the athletes showed how motivated they are to qualify for the World Cup Final.

"It has been a great competition and I congratulate and thank the Polish federation, Anna Bajan and her team and also our Executive Board Member for Sport, the Olympic champion Janusz Peciak. Many of our former athletes are giving so much to our sport."

The medals will be decided in the Men's Individual Final tomorrow (May 28) before the Mixed Relay concludes World Cup IV on Monday (May 29).