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UIPM 2017 SENIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS: KOREA RETAIN MEN'S RELAY TITLE



The pentathletes of Korea are starting to become increasingly comfortable when wearing the crown.

In 2016, Jun Woongtae and Hwang Woojin proved their calibre at the highest level with gold in the UIPM World Championships Men's Relay in Moscow (RUS).

Today in the searing heat of Cairo the duo enjoyed another impressive victory as they defended their title under extreme pressure from a mass of athletes from pentathlon's traditional stronghold.

In fact, Korea (Jun/Hwang) were the only nation from outside Europe to finish in the top eight, as Germany (Christian Zillekens & Alexander Nobis) claimed silver and Belarus (Ilya Palazkov & Pavel Tsikhanau) took home the bronze ahead of Russia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Poland and Ukraine.

For

Korea, it was another step in the right direction and provided further proof that Asia's most progressive pentathlon nation has become a regular global contender at all age groups.

"We are still competing with other countries in Asia like Japan, but I think we are getting closer to the standard of the European countries," said the Korea team coach, Choi Eunjong.

"Today our team managed to compete well in difficult conditions – it was very hot but we have the same conditions in Korea at this time of year."

The day began with Russia (Ilia Frolov & Danil Kalimullin) setting the pace in Fencing with 22V/10D, with Korea (Jun/Hwang) only two victories behind.

Great Britain (Myles Pillage & Bradley Sutton) were quickest in Swimming with 1:48.62 as Japan (Takeshi Sekiguchi & Hikaru Shimano) also dipped under the 1:50 mark with 1:49.92. Korea (Jun/Hwang) kept the pressure on leaders Russia (Frolov/Kalimullin) as they timed 1:50.19.

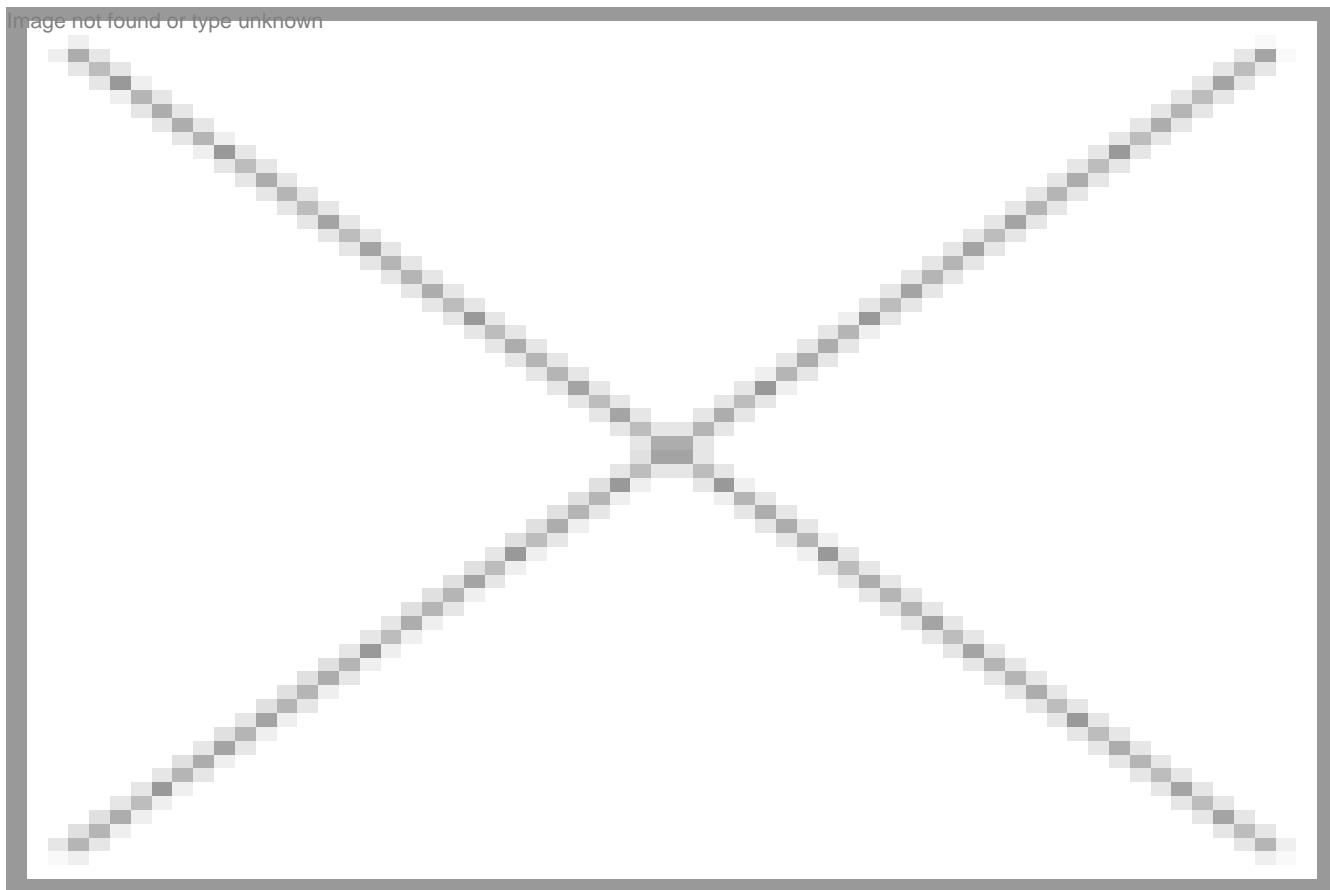
On a difficult day for Riding, there were no clean rounds but Korea (Jun/Hwang) moved into the overall lead with a solid 289, only bettered by Germany (Zillekens/Nobis) with 297.

Russia (Frolov/Kalimullin) picked up 37 penalty points and this meant they had to start the Laser-Run with a 22sec deficit, while Great Britain (Pillage/Sutton) and Japan (Sekiguchi/Shimano) were eliminated.

Korea (Jun/Hwang) protected their lead with composure and style, never allowing their rivals to sense an opportunity. Germany (Zillekens/Nobis) moved into second place after the 3rd shoot and almost closed in on the winners, while Belarus (Palazkov/Tsikhonau) also overtook struggling Russia (Frolov/Kalimullin) at the final shoot to claim a satisfying bronze.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "The Men's Relay provided us with an exciting start to the UIPM 2017 World Championships and it was wonderful to see the team spirit on show. Korea

were so strong and nobody could beat them but there was an exciting race behind them.



"We are here at a new facility and we look forward to other exciting competitions this week. The World Championships is our most important competition since the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and I hope all the athletes will remain healthy and competing at their highest level."

Sharif Elerian, President of the Egyptian Modern Pentathlon Federation, added: "The first day of competition was a great day, we were testing all the facilities and everything worked out fine.

"This is always the most difficult day in any competition and everyone is happy, and I hope the coming days will be even better than today and produce more great champions."

The action at the UIPM Senior World Championships runs from August 22-28 and continues tomorrow (August 23) with the Women's Relay.

The Men's and Women's Individual and Mixed Relay finals (August 26-28) will be available to watch on TV through the continental broadcaster Eurosport, 11 other national TV networks and online at UIPM TV and the Olympic Channel.