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UIPM 2017 CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS: BATULEVICIUTE (LTU) TAKES WOMEN'S CROWN

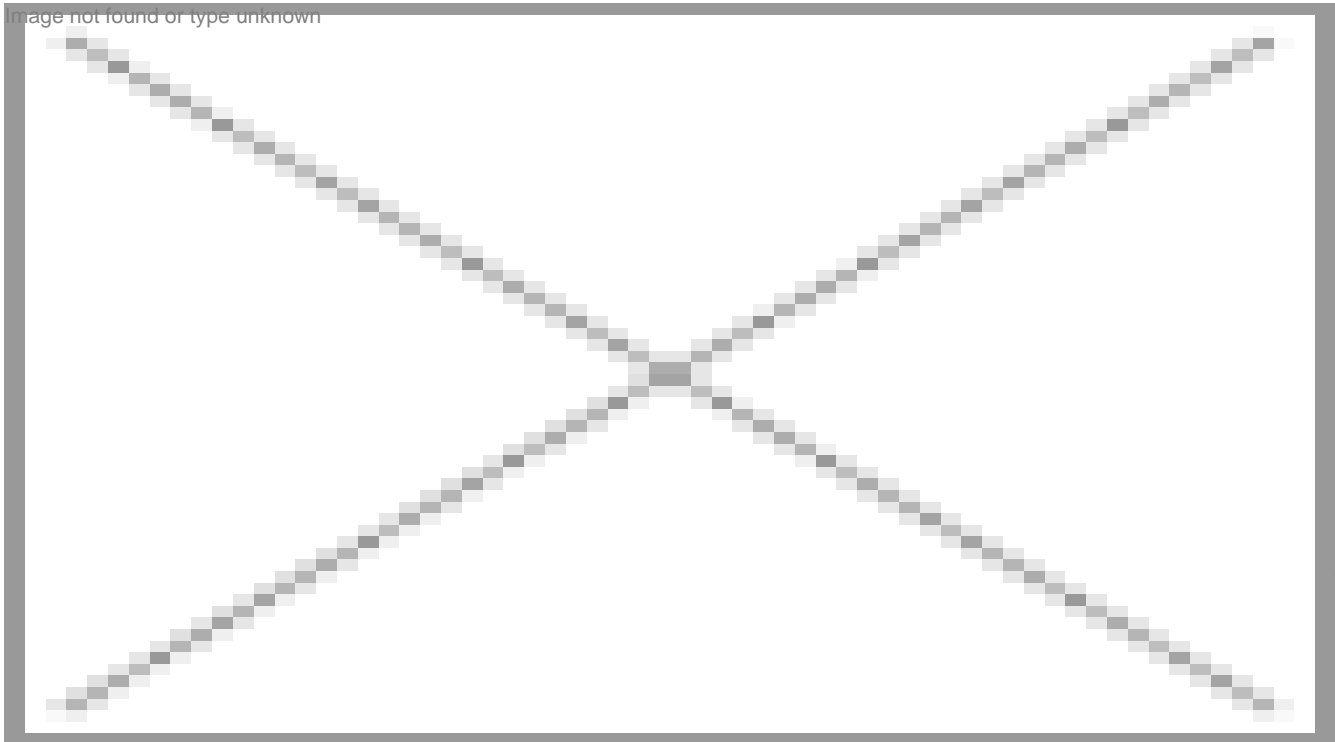
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- New world military champion claims second title of 2017
- Sotero (ITA) ends excellent year on a high with silver
- Olympic medallist Clouvel (FRA) loses lead but salvages medal

She has spent most of her career in the shadow of a superstar but Lina Batuleviciute of Lithuania became the UIPM Champion of Champions today after a fine performance in the women's event.

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result continued an intriguing season of transition in women's pentathlon, with a number of athletes claiming their first major titles such as world champion Gulnaz Gubaydullina (RUS) and World Cup Final gold medallist Tamara Alekszejew (HUN).

Today, in the absence of Gubaydullina (RUS), the Olympic champion Chloe Esposito (AUS) and her celebrated compatriot Laura Asadauskaite (LTU), Batuleviciute (LTU) seized her chance to scale the top of the podium where she was joined by silver medallist Alice Sotero (ITA) and bronze medallist Elodie Clouvel (FRA).

"It's the best day – I am so excited that I got the gold," said Batuleviciute (LTU) after receiving her gold medal at the Al Shaqab Arena. "This is the second title of my career and the first was last month in the World Military Championships.

"I know that I am a good fencer but I am surprised that my Riding went so well after a bad day yesterday at the jumping test.

"The facilities are very good here in Doha, probably the best of anywhere I have competed."

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Batuleviciute, 28, had already claimed victory in one UIPM Category A competition this year when she won gold at the CISM World Military Championships in Drzonkow (POL). She also finished 14th in the World Cup Final in Vilnius in her homeland, where the 2012 Olympic champion Asadauskaite (LTU) was the star attraction.

Prior to that most of the best results for Batuleviciute (LTU) had come in team and relay events, including a Senior World Championships Women's Relay silver medal in 2015 in Berlin (GER).

Today, brimming with confidence after her CISM success, she led from the front in the all-important Fencing, finishing 1st with 22V/10D ahead of Kate Coleman Lenehan (IRL; 21V/11D) and Clouvel (FRA; 20V/12D).

Swimming had been less prosperous for the leader as Clouvel (FRA) topped the standings with 2:13.56 ahead of Sotero (ITA; 2:14.42) and Bian Yufei (CHN; 2:15.46).

Only three of the 17 participating athletes managed a clean round in Riding, but one of them was Batuleviciute (LTU), whose perfect round kept up her momentum in the race for gold. Anna Maliszewska (POL) and Coleman Lenehan (IRL) also scored 300 while Sotero (298) and Clouvel (291) stayed in touch.

The outcome was that Clouvel (FRA) started Laser-Run in 1st place ahead of Coleman Lenehan (IRL; 3secs), Sotero (ITA; 15secs) and Batuleviciute (LTU; 16secs).

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Clouvel (FRA) protected her lead until the 2nd shooting range, where Sotero (ITA) and Batuleviciute (LTU) stole the initiative. Batuleviciute (LTU) proved she had the greater composure on the day as she edged ahead of Sotero (ITA) to win by 7secs, with Clouvel (FRA) crossing the line 5secs later.

In 4th place was Shino Yamanaka (JPN), whose Laser-Run time of 12:50 was the quickest in the field. Janine Kohlmann (GER) finished 5th and Ekaterina Khuraskina (RUS) 6th.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Today's excellent women's final proved that we have already created a strong legacy here after four years of the UIPM Champion of Champions in Doha.

"I am so pleased with what the Qatar organising committee have achieved for us and the athletes produced a high level of performance in these amazing facilities with great horses.

"I am sure the men tomorrow will provide a big showcase once more. We know that the Qataris are very happy to host us and we hope to continue the Champion of Champions here in future."

Bronze medallist Clouvel (FRA), the 2016 Olympic silver medallist, added: "It's incredible here, a really amazing complex and the Riding is very good. It's a wonderful place and I love coming here."

The men's event at the UIPM Champion of Champions, featuring the 2016 Olympic champion Alexander Lesun (RUS), concludes the 2017 season tomorrow (October 22) from 10am local time.

Follow the UIPM website and Facebook and Twitter pages for updates and results.