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UIPM 2017 CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS: DE LUCA (ITA) ENDS SEASON IN STYLE

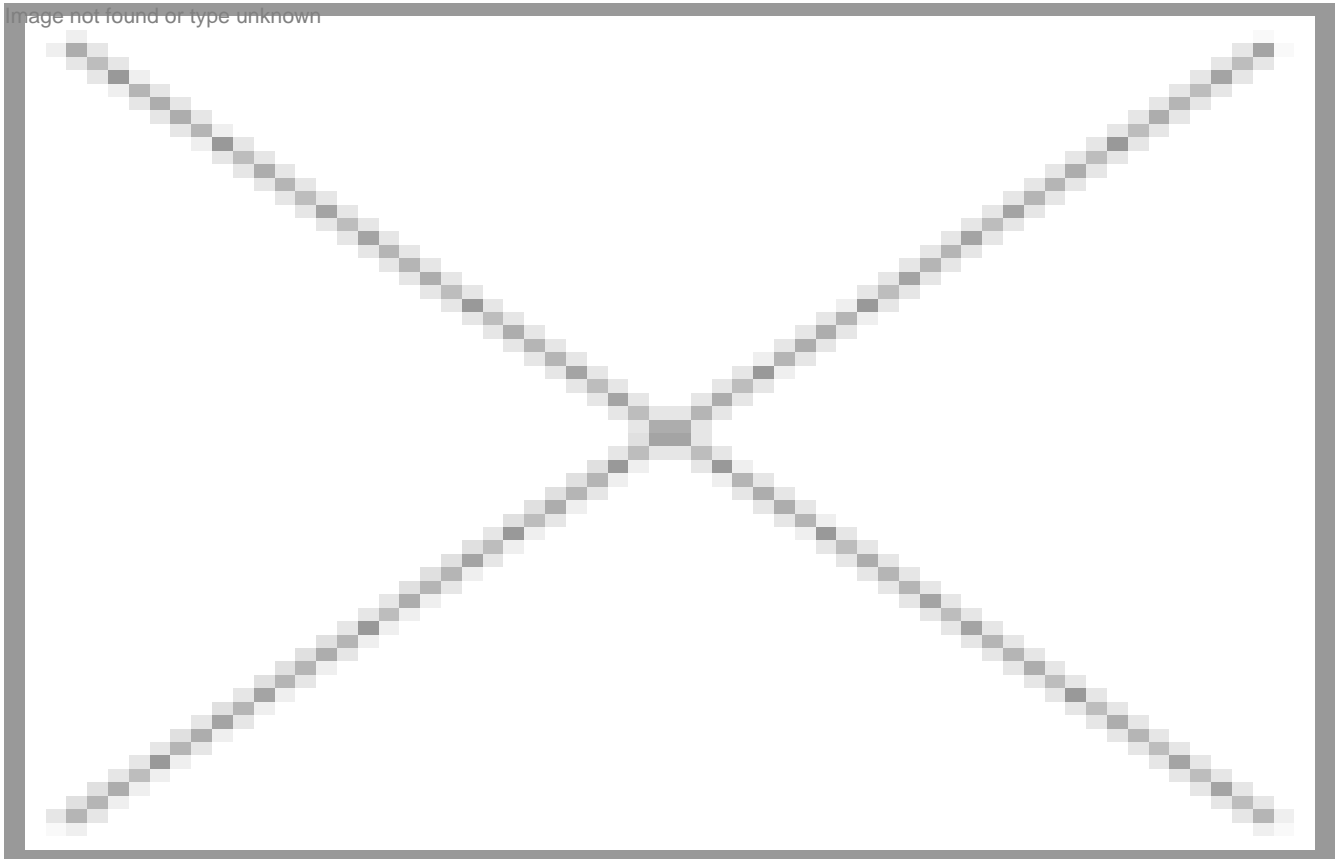
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- New title for former European champion and World Cup winner
- Dogue (GER) adds silver medal to 2016 gold
- Belaud (FRA) keeps Colasanti (ITA) off the podium

Riccardo de Luca of Italy enjoyed one of the finest wins of his career as he took home the title of UIPM Champion of Champions after dominating the men's event.

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Luca (ITA), European champion in 2012 and winner of the World Cup Final in 2015, missed most of the 2017 season after he narrowly failed to reach the podium at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, finishing 5th after a sprint finish.

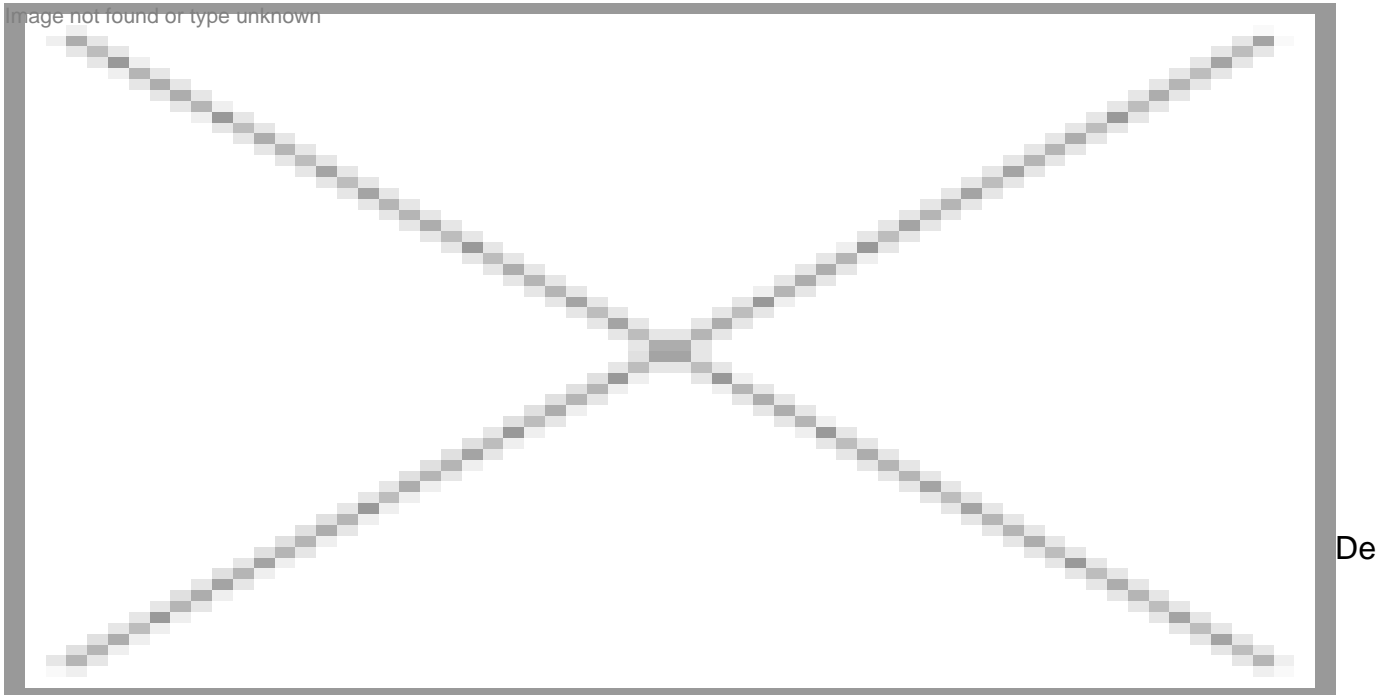
The 31-year-old's success in Doha in a high-quality field should be a source of great confidence for 2018 and beyond.

The Italian was so strong that the 2016 Champion of Champions, Patrick Dogue (GER), had to settle for silver despite a very impressive performance of his own.

Behind the top two, 2016 world champion Valentin Belaud (FRA) earned the bronze medal after a great battle with Daniele Colasanti (ITA), the 2017 junior world champion. Olympic champion Alexander Lesun (RUS) finished 5th with Pavel Ilyashenko (KAZ), Joseph Choong (GBR) and Taishu Sato (JPN) completing the top eight.

Typically it was Choong (GBR) who set the standard in Swimming, where he timed 2:05.64 ahead of the Japanese duo Tomo Onoyuki (2:06.05) and Sato (2:07.33).

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Luca (ITA) used his Fencing prowess to take control of the competition in the Qatar Foundation Recreation Centre. He took the lead after a score of 22V/8D, with Lesun (RUS) proving his closest challenger with 20V/10D. Colasanti (ITA) and Dogue (GER) ensured they would be in the mix with 18V/12D each.

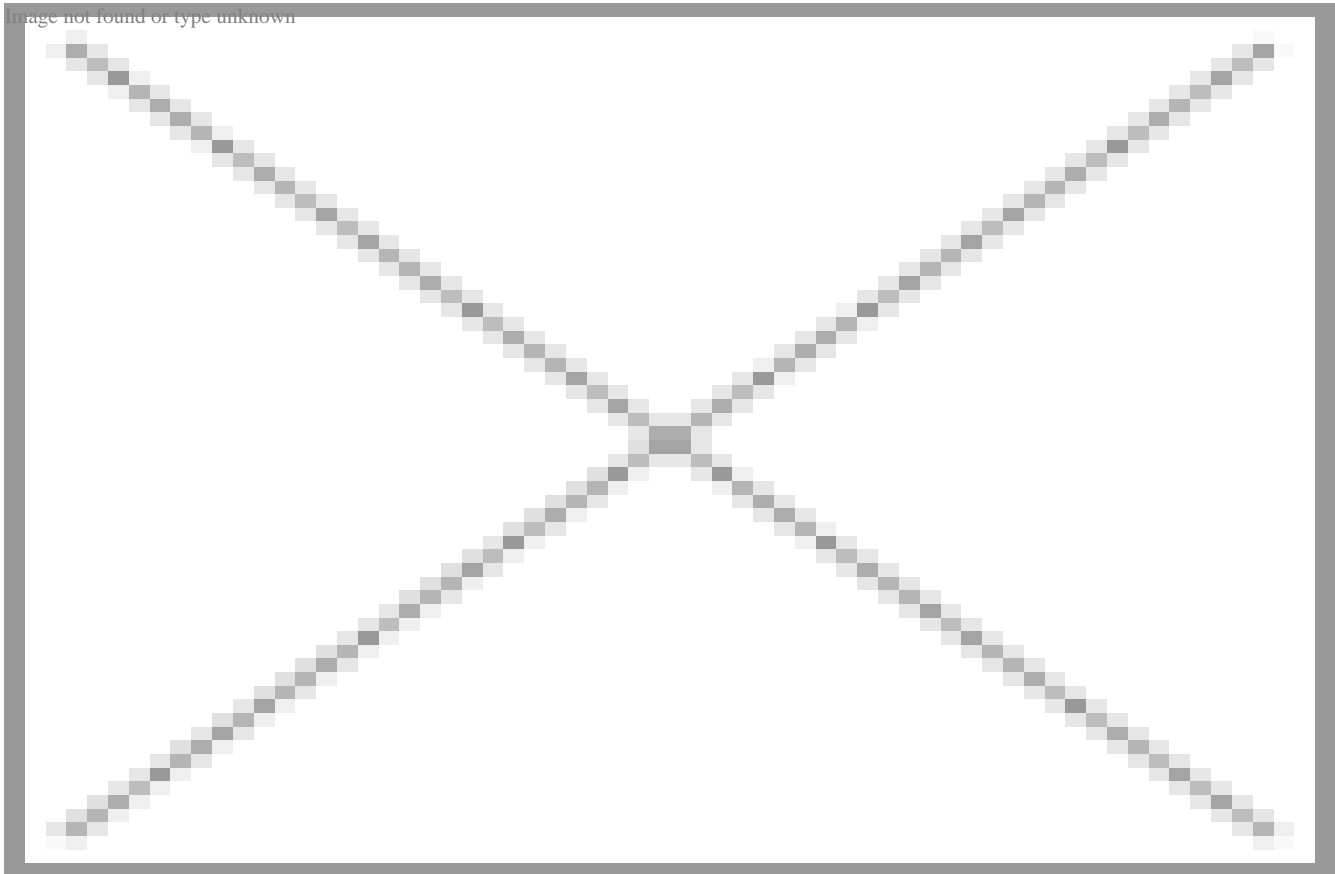
Each of the main contenders stayed on course for the podium during the Riding, with Lesun (RUS) incurring the most damage with 18 penalty points. Dogue (GER) and Colasanti (ITA) enjoyed the only two clear rounds while De Luca (ITA) dropped only six points to ensure he would start Laser-Run first.

In fact the leader had a 17sec advantage ahead of Colasanti (ITA), who was under pressure on the start line from Dogue (GER), Lesun (RUS) and Choong (GBR), and whose nerves on the shooting range ultimately cost him a medal.

Belaud (FRA) started 6th but made up lots of ground and moved into 3rd place after the 2nd shoot, where Lesun (RUS) began to drift back. De Luca (ITA) and Dogue (GER) moved unchallenged through their laps and the only suspense was reserved for the battle for bronze, as Colasanti (ITA) fought tenaciously to catch Belaud (FRA), but ultimately in vain.

De Luca (ITA) said afterwards that it had been a “long day” but he had lots of praise for the venue and the local organising committee.

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He

said: "I already competed twice in the Champion of Champions here in Qatar and everything works well – the food, the timings, the venue – it's very well organised and I think it would be great to see some more pentathlon competitions come here in future."

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann added: "I congratulate all the athletes, the women yesterday and today the men, and to everyone who has been involved in making this UIPM Champion of Champions such a big success.

"The athletes and the media have been asking me and I can say very proudly that we met with the Qatar Federation of Equestrian and Modern Pentathlon today and they will continue to support us, so next year we will have the 5th edition of the Champion of Champions here in Doha.

"This means a lot to our sporting movement and to the Olympic movement in Qatar.

"When we look to the podium on both days we can see that the best athletes of the season are on the podium and that makes all of us very proud and shows that the Champion of Champions is a big motivation for the athletes. We are already looking forward to the 2018 Champion of Champions here in Doha."

The 2017 major competition season is now over but stay tuned to the UIPM website and Facebook and Twitter pages for news and results from other competitions as well as the 2017 UIPM Congress from November 24-26 in Tbilisi (GEO).

The 2018 season will kick off in Cairo (EGY) with World Cup I from February 28 to March 4.