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UIPM 2021 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP SOFIA (I): KAZAKHSTAN PICK OFF RIVALS IN MIXED RELAY



- Joy for Potapenko and Michshenko (KAZ) on final day
- Hard work earns silver for Klimiankova & Tsikhanau (Belarus)
- Kim & Seo (Korea) pip Moya & Ders (Cuba) to bronze

Elena Potapenko of **Kazakhstan** warmed up for what promises to be her second Olympic Games appearance by winning the Mixed Relay alongside **Vladislav Michshenko** at UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia (I).

It was a dominant performance by Potapenko (KAZ), who finished 9th at Rio 2016 and secured a Tokyo 2020 quota place for her country at the 2019 Asian Championships, and her less experienced partner Michshenko (KAZ).

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Competing against 18 rival pairs from around the world, the Kazakh duo finally won by 22sec from **Kseniya Klimiankova** and **Pavel Tsikhanau** of **Belarus**, who were joined on the podium by bronze medallists **Unju Kim** and **Changwan Seo** of **Korea**.

The medal ceremony would have been hard to watch for **Leidis Laura Moya** and **Lester Ders** of **Cuba**, who lost possession of silver at the final shoot and finally had to settle for 4th, ahead of **Italy** (**Gloria Tocchi & Stefano Frezza**) in 5th and **Hungary** (**Kamilla Reti & Balazs Szep**) in 6th.

Swimming

A very tight contest between two neighbouring nations ended in prominence in the pool for **Russia** (**Maria Samoilova & Vladimir Chelmakin**), whose time of 1:58.27 upstaged **Ukraine** (**Iryna Boicheniuk & Oleksandr Tovkai**) by just 0.1sec.

There was some satisfaction for the host nation as **Bulgaria** (**Svetla Zgurova & Denis Kolev**) recorded the third-fastest time (2:01.00), a fraction of a second ahead of **Guatemala** (**Sofia Cabrera & Charles Fernandez**).

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Fencing

They would finally win the competition by 22 points and this could be strongly attributed to the fact that Kazakhstan (Potapenko/Michshenko) were the best by far on the piste, scoring 26V/10D and adding two points in the Bonus Round to notch up 26 more points than their nearest rivals.

Ukraine (Boicheniuk/Tovkai) managed 22 victories, one more than a clutch of nations on 21 – **Egypt (Haydy Morsy & Ahmed Elgendy)**, Cuba (Moya/Ders), Italy (Tocchi/Frezza) and **Switzerland (Anna Jurt & Maxence Hofer)**.

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Riding

Kazakhstan (Potapenko/Michshenko) could afford to concede a little ground on horseback and they did just that, conceding 17 penalty points after watching their rivals cut away at the overall deficit.

There were superbly composed performances by Cuba (Moya/Ders), who scored 294, and Belarus (Klimiankova/Tsikhanau), who managed a perfect 300. That gave those two countries a surge of optimism as they embarked on the Laser Run 21sec and 27sec respectively behind the leaders.

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Laser Run

Great champions make winning look easy, and Kazakhstan (Potapenko/Michshenko) betrayed no sign of nerves as they moved serenely through the shooting series, improving with every visit as they got their times down from 15sec to 9sec during the course of the Laser Run.

That meant the leaders could pace their running laps economically without any threat from the chasing pack, leaving all the drama behind them.

It was hard not to feel for Moya (CUB), who successfully protected her starting position of 2nd, and her hard-running partner Ders (CUB), who fought to earn the position back from Tsikhanau (BLR) during the third lap, only to get stuck on the range for 25sec at the final shoot and leave himself too much to do.

The most impressive Laser Run came from Korea (Kim/Seo), who had started in 7th place but chewed up a 35sec deficit behind Cuba (Moya/Ders) to snatch bronze.

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Medallists' reaction

Gold medallist Potapenko (KAZ) said: "It was comfortable, but today is a great day for our country.

"I was nervous regardless of the lead - 21sec or 1sec - but we just did our work, we stayed confident and we enjoyed it."

Silver medallist Tsikhanau (BLR) said: "It's a very good day because our start was not lucky, especially Fencing, but Modern Pentathlon is so interesting and there can be many changes in one day.

"We worked hard in Riding and Laser Run, and we went up from 3rd to 2nd so it's a very good day."

Bronze medallist Kim (KOR) said: "It was an unbelievable race and I'm very happy. It's a nice day and we have a great feeling."

To their credit, the 4th-placed Cubans were also happy to be interviewed after receiving their certificates alongside the medallists.

Two-time Pan American champion and 2010 Youth Olympic Games gold medallist Moya (CUB) said: "I am very happy because even though I couldn't prepare myself easily because of COVID, and last week [Pentathlon World Cup Budapest] wasn't so great for me either, but today we succeeded in every event and I feel it was wonderful.

"It feels good that we already qualified to the [Tokyo 2020 Olympic] Games and this competition was preparation for the Games and we hope to get other good results to be able to take part in the Pentathlon World Cup Final.

"We know that we have to improve in all the disciplines but the good thing is that we know which

disciplines to work on specifically.”

UIPM Secretary General’s reaction

UIPM Secretary General Shiny Fang said: “Today we saw a lot of young, talented athletes in the Mixed Relay from 19 different countries.

“To have a top six on the podium from three continents, including Cuba, the Mixed Relay simply gives more countries opportunities to compete with gender equality and harmony.

“Competing with joy and respect, that’s the Mixed Relay; encouraging and motivating your teammate is the spirit and the most valuable part of the game.

“Why is the Modern Pentathlon Mixed Relay not yet in the Olympic Games programme? Well, maybe not for 2024, but it will only add value for future Games if the opportunity will come.”

Watch and follow

UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia (I) has now concluded but the action continues next week with UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia (II) from April 15-18.

Live streaming of all finals is available on UIPM TV, while all competition results are available at the UIPM website and the ‘UIPM Central’ app.

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Rank	Name	Nation	MP Points
1	JUN Woongtae	KOR	1457
2	KASZA Robert	HUN	1455
3	PALAZKOV Ilya	BLR	1451
4	LUO Shuai	CHN	1448
5	LIEBIG Fabian	GER	1446
6	TOOLIS Thomas	GBR	1443
7	VLACH Martin	CZE	1438
8	DOGUE Patrick	GER	1434
9	DOGUE Marvin Faly	GER	1433
10	MAROSI Adam	HUN	1432
11	JUNG Jinhwa	KOR	1430
12	PRADES Valentin	FRA	1424
13	PADILLA Manuel	MEX	1422
14	KARDOS Bence	HUN	1421
15	CHOONG Joseph	GBR	1420
16	CURRY Samuel	GBR	1419
17	TYMOSHCHENKO Pavlo	UKR	1417
18	ZILLEKENS Christian	GER	1416

19	HAMED Ahmed	EGY	1412
20	FERNANDEZ Charles	GUA	1411
21	SEO Changwan	KOR	1409
22	LANIGAN-O'KEEFFE Arthur	IRL	1404
23	SANDOVAL Alvaro	MEX	1398
24	ZVEDENIUK Pavlo	UKR	1393
25	HAMAD Eslam	EGY	1389
26	UNAL Bugra	TUR	1387
27	KUZNETSOV Maxim	RUS	1386
28	CARRILLO Duilio	MEX	1384
29	SEWILAM Alyeldin	EGY	1378
30	LEE Jihun	KOR	1366
31	KUF Jan	CZE	1359
32	PAVLYUK Denys	UKR	1356
33	VAIVADA Dovidas	LTU	1350
34	GUTKOWSKI Lukasz	POL	1332
35	HAN Jiahao	CHN	1331
36	SUKHAREV Vladislav	KAZ	1322