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GOLD SHARED BY FIVE NATIONS AS EUROPEAN U24 CHAMPIONSHIPS FEATURE PULSATING FINISHES



Podium places were shared early and often as the fifth instalment of the European U24 Championships saw frenetic finishes throughout the three days of action in Drzonkow, Poland.

With athletes from 16 nations across the continent gathering in Poland, the depth of talent was clear from the very off.

It was left to the Women's entrants to get the ball rolling and they did so in style. Barbora Hartmanova of Czech Republic raced to an early lead as she dominated the pool in a time of 2:14.10. As action moved to the piste, Elzbieta Adomaityte was in dominant form, the Lithuanian racking up 22 Fencing victories, Sweden's Marlena Jawaid just behind with 21.

While three competitors recorded perfect runs in the Riding round, Poland's Natalia Dominiak was fastest. It would all come down to a nail-biting Laser Run with the destination of the medals still up in the air on the final round of shooting.

In a truly great year for Great Britain, Olivia Green raced clear of the rest down the finishing straight to take gold with Jawaid (SWE) second and Katerina Krejci (LAT) third. Team gold went to Great Britain too ahead of Belarus and Ukraine.

On day two, it was the Men's turn to match their female counterparts for fireworks. They did just that with Turkey dominating in the pool before Germany's prowess on the piste. German's occupied three of the top four places in the Fencing round with Marc Spletzer (GER) best of all. Riding required skill and concentration and many riders turned in a great performance on the very challenging course with Uladzislau Nestserau from Belarus best of all with a perfect score 300 points.

Going to the Laser Run, German athletes looked to be in prime position but the Shooting rounds proved particularly decisive. Maksym Aharushev from Ukraine held his nerve best of all and took gold ahead of the Hungarian pairing, Csaba Bohm and Balazas Szep. The Germans made do with team gold with Ukraine and Hungary filling out the podium.

With 18 teams competing, the Mixed Relay on the closing day proved to be just as action-packed as the individual events. Ukraine and Turkey once more proved that the pool was the playground as they got off to great starts in the Swimming round.

On-lookers described the Fencing round in Drzonkow as particularly fun to watch with the competition now heated and three teams tying on 23 victories apiece — Great Britain, Belarus and Lithuania. Similar could be said for the Racing round which was again close.

In an unmissable Laser Run, it was Maksim Maruk and Kseniya Klimiankova of Belarus who avoided all distractions with some brilliant Shooting to stay ahead of the field. In a razor-thin battle for silver it was the Polish team of Ewa Pydyszewska Ewa and Lukasz Gutkowski who saw off the challenge of Great Britain with Toby Price and Olivia Green settling for bronze.

All in all, gold was shared by five nations and seven countries out of the 16 made it on to the podium in a hugely successful weekend that proved the future is indeed very bright across the continent of Europe.