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UIPM 2023 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP BUDAPEST: GOLDEN GLORY FOR GUZI (HUN) AND JUN (KOR)



Blanka Guzi of Hungary and **Woongtae Jun** of Korea savoured the sweet taste of gold on Super Saturday at UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Cup Budapest.

One first-time winner, one crowned Pentathlon World Cup champion for the ninth time, four world records – and two Finals of the highest quality thrilling audiences in Budapest (HUN) and worldwide.

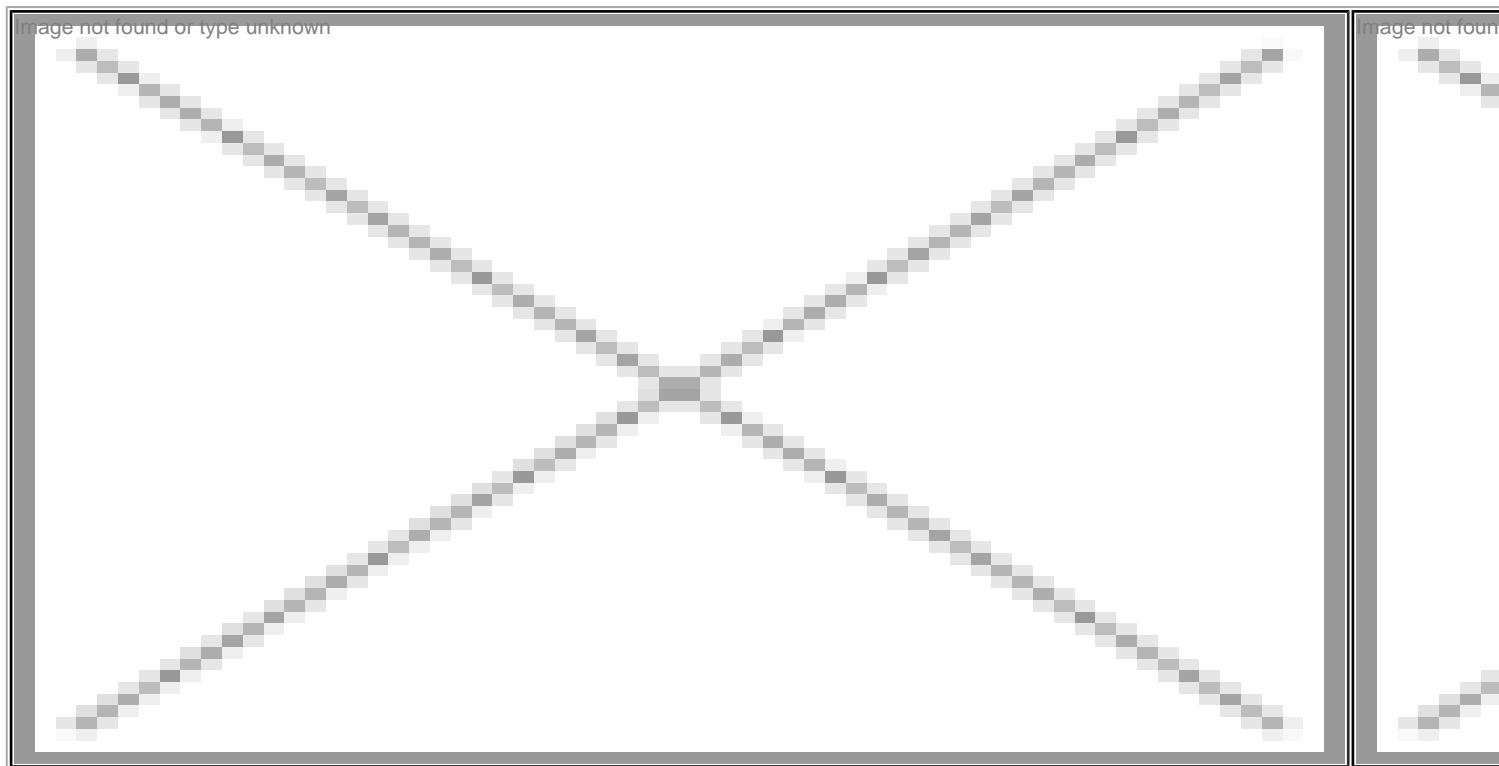
Given the strength of Hungarian Modern Pentathlon, it was no surprise to hear the brass band playing the national anthem of the host nation as a heroic champion shed tears of joy on the podium. But at the end of a captivating Women's Final, the athlete on the top step was not the one everybody had expected to see.

Having started 26sec off the lead in the decisive Women's Final Laser Run, Guzi (HUN) staged a remarkable comeback to defeat her more celebrated team-mate, **Michelle Gulyas** (HUN), as well as bronze medallist **Salma Abdelmaksoud** of **Egypt**, in an astonishing sprint finish.

So great was the determination of the top three to claim a medal, they kept out one of the greatest pentathletes of all time, as 39-year-old **Laura Asadauskaite** of **Lithuania** came home just 1sec behind Abdelmaksoud (EGY) in 4th. **Gintare Venckauskaite** (LTU) also made an incredible gain to finish 5th, setting a new Laser Run world record of 10min 58.20sec.

The Men's Final was a little less dramatic thanks to a serene performance by Tokyo 2020 Olympic bronze medallist Jun (KOR) in reversing the order of Pentathlon World Cup Ankara two weeks ago. This time **Mohanad Shaban** (EGY) took silver as he maintained his incredible streak of form.

Behind them, another Laser Run world record was broken in another compelling sprint finish for bronze. The race was won by **Martin Vlach** of **Czech Republic** in 9:44.80, erasing the mark of 9:51.30 set by **Andras Gall** (HUN) a few days earlier, with 4th-placed **Changwan Seo** (KOR) also timing comfortably inside 10min (9:54.60).



Medallists' reaction

Women's champion Guzi (HUN) said: "I came from hell, because the last few weeks were really hard, and it's totally a wonder what happened today and this week for me."

"I can't believe I achieved such a great result. You know, it's the first time I came first in a senior international competition, so what can I say? I think I'm the happiest of all the people."

"The key today was that I just smiled all day. I made a mistake in Riding, I didn't achieve the touch against Charlie Follett [in the Fencing Bonus Round], but never mind. I just smiled, and that was the key."

“Michelle Gulyas, Salma Abdelmaksoud and Laura … they are really talented pentathletes so I’m thankful to be here.”

Silver medallist Gulyas (HUN) added: “It was a big race and I’m really tired. My full competition didn’t start as well as I planned because I had difficulties in Fencing, although I finished quite well in the Ranking Round.

“I was very, very happy with my Riding because I got a tough horse, I’m very proud of myself that I could manage a 300. Swimming OK, and Laser Run was really exciting. I will need to build myself up ahead of the next races because it was really tough, but it was great to race like that with the others, it was fun.

“I love competing, I train for competing, I always enjoy every moment even if it’s not as good as I imagine. I always see little improvements, so I’m glad I was competing again.”

Bronze medallist Abdelmaksoud (EGY) said: “I am very happy with this medal, my second medal of the World Cup season. Thank you to my coaches and my family for helping me.

“This competition was very, very hard. First the Fencing was really tough, and in Laser Run I started 2nd and finished one place back, but I worked very hard.”

Men’s champion Jun (KOR) said: “After a silver in Ankara, finally I have the gold medal so I’m very happy. After the last World Cup we didn’t go back to Korea, we stayed in Europe, and I’m happy with the result today. Riding was a little bit difficult, but I stayed focused and it was OK.

“Now I am going to prepare for the World Championships in Great Britain and the Asian Games in China.”

Silver medallist Shaban (EGY) added: “I’m so happy because two weeks after the last competition, I take the silver medal behind Woongtae, we were 1st and 2nd and now we are 2nd and 1st.

“After World Cup Cairo [where he finished 4th after leading], I trained hard with the running because I wanted to improve my results.”

Bronze medallist Vlach (CZE) said: “It was a very tough day because my position after the Ranking Round was quite bad. But I started with great Riding, and in every discipline I improved my position.

“In the end, in the last lap I could see my opponent so I thought I would try it, and it worked. I think every pentathlete has the ability to perform like this, because we spend so much time training all five disciplines.

“You must push yourself to your limit when running. Maybe I’m faster than others, but I think every pentathlete has this ability to do it.

“Thank you very much to everyone who watches and supports us, and I hope this is not the last good result in this season.”

Women’s Final

Riding

Sensing her opportunity to move up the leaderboard in front of a supportive home crowd, Gulyas (HUN) showed yet again why she is such a special athlete across all disciplines.

With her horse threatening to veer away from the second jump, the local favourite retained control just in time to complete the double obstacle and smoothly negotiate the rest of the course for a perfect score of 300.

Gulyas (HUN) was not the only athlete to achieve the maximum score. Her team-mate **Luca Barta** (HUN) also delighted the home crowd, and pentathlon legend Asadauskaite (LTU) also boosted her medal chances in the best possible way.

The **Great Britain** duo of **Charlie Follett** and **Olivia Green** and 3rd-placed Abdelmaksoud (EGY) also performed superbly, only conceding time penalties to take advantage of the misadventures of two leading athletes who suffered elimination.

World champion **Elena Micheli** of **Italy** was forced to dismount after her horse refused the very last jump, and overall leader **Haydy Morsy** (EGY) was never in control and sadly had to admit defeat in her medal quest.

Fencing

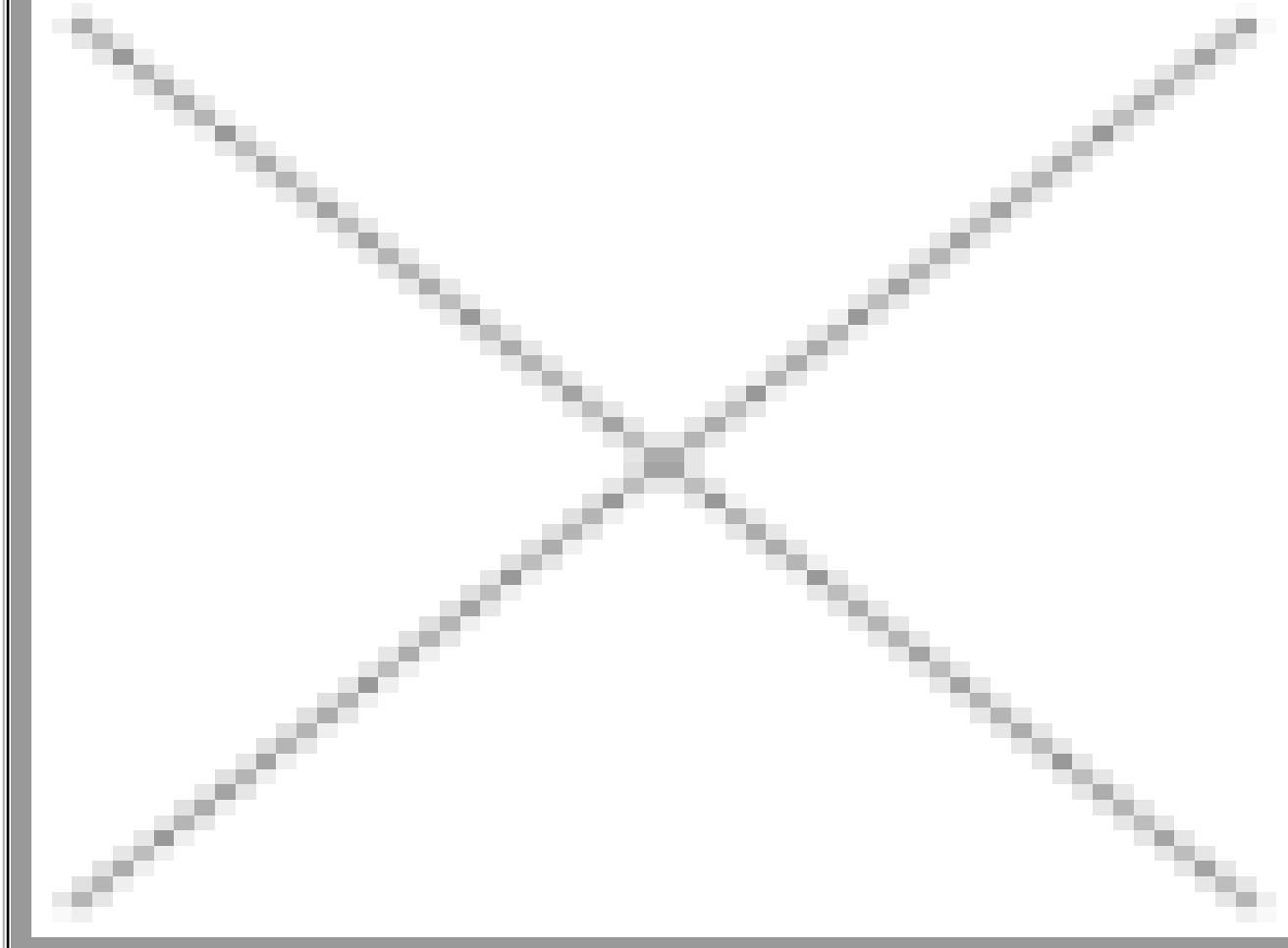
Morsy (EGY) came into the Bonus Round as the top scorer from the Ranking Round, with 245 points, and she shook off her difficult Riding experience by beating Gulyas (HUN) in the final bout to add four points.

By then, Gulyas (HUN) had marched further up the leaderboard by winning four bouts, following three wins for Follett (GBR) and four for **Gintare Venckauskaite** (LTU).

Mingyu Zhang of **China** performed strongly in the Ranking Round with 23V/12D, one more win than Abdelmaksoud (EGY) and two more than Micheli (ITA). Gulyas (HUN) scored 20V/15D and Guzi 19V/16D.

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Swimming

With Gulyas (HUN) and Abdelmaksoud (EGY) now jointly leading, good performances in the pool were vital and the local favourite surpassed her rival by half a second to move one point ahead.

The top three times were recorded by Micheli (ITA, 2min 13.19sec), Gulyas (HUN, 2:13.69) and Zhang (CHN, 2:14.03), with Abdelmaksoud (EGY) and Guzi (HUN) next-fastest and staying very much in the hunt.

Laser Run

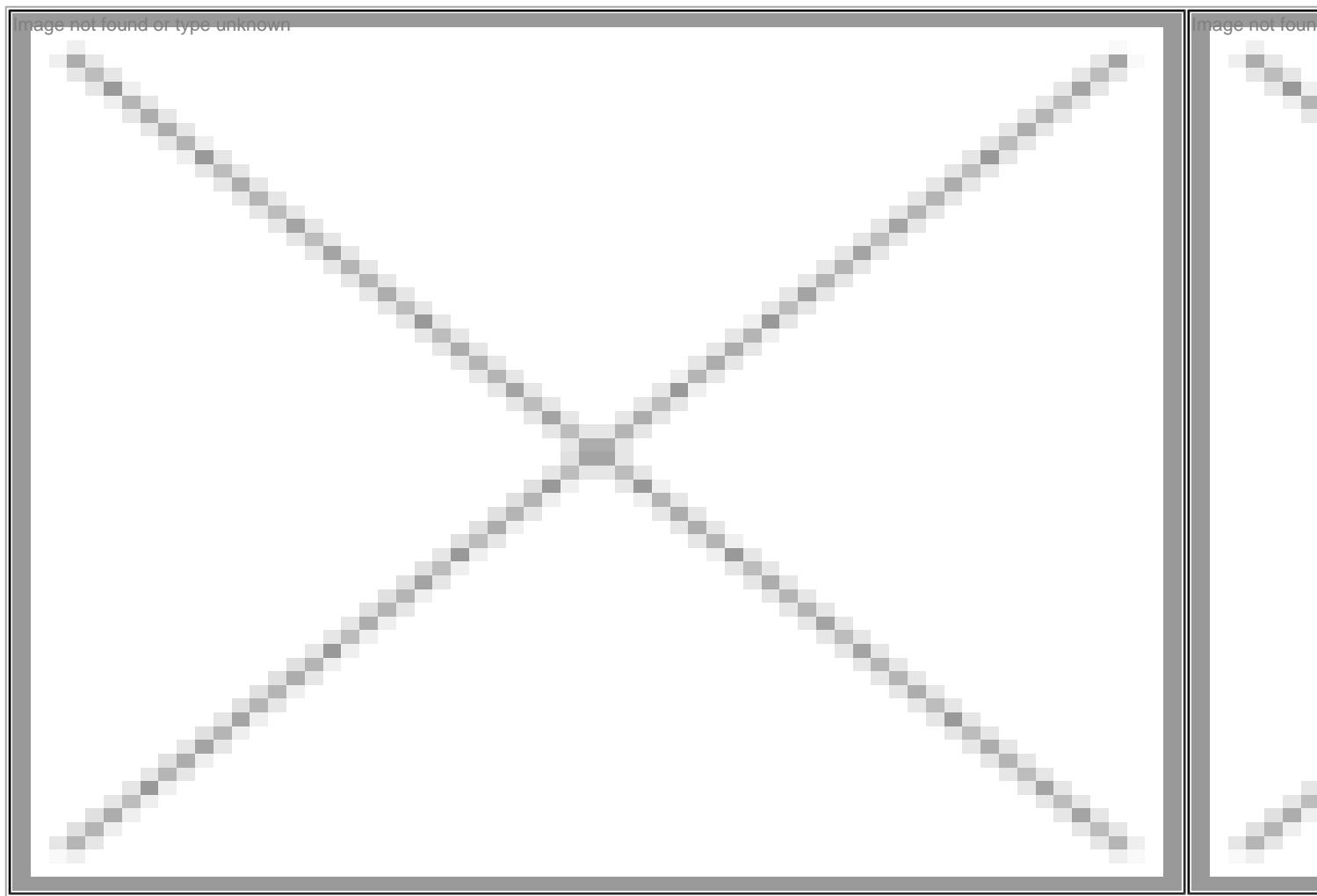
Trailing the world No.1 by 26sec, Guzi (HUN) started in 7th and immediately moved past two rivals on the first shoot, before overtaking Zhang (CHN) on the second run to move into the medal equation.

Ahead of her, the apparent gold-medal battle between two medallists from the Buenos Aires 2018 Youth Olympic Games was full of intrigue. Abdelmaksoud (EGY) gained 6sec on Gulyas (HUN) at the second shoot, only for the local favourite to regain the top spot on the third run. And every time this contest took a toll on the front runners, Guzi (HUN) made a gain on them.

The stealth attack was perfectly paced. Using her slight height advantage, Guzi (HUN) pushed so hard on the fourth lap that she arrived at the shooting range almost in time with the leaders. None of them froze under the pressure and the last 600m was destined to be a three-way race, even though they all kept a close eye over their shoulders.

Gulyas (HUN) looked to have the edge for most of the lap, until they all turned into the home stretch and Guzi (HUN) kicked hard to take a decisive advantage and grab the tape in front of an electrified home crowd.

The winner's Laser Run time was 11:06.50, and it would have been a new world record if not for Venckauskaite (LTU) and Asaduaskaite (LTU), both of whom smashed the previous mark held by Jessica Varley (GBR, 11:08.86) to go under 11min and surge into the top five. Green (GBR) beat Zhang (CHN) to the last place on the podium.



Men's Final

Riding

The standard of Riding in the Men's Final was exceptional, with six athletes enjoying a maximum score of 300 and only seven falling beneath 290.

Among the '300 club', big moves were made by Laser Run specialists such as Vlach (CZE), **Csaba Bohm** (HUN) and **Valentin Belaud** of France, while Rio 2016 Olympic silver medallist **Pavlo Tymoshchenko** of Ukraine took the overall lead and Jun (KOR) stayed in touch with a 291.

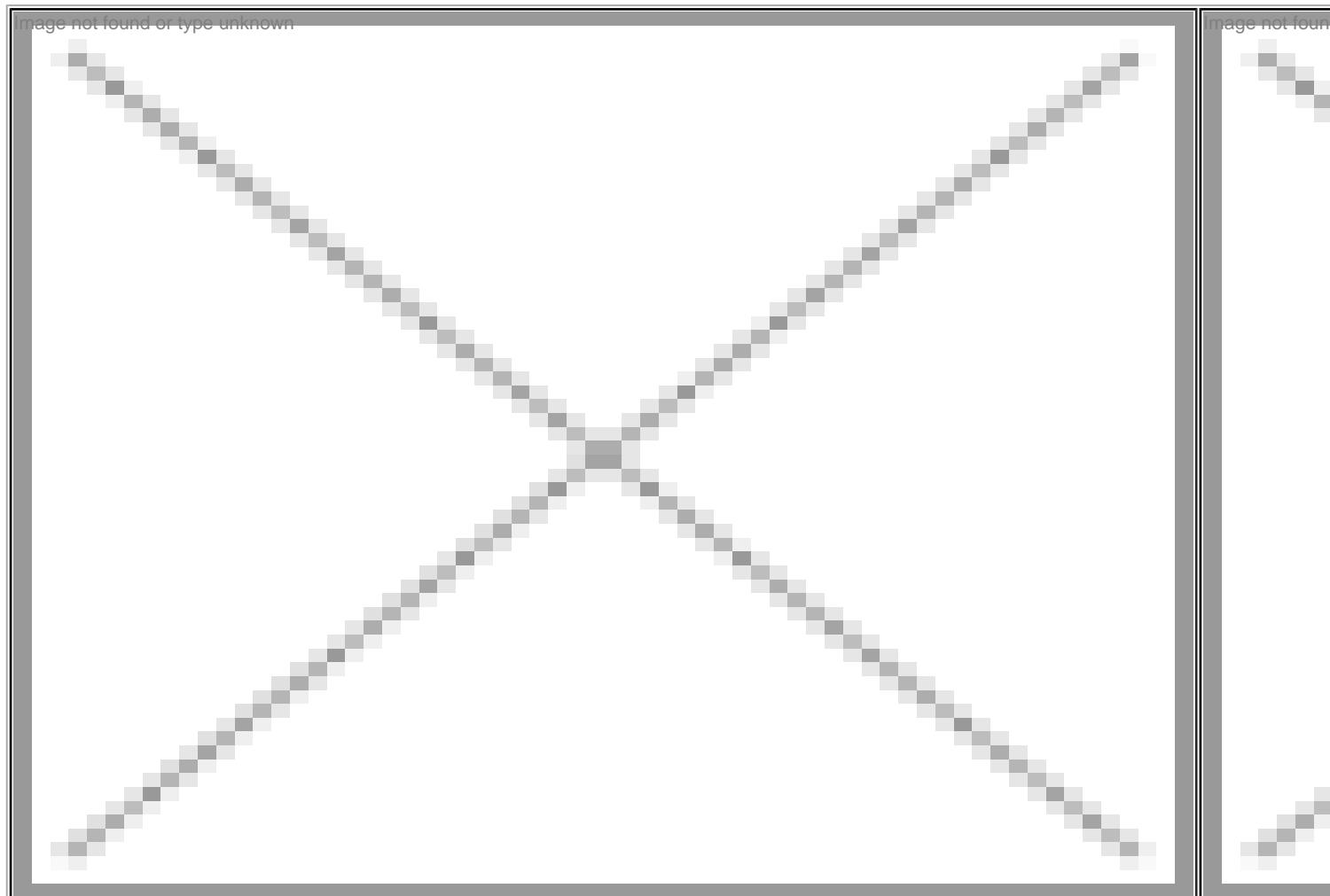
For the second time in a matter of hours, the final rider was unable to handle the pressure of the overall lead and ended up with the worst possible outcome. Zhang (CHN) became the first and only male athlete to suffer elimination.

Fencing

With four athletes tied at the top of the Fencing standings after the Ranking Round, the Bonus Round was unlikely to have a great impact unless there was a big move from the pack.

And that is exactly what transpired, as Jun (KOR) joined the ladder at No.6 and defeated every rival in his path for six straight wins and a 12-point boost that brought him to within two points of the overall lead.

For the third consecutive Fencing Ranking Round in this World Cup season, Shaban (EGY) could not be removed from the top rung of the ladder, but this time he was joined on 23V/12D by Zhang (CHN), **Mihaly Koleszar** (HUN) and Tymoshchenko (UKR), with Jun (KOR) one victory off the pace alongside **Gianluca Micozzi** of Italy.



Swimming

Bohm (HUN, 1:59.92) made a further gain on the leaders when joining **Matteo Cicinelli** (ITA, 1:59.59) by ducking narrowly under 2min, with **Giorgio Malan** (ITA) only fractions of a second behind the pace-setters.

However, once again the leaderboard story belonged to Jun (KOR) as his 4th-fastest 2:00.36 allowed him to move into pole position, five points ahead of Shaban (EGY) with Koleszar (HUN) and Tymoshchenko (UKR) the only others within 20 points of him.

Laser Run

The unflappable Jun (KOR) is perhaps the best athlete in the world when defending a lead. He only had a 5sec lead at the start, but it grew and grew as he ran and shot with consistent efficiency, stumbling only at the final shoot when he knew he could afford to take 15sec to nail his shots and still cruise home.

World junior champion Koleszar (HUN) made a big impression in achieving his first top-six finish at senior level. The 21-year-old stayed close to 22-year-old Shaban (EGY) for much of the race, only letting his rival slip away at the third shoot. Still he held his speed and denied 6th-placed Bohm (HUN) the title of top-ranking Hungarian.

The drama of the final lap surrounded the race for bronze, which came to life when the muscular Seo (KOR) bolted out of the shooting range having made his way up from 8th to 3rd. He looked well set to join team-mate Jun (KOR) on the medal rostrum, but the world's greatest Laser Runner had other ideas.

As the current world record holder (9:58), Vlach (CZE) paced himself superbly to snatch bronze and set a new global standard. In fact he smashed the record by more than 13sec with an extraordinary 9:44.80 that enabled him to overtake Seo (KOR, 9:54.60) on the final straight. **Balazs Szep** (HUN), advancing from 17th to 12th, also ducked under 10min with 9:59.40.



In the final analysis, three new world records were set on an extraordinary day, and another was equalled. Laser Run standards were rewritten by Venckauskaite (LTU) and Vlach (HUN), while Guzi (HUN) set a new overall world record of 1,424 points and Jun (KOR) equalled the existing men's record of 1,534 points.

President's reaction

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "The organisation of this UIPM Pentathlon World Cup has been excellent and today we saw well-prepared athletes giving spectators in both the Women's and Men's Finals a fantastic showcase of Modern Pentathlon.

"They saw what it means to fight until the end, as high-performing athletes gave everything to secure rankings not only for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, but also for the points that will help them to qualify for the UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Cup Final in Ankara.

"The leaders in both Finals were unlucky during the Riding discipline, but they didn't give up and they finished the competition professionally.

"My compliments go to the judges and referees, and we never forget the importance of selecting good horses. The atmosphere is friendly and we can say that these athletes are real ambassadors for our sport.

"Thanks a lot to the volunteers and the supporters who provided a basis for us to host a great World Cup here in Budapest, a true centre of our sport where we have a great Modern Pentathlon society. It was a pleasure to host some of the former champions, IOC Members and other dignitaries who have a lot of respect for the younger generation now presenting our sport to the

world."

Watch and follow

UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Cup Budapest concludes with the Mixed Relay on Sunday, April 30. Live coverage is available on UIPM TV and up-to-date results competitions can be found at the UIPM website and via the UIPM Central app.

The next competition on the calendar is UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia, taking place in the capital city of Bulgaria from May 9-14.

