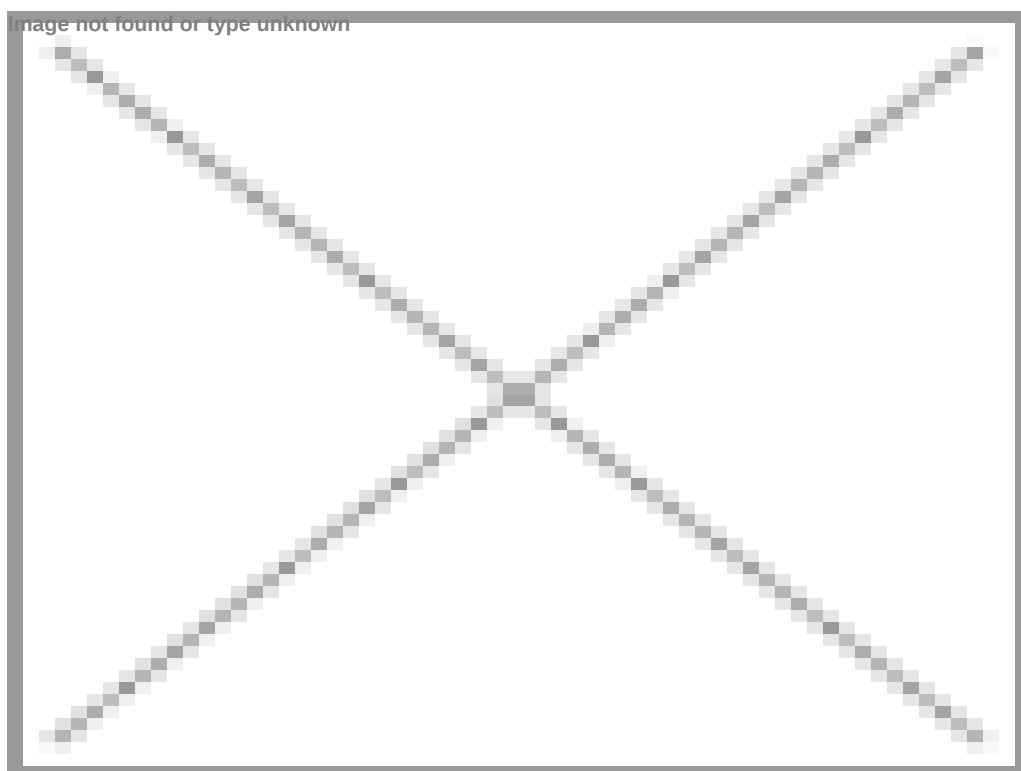


22 JUL 2013

SVOBODA CROWNED OLYMPIC CHAMPION



David Svoboda (CZE) has become the Olympic champion in the 100 year anniversary of Modern Pentathlon in the Olympic Games.

The elated former world #1 stated after: "It's an amazing feeling. I was thinking I could be on the top this morning - actually since my childhood - so it is the best moment in my sporting career. It was the best crowd I've ever seen so it was very nice."

The 27-year-old held off a strong challenge by China's Zhongrong Cao, who had to settle for silver, to win the third gold medal of these Games for the Czech Republic – and the country's first ever in modern pentathlon.

2009 World Champion Adam Marosi (HUN) charged to bronze on the back of a perfect 1200 ride on the brilliant horses here in London.

"This is the most important medal in my life. In the horse riding, the clear round was an amazing feeling. This is my favourite event in the modern pentathlon and I'm very very happy now."

Svoboda was cheered on by a noisy crowd of around 25,000 in the imposing arena at Greenwich Park as he led off the field for the combined running and shooting event, an innovation for this Olympiad along with the introduction of laser pistols.

The athlete told a news conference the new combined event had really changed the sport.

"It's totally different," he said. "Now we are shooting very fast, we don't have to be really near, by the ten.

"We were running together and he (Cao) was shooting nearby to me. I'm left-handed so I saw his mistakes, my mistakes so it is mentally very hard. I was trying to be cool, calm down my mind, I was just focused on my shooting and it worked. I left the last shoot 50 meters behind Cao, from that point I was not going to settle for anything less than gold."

The victory will be popular among fans of the sport who remember how Svoboda's chances of a medal in the Beijing Olympics disappeared with a terrible time in the riding. Four years may have passed, but the memories appear fresh for Svoboda: "That was the key event for me for success. It was a very sad moment for me."

Svoboda, who had earlier equalled the Olympic record in the fencing, started the combined event with a one second head start over Cao after faring better than the Chinese athlete in the show jumping. Cao's shooting was quicker than Svoboda's, but the Czech military officer was far stronger on the testing running course in Greenwich Park.

Marosi, the bronze medalist told the media he thought the combined event had improved the sport.

He said: "For modern pentathlon when the rules changed it was very good because now the competition is very very interesting and the positions change every time. If you stay focused on the shooting area and just look at the target and listen in your heart and in your soul it's perfect."

The much-fancied Russians, Aleksander Lesun and reigning Olympic champion Andrei Moiseev, finished just outside the medals which was the first time a Russian has not won a medal in the men's Olympic event since 1984.

Svoboda said he believed the Russian athletes may have suffered from the national quotas which meant four or five talented Russians have been battling all year to qualify for one of the two places.

He said: "I was concentrating for one race in the year, the Olympics. That's the difference between me and my preparations and the Russians' preparations."

In a day of fierce competition, Amro El Geziry of Egypt had earlier broken the Olympic swimming record. His challenge ended with a weak performance on horseback that included a refusal as well as knock-downs and time penalties.

Nick Woodbridge led Team GB's charge, but could only finish 10th, roared home by the good-natured crowd who supported all the athletes well.

The medals were awarded by UIPM's Honorary President HSH The Sovereign Prince Albert II of Monaco and flowers by UIPM President Dr h.c. Klaus Schormann.

Stay tuned for the Women's Olympic final starting at 8:00 BST.