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WARSAW 2014 - FRANCE ON TOP OF THE WORLD IN THE MEN'S RELAY



A thrilling day of top class competition saw France top the podium in the Men's Relay at the 2014 Modern Pentathlon Championships in Poland.

The Gold Medal pairing of Valentin Prades and Valentin Belaud (FRANCE) triumphed after a day where they experienced mixed fortunes.

After an intensely competitive Fencing event they were involved in a three way tie at the top of the leaderboard - with Belarus and the Czech Republic.

They then fell away in the middle two events of Swimming and Riding, but finished strongly in the Combined Event with a superb display coming from fifth in the table to steal the gold medal from Belarusian duo Raman Pinchuk and Stanislau Zhurauliou (BELARUS) who had led the overall competition after their efforts in the pool.

Delighted the French Gold Medallists said: "It's never easy to win a gold medal, but we had a good Fencing competition which gave us a good start although we were not so good in the swimming.

"We improved in the Riding, but it was definitely the Combined Event that made this a good day for both of us and for the whole French team."

Prades and Belaud (FRA) started their day on good form in a very close Fencing competition which saw them, Raman Pinchuk and Stanislau Zhurauliou (BELARUS) along with Jan Kuf and London 2012 Olympic Champion David Svoboda (CZECH REPUBLIC) all sitting top of the table heading in to the Swimming.

Things quickly changed in the pool though where Pinchuk and Zhurauliou (BLR) recorded a time of 1:48.95 to place seventh in the table, but moving them into first place in the overall competition.

Prades and Belaud (FRA) could only manage an unlucky 13th place while the event was won by Russian pairing of Maksim Kustov and Egor Puchkarevskiy (RUSSIA) putting in the fastest time of 1:44.61 to take maximum points.

The leaderboard was now beginning to take shape as Belarusians Pinchuk and Zhurauliou maintained their lead in the Riding with a fourth place finish, a placing they shared with their French counterparts.

They were being pushed all the way, however, by David Svoboda and Jan Kuf (CZE) and brothers Amro and Omar el Geziry (EGYPT) who after the Riding, where they finished eighth and seventh respectively, sat joint second in the on the overall table.

Brits Thomas Toolis and James Cooke (Great Britain) took first place in the Riding Event.

Unfortunately, the host nation had a poor performance with three refusals and two knock downs which saw them exceed the time limit by 40 seconds and drop down to the bottom of the leaderboard, where they stayed for the remainder of the competition.

With a slim two second advantage at the start of the Combined Event, Pinchuk and Zhurauliou (BLR) set off with Gold in their sights.

They were followed closely by the Czech's and Belarusian's, but it was a superb run from Belaud (FRA) - who had started seven seconds behind Zhurauliou (BLR) - that saw him take the lead which his teammate Prades (FRA) maintained after the changeover to see him cross the line first in a time of 10:18.52.

The Belarusians finished in third place, but still managed to secure the Silver Medal while Korea's Woojin Hwang and Woo Jin Lee (KOREA) made an impressive surge, both up the field and up the table, to take Bronze.

Previous prospective medallists the Czech Republic finished fourth overall with Egypt in ninth.

UIPM President Klaus Schormann said: "All the athletes today can be proud of themselves as can their federations. Like yesterday, the competition was exciting but I feel the atmosphere improved even more and will get better as the World Championships progress."

"The fact that we changed the Relays to have two athletes per team increased the number of teams taking part and it is now a more fair and balanced competition."

Warsaw is the host city of the 54th Senior World Championship in Modern Pentathlon that continues tomorrow with the Semi-Finals of the Women's Individual Competition with a record of attendance of 82 athletes from 29 nations.