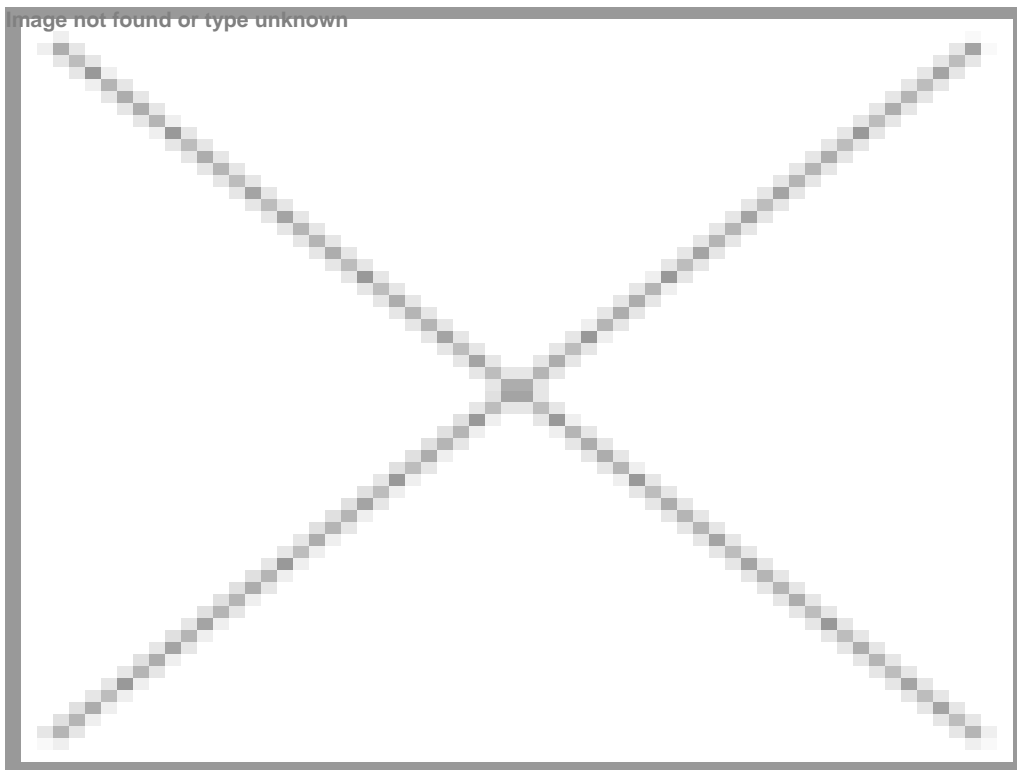


23 FEB 2015

UIPM 2015 WORLD CUP #1 RUSSIA WINS THE GOLD IN THE TEAM MIX RELAY



Russia were the victors in the Team Mix Relay Final on another thrilling final day of the UIPM 2015 World Cup #1 in Sarasota-Bradenton, USA. Aleksander Lesun and Anna Burjak formed a wonderfully balanced partnership in the Sarasota sun achieving the top place of the podium.

The elimination of early pace setters Egypt in the Riding arena, where they mistakenly jumped an obstacle in the wrong direction, saw the Russian duo replaced them going into the Combined Event in first place.

Jubilant Aleksander Lesun hopes the Mixed Relay becomes a permanent fixture in the Olympic Games. He said: I like this event, it is very interesting. It is not in the Olympics yet, but I hope that it could be for the Tokyo Olympics as I would like to see it recognised there."

Irish pentathletes Arthur Lanign-O'keeffe and Natalya Coyle secured silver with a fantastic surge up the table in a thrilling Combined Event which they had started sitting way down in eighth.

Arthur Lanigan O'Keeffe was delighted with the result: "It was pretty great. Kind of unexpected but great. I was waiting for Natalya to come round the corner and I'd heard some seconds before she

was in fourth place, but then she appeared and was in first place and I'm shouting at her to run.

"After that the shooting was good, my legs were a little bit tired but they managed to carry me to the end so I'm really happy."

Third was taken by Canadian duo Melanie McCann and Joshua Riker Fox.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann has been delighted with the high standard of athletes at the competition as well as the work which has gone on behind the scenes. He said: "When you look at the podium in the Mixed Relay we have Russia, Ireland and Canada and this is I think a great advert for the event.

"Ireland, who finish second, came back to our union few years ago and I think this is an important message to countries on how important it is to compete in Mixed Relay.

"We had another big crowd today and there was some really tough running at the finish. There was a lot of drama on show and I think we can all say the competition was very well organised and a complete success.

"The weather was with us, the horses were good and what is important is that we have had a wonderful crowd around us. All the people I have spoken to so far, our guests from the IOC and others, have said this competition was a big success and a great start to the World Cup Series and the UIPM year.

"It is always great to start the season without any complications as it gives a confidence for the other competitions to follow.

"I have to say a huge thank you to the Modern Pentathlon Association of the United States and the Local Organising Committee, Katherine Harris and her team and a big clap for all the volunteers as everybody did the best work they possibly could."

After Great Britain's dominance in the Men's and Women's Individual events, there was no British team amongst the 15 taking part in the Mixed Relay.

Omar El Geziry (EGY) started off well with a strong display in the Fencing along with partner Haydy Morsy (EGY) to give them early control of the leaderboard after the first discipline.

The Egyptians were a good margin ahead of their second placed rivals Jaroslaw Swiderski and Oktawia Nowacka (POL) while Russian duo Aleksander Lesun and Anna Burjak (RUS) sat a comfortable third going into the Swimming.

The Russian's maintained a strong performance in the pool to finish the event in third place leaving them sitting second overall as the competition entered the Riding area.

A strong swim from Japanese duo Hikaru Shimano and Rena Shimazu (JPN) saw them take first place in the Swimming with Arthur Lanigan-O'Keeffe and Natalya Coyle (IRL) of Ireland coming in second.

Despite finishing way down the order in the Swimming Event, Egypt's El Geziry and Morsy (EGY) held on to first place overall as the Riding got underway while Poland's Swiderski and Nowacka (POL) sat third overall.

Disaster struck for the Egyptians hopes of topping the podium in the Riding however as they were eliminated for jumping the obstacle in the wrong way seeing them tumble all the way to the foot of

the leaderboard and out of medal contention.

Russia's Lesun and Burjak (RUS) took over at the top of the table followed by Swiderski and Nowacka (POL) of Poland with Argentina's pairing of Iryna Khoklova and Emanuel Zapata (ARG) emerging as real podium possibilities as the Combined Event of running and shooting got underway.

The Team Mix Relay Combined Event ensured a nail-biting and enthralling finish to the UIPM World Cup #1 for the enthusiastic spectators who watched in awe as a battle over the final meters of the course saw Russia crowned champions followed over the line by Ireland and Canada, who began the event in fourth.

Katherine Harris, President of the Local Organising Committee in Sarasota, thanked the local community for the part they played in ensuring the success of World Cup #1: "I think the entire community and every spectator who turned out was elated and mesmerised by the athletes, the beauty of the sport and they feel they've been enlightened through pentathlon.

"Pentathletes are the most complete athletes around and the opportunity to be able to see these Olympic hopefuls at close quarters was an extraordinary honour."

The 2015 UIPM World Cup series will continue in the next months in Cairo (Egypt), Rome (Italy) and Kecskemet (Hungary), with the Final taking place in Minsk (Belarus) in June.