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UIPM 2015 WORLD CUP #1 – JAMES COOKE TAKES THE GOLD



James Cooke completed a spectacular double for Great Britain as he matched the achievement of Samantha Murray by winning individual Gold at the 2015 UIPM World Cup series in Sarasota, USA.

Cooke's dramatic Men's Individual victory came at the end of a compelling Combined Event in which he overtook the leader, Amro El Geziry of Egypt, with two laps of the course to go – after which he never looked back.

With the Mixed Relay still to come on Sunday, the British team is already to be congratulated on a job well done as the success of Cooke came 24 hours after Murray won the Women's Individual Gold and Kate French picked up Bronze in the same event.

Cooke, 23, already had one World Cup gold medal in his collection after his maiden triumph in Hungary in 2013, but today's success was arguably the most impressive of his career as it allowed him to take the early initiative in terms of qualifying for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

After a long day at the top of the leaderboard, El Geziry, his legs tiring on the sand and grass of

Nathan Benderson Park and his aim wavering, was then overtaken by the Russian duo Egor Puchkarevskiy and Ilia Frolov, who finished strongly behind Cooke to win Silver and Bronze respectively. Egypt's 2014 World Championships silver medallist finished fourth, with Ismael Hernandez (MEX) 5th and Charlie Fernandez (GUA) 6th.

Finishing in Silver medal place was a major breakthrough at senior level for Puchkarevskiy, who is eight years younger than Russian compatriot Frolov at 22, and who was crowned World Junior Champion last year in Drzonkow.

El Geziry (EGY) had been the man to beat for most of the day in Florida. He was 1st alongside Raman Pinchuk (BLR) in the fencing round robin after 23 wins, and claimed the lead for himself in the swimming pool where his 200m time of 1min 58.05sec was not bettered.

The Egyptian stayed in pole position through the fencing bonus round and the riding stage, but El Geziry incurred three faults and that provided encouragement for the chasing pack. It was Cooke (GBR) who best took advantage, and his concession of four penalty points allowed him to go into the Combined Event with a handicap of only four seconds.

Matthias Sandten (GER) was third to start but he was quickly reined in by Puchkarevskiy (RUS), who kept up his momentum right to the finish line. Frolov (RUS) used all of his experience and stamina to reach the podium from a starting berth of 11th.

There was no stopping Cooke, however, who held his nerve with some decisive shooting, and as the sun set over Nathan Benderson Park the champion was warmly applauded on the podium by an appreciative crowd who had packed the stands all day.

“It’s a good start to the year,” said Cooke. “We’ve worked really hard over the winter period, the whole boys’ team and the girls’ team, and I think it has been reflected here because obviously Samantha won yesterday and Kate came third. It was fantastic to get another medal.

“The plan is Rio. You’ve got to take it one step at a time, but it’s really good that it’s going well and I’m just happy with the result.”

Sarasota/Bradenton has once again excelled as a host of world-class Modern Pentathlon, allowing the sport to shine in front of an audience consisting of fans of all ages.

Dr Klaus Schormann, President of the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne, once again praised the Local Organising Committee and USA Pentathlon for putting on such a captivating show.

Speaking at the post-competition press conference, Dr Schormann also hailed the implementation of the Fencing Bonus Round as a valuable addition to the sport’s format due to the increased pressure it places on the pentathletes.

The Mixed Relay brings World Cup #1 to a close on Sunday. The other venues for the 2015 UIPM World Cup series are Cairo (Egypt), Rome (Italy) and Kecskemet (Hungary), with the Final taking place in Minsk (Belarus) in June.