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UIPM 2015 WORLD CUP #2 - RUSLAN NAKONECHNYI TAKES THE GOLD

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CAIRO, 22 MARCH 2015 - RUSLAN Nakonechnyi (LAT) took the field by surprise to be crowned the Men's Individual Champion at the second leg of the UIPM 2015 World Cup Series after another thrilling day of top class Modern Pentathlon action in Cairo, Egypt.

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After a steady display in the first three events of Fencing, Swimming and Riding, the Latvian didn't look to be in contention for a place on the podium.

But he saved his best for the final Combined Event where he wowed the Egyptian crowds with a fantastic performance in the running and shooting to overtake the more fancied athletes and clinch first place.

"I am very happy," said Nakonechnyi. "I thank my family and I thank Cairo and the lovely people of Egypt. A year ago I finished in fifth place and now I am the winner so I am very thankful. I have a new coach and a new team and I thank them too, this is a great result for me and I am delighted."

He was joined on the podium by Jan Kuf (CZE), who took silver, and Belarussian Pavel Tsikhanau (BLR) in third.

Kuf (CZE) was also a surprise package on the podium having come from ninth position to clinch second. He said: "I was really tired in the last leg. It is a good thing I finished second because I can now be more confident for the upcoming competitions and we'll see how it goes. I thought my fencing was average and the rest was too so I am hoping it will be good in the rest of the season now."

Tsikhanau was particularly happy with his display on the day: "It is my first medal in international competition and I am so so happy, but so so tired."

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Pavel Tsikhanau (BLR)

was the early leader at the end

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of the Fencing with 23 wins, with the host country's Omar El Geziry (EGY) putting in a solid performance to take second spot along with Poland's Szymon Staskiewicz (POL) both with 22 wins.

However, the Men's Final was tinged with sadness in the first event when reigning World Champion Aleksander Lesun (RUS) had to retire for the competition with a back injury.

Home advantage very much counted in the pool with World Championships silver medallist Amro El Geziry (EGY) the only pentathlete to swim under the two minute mark.

His time of 1:59.32 saw him take first place in the Swimming although it was brother Omar El Geziry who went first in the overall classification after posting a time of 2:02.26 and a third place finish in the pool.

At this point, Tsikhanau (BLR) dropped to second overall while eventual winner Ruslan Nakonechnyi (LAT) now sat third as his challenge for the title began to mount.

On to the riding and as one of nine pentathletes to achieve the maximum 300 points, Omar El Geziry (EGY) kept his grip on first place, much to the delight of an excited home crowd, to give him a 15 second advantage going in to the final Combined Event.

Early leader Tsikhanau (BLR) was sitting in second place overall, with Bence Demeter (HUN) in third.

The scene was set for what looked to be a straightforward Combined Event, but the crowd was treated to a thrilling climax.

After the first shooting round Demeter's countryman Adam Marosi (HUN) had put himself in contention for a medal, but then Nakonechnyi (LAT) took control.

By the end of the second shooting round and running loop the Latvian had an unassailable lead and it was one he didn't relinquish to claim the gold medal.

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The fight for second and third place on the podium still

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aged however with silver secured by Jan Kuf (CZE) and Belarussian Tsikhanau (BLR) holding off a late challenge from Fabio Poddighe (ITA), Valentin Belaud (FRA) and Riccardo De Luca (ITA), last year's winner in Cairo, to pick up bronze.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann was thrilled with the excitement of the Men's Final and believes it will help Modern Pentathlon prosper as a sport in Egypt.

He said: "Today we had a new winner, a new face from last year and I think it is very good for our movement to have new people, young people coming through to win a World Cup.

"It gives a lot of hope for other people and provides big motivation that not only the star can win, but other young up and coming stars who are rising through the ranks. This is very good for the whole development of our sport.

"Again today we had real drama at the end in the Combined Event, athletes changing positions and I think this is so important for us. The Sports Minister was with us today watching the competition and we are delighted to know we have a strong government behind our sport here in Egypt."

The Mix-Relay closes the programme tomorrow (March 23).

Follow all the action of the this event at www.pentathlon.org, with on the hour updates through Facebook at www.facebook.com/modpen and Twitter at https://twitter.com/UIPM_HQ