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UIPM 2015 WORLD CUP FINAL - RICCARDO DE LUCA WINS IN MINSK



MINSK, BELARUS - Rio and the 2016 Olympics beckon for Riccardo De Luca after the Italian was today crowned Men's Individual World Cup Winner here in Minsk, Belarus.

With so much at stake, and so little between the top male pentathletes heading in to the Final, competition was fierce especially between the top three of Pavlo Tymoshchenko (UKR), Ilia Frolov (RUS) and Valentin Belaud (FRA) with just six points separating first from third in the overall World Cup Men's Rankings.

But in a day of thrilling and dramatic competition on the field, it was the surprise package of Riccardo De Luca (ITA) who triumphed in a spectacular Combined Event to take Gold and guarantee his place at next summer's Olympic Games in Rio.

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e said: "I am very proud of myself. I have

worked very hard and I am getting better all the time and to know that I am not only the World Cup Final Winner, but I have also qualified for the Olympics is such a wonderful feeling.

"I changed some things about my approach to the Combined Event at the start of the season and

now I am better and I had a good competition. I am very very happy."

The much fancied Tymoshchenko (UKR) took Silver and graciously congratulated his rival: "I feel good with second place in such a big competition," said the Ukrainian. "But I am also a little disappointed to miss out on the Olympic qualification as there is only one place up for grabs, but second place is better than other places."

"Riccardo is a good winner, he is strong and ran very well. I was hoping to make him nervous in the Shooting and make some ground up on him before the Running, but once he started the final running loop I knew I wasn't going to be able to catch him. Congratulations to him though."

Third place and bronze went to Kazakhstan's Pavel Ilyashenko (KAZ).

With 23 wins each, four athletes - Riccardo de Luca (ITA), Pavlo Tymoshchenko (UKR), Ilia Frolov (RUS) and Szymon Staskiewicz (POL) - were awarded 232 points apiece in the opening event of Fencing.

It was Italian de Luca (ITA) who clinched first place overall, however, followed by Staskiewicz (POL) then Tymoshchenko (RUS).

Into the Pool and the Leaderboard took on a very different complexion.

Strong swims from Egyptian Amro el Geziry (EGY) and Brit James Cooke (GBR) in times of 1:56.40 and 1:56.46 respectively saw them take joint first in the event and catapult Egyptian el Geziry (EGY) up to first on the Leaderboard.

It turned out to be a good Swimming round for the Brits as Cooke's countryman Joseph Evans (GBR) finishing third in the pool in a time of 1:59.28.

Despite a good display in the Fencing, De Luca (ITA) had a disappointing swim with a time of 2:09.38 to see him drop to sixth overall.

Tymoshchenko (UKR) however moved into third on the table despite a similarly poor time of 2:08.53, but Poland's Michal Gralewski (POL) leapfrogged from sixth to second finishing the event fourth in a time of 1:59.54.

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Into the Riding Arena and a solid round and shared third

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place finish from Egyptian el Geziry (EGY) saw him remain in pole position over all with a sizeable 21 second start over his nearest rivals.

Behind the Egyptian, the pre-WCF favourites re-emerged as contenders.

Tymoshchenko (UKR) finished second to also secure him second place on the overall leaderboard giving him a narrow three second start over Da Luca (ITA) as the final Combined Event got underway.

Italy's De Luca (ITA) took first place in the Riding to move back up the table to third and very much into the running for overall glory.

Russia's Frolov (RUS), sitting fourth overall, was just five seconds behind Italian da Luca followed even more closely by Jung Jinhwa (KOR) and Staskiewicz (POL) in what was set to be a thrilling final event.

The real drama unfolded in the final moments of the Combined Event with De Luca (ITA) and Tymoshchenko (UKR) neck and neck and neck going into the final Running loop.

It was the Italian who persevered with his strength and determination taking him across the line first to secure Gold and a place at the biggest sporting spectacular of them all - the Olympic Games.

After another thrilling day of breathtaking competition, UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "The Men's World Cup Final was so dramatic at the end. We could see how strong and competitive both the Ukrainian and Italian athletes were as well as those chasing them. It was a real fight to the end and an absolutely excellent finish.

"The competition went very well overall - there was a little bit of a time delay which I have to mention, but I think it will be better tomorrow. The weather in the morning wasn't great as we had a thunderstorm and heavy rain, but thankfully when it came to the Riding and Combined Event we had blue skies and sunshine so the spectators came out in their numbers to watch which was fantastic for the athletes.

"We have finished the Men's World Cup Final with a top winner as Riccardo is a great athlete and I imagine he will be very happy at securing his spot in Rio. We look forward now to the Women's event tomorrow."

The next event at the WCF is the Women's Individual tomorrow. Follow all the action of this UIPM 2015 World Cup Final with our live results and live streaming of the Women's Individual Competition at www.pentathlon.org, our updates through Facebook at www.facebook.com/modpen and Twitter at https://twitter.com/UIPM_HQ