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UIPM 2016 WORLD CUP FINAL: COOKE CLEARS A PATH TO GLORY IN FLORIDA

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James Cooke of Great Britain has confirmed his status as a serious contender for Modern Pentathlon's biggest prizes with the highlight achievement of his career: individual gold at the 2016 UIPM World Cup Final. Cooke, 25, built on his victory at World Cup #4 in Kecskemet a few weeks ago and the gold medal he won at World Cup #1 in Sarasota last year to prevail with a display of self-assurance, control and intent. He stayed in contention all day, lurking behind the leaders and pouncing when he saw his chance. It was a truly impressive performance. "It was the World Cup Final, there were big Olympic qualifying points on offer and everyone was fighting for them, and I know myself that the pressure was there. Fortunately, other people were feeling the pressure in the shooting as I was, so that was good. "To be honest, I just came here for points. Obviously winning is quite good and it's maximum points, but the points is all we were focused on. "For me, it's brilliant that I've got a World Cup win and a World Cup Final win. The focus has to be Rio, because that's the pinnacle of our sport and it's every four years, but next it's the World Championships and everything feels pretty good at the moment." For most of this Final it seemed that the prospect of a European 1-2-3 was highly improbable, because the duel for gold was mainly involving an African and an Asian athlete. But the composure and stamina demonstrated by Cooke (GBR) in the Combined Event was matched by Patrick Dogue (GER), who claimed silver,

and Valentin Prades (FRA) who took bronze. "I'm feeling very, very good because this was a really important competition for me and I feel I'm one step closer to the Olympics," said Dogue (GER) after an excellent Run/Shoot where he overcame a 33-second deficit on the leader. "I was so nervous before the Combined. But this gives me a real boost ahead of the Olympics. I hope this will not be a one-hit wonder, and I can get the same result in the next competition." The overnight leader was Guo Jianli (CHN), who won 24 of his 35 bouts in the Fencing Ranking Round, but Amro El Geziry (EGY) was sitting poised with 22 wins and his prowess in the pool saw him take the lead after today's first event. Swimming is the world No.2's strongest discipline and true to form he won the fastest heat, eventually with some comfort. El Geziry (EGY, 1:57.62) and Cooke (GBR, 1:58.76) were the only athletes to go under 2mins. In the Fencing Bonus Round, Mikalai Hayanouski (BLR) gained six precious points with a strong run that was stopped in the end by Amro El Geziry (EGY). Zillekens (GER) was the last man standing after defeating Guo (CHN) in the final bout with a neat hit to the wrist. At this point there were two athletes out in front: Amro El Geziry (EGY) and Guo (CHN), and it was the latter who ended the Riding stage in top spot. Guo (CHN) had a relatively smooth ride, incurring 11 penalty points, but his rival had a much more awkward experience on horseback and seemed fortunate to escape with a concession of just 21. After that, Guo (CHN) carried a 9-second lead into the Combined Event with Cooke (GBR) only 2secs behind El Geziry (EGY) and Hayanouski (BLR) and Hwang Woojin (KOR) also within 20secs of the leader. The order was maintained for the first half of the Combined Event, until the 3rd Shooting series when Cooke (GBR) seized control. As Guo (CHN) stuttered with gun in hand, taking 26secs to score his five shots, the British athlete moved into the lead and never looked back. His final series took him just 11secs and that was when it became clear that gold was his. Behind him, the chasing pack suddenly closed in on Guo (CHN) and El Geziry (EGY) and Dogue (GER) used his shooting prowess to sneak ahead of Prades (FRA) and stretch away with his long stride. Behind them, Maksim Kustov (RUS) finished 4th, one place ahead of Guo (CHN) and Marosi (HUN) in a bunch sprint finish. Afterwards, 7th-placed Nathan Schrimsher (USA) was awarded the John Holland Memorial Award alongside Tamara Vega (MEX), who finished 10th in the Women's Final. The duo were recognised as the top-performing Pan-American athletes. UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Again we have a great winner, Mr Cooke from Great Britain, and it was so exciting for the supporters here today to see positions changing and to see athletes in all positions fight so hard for Olympic qualifying places in Rio. Compliments go to all of them." The World Cup Final concludes with the Mixed Relay on Sunday, May 8. The Combined Event will be available to watch live on uipmtv.org, where you can also see highlights from all recent competitions, while a full live results service is provided on pentathlon.org.

2016 UIPM World Cup Final, Sarasota, USA Men's Individual Final Final Standings: 1 COOKE James GBR 1480 2 DOGUE Patrick GER 1476 3 PRADES Valentin FRA 1473 4 KUSTOV Maksim RUS 1469 5 GUO Jianli CHN 1468 6 MAROSI Adam HUN 1467 7 SCHRIMSHER Nathan USA 1465 8 HAYANOUSKI Mikalai BLR 1462 9 HERNANDEZ USCANGA Ismael MEX 1460 10 EL GEZIRY Amro EGY 1455 11 PAVLYUK Denys UKR 1451 12 EL GEZIRY Omar EGY 1450 13 KINDERIS Justinas LTU 1450 14 JUNG Jinhwa KOR 1449 15 BELAUD Valentin FRA 1447 16 ILYASHENKO Pavel KAZ 1447 17 ZILLEKENS Christian GER 1435 18 FERNANDEZ Charles GUA 1435 19 PATTE Christopher FRA 1433 20 STASIAK Sebastian POL 1428 21 PETRONI Pierpaolo ITA 1426 22 DEMETER Bence HUN 1408 23 SANDOVAL Alvaro MEX 1407 24 JUN Woongtae KOR 1405 25 TYMOSHCHENKO Pavlo UKR 1405 26 HWANG Woojin KOR 1394 27 SCHRIMSHER Lucas USA 1385 28 HAN Jiahao CHN 1385 29 KASZA Robert HUN 1382 30 INZUNZA Jorge MEX 1364 31 KOLLNER Stefan GER 1278 32 NAKONECHNYI Ruslan LAT 1273 33 POLIVKA Ondrej CZE 1257 34 FRANCESCHINI Auro ITA 1249 35 FEDECHKO Andriy UKR 1213 36 HEFNY Yasser EGY 553

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