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UIPM 2016 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS – GERMANS RIP UP RUSSIAN BID FOR GLORY

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The sight of Lena Schoeneborn breaking the tape at the finish line has become an increasingly familiar sight this season and Germany's world No.1 scored another gold for her country on day one of the UIPM World Championships.

Schoeneborn and Annika Schleu (GER) performed with clinical conviction in the Combined Event of the Women's Relay to win gold and push host nation Russia out of the medals.

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Russia (Anastasia Petrova/Sofia Serkina) ended up in 4th after leading the race for much of the day and entering the Combined Event with a 32-second advantage.

The home team's shooting let them down badly and Serkina (RUS) was disconsolate afterwards, having enjoyed loud support from a crowd in the Olympic Stadium.

That show of emotion contrasted with the joy of all six medallists, as Great Britain (Samantha Murray/Joanna Muir) savoured their silver and Belarus (Katsiaryna Arol/Iryna Prasiantsova) their bronze. But it was apparent throughout the Run/Shoot that Germany's top-ranked duo had the greatest firepower and the ability to perform under pressure.

This success made it five international gold medals already this year for Schoeneborn (GER), the 2008 Olympic champion who will aim to defend her individual world title on Friday. She came to Moscow fresh from triumphing in the 2016 UIPM World Cup Final in Sarasota (USA), so it was no surprise to see her winning smile reappear in the Russian capital.

In fact the only surprise was that Germany entered the Combined Event needing to make up a 40-second deficit on the leaders Russia.

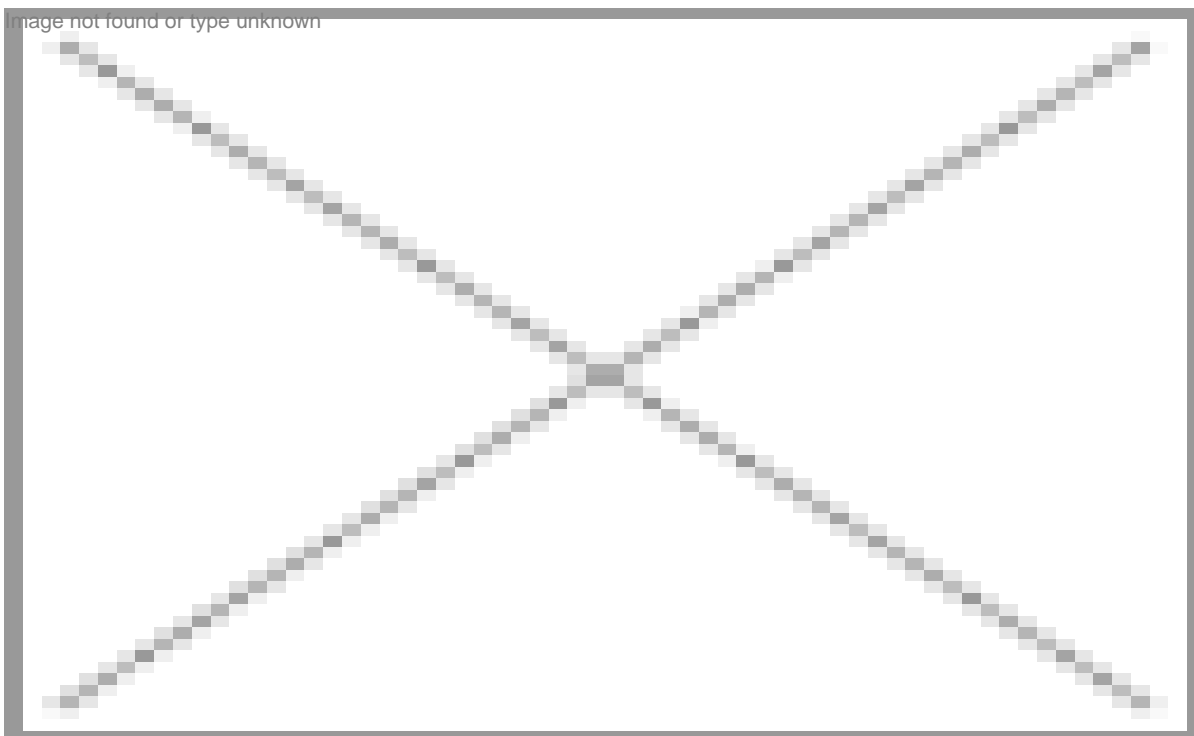
"Our Swim was OK, and we are used to the Fencing in the Relay going like this sometimes, but we knew we had a strong Combined," said the world No.1.

"Annika got us into a good position and I only had to keep it."

Schleu (GER), currently ranked No.6 in the individual rankings, added: "I think we knew it was possible to get a medal and it was our goal to get a medal. But in Modern Pentathlon, anything can happen.

"The Fencing is sometimes weird and so is the Riding, but as you saw in the end, everything can be pretty close. We really wanted to win a medal."

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It was a

tough assignment for the Russian team to take on some of the sport's leading lights in front of an expectant home crowd: Petrova is 22 and Serkina only 20, and neither is ranked in the top 100. So it was a very accomplished performance from the young duo across three events.

Russia (Petrova/Serkina) came first in Swimming, ahead of Great Britain (Murray/Muir) and Germany (Schoeneborn/Schleu).

The hosts continued to set the standard in Fencing, winning the Ranking Round ahead of Italy (Lavinia Bonessio & Alessandra Frezza) and Belarus (Arol/Prasiantsova) and also the Bonus Round.

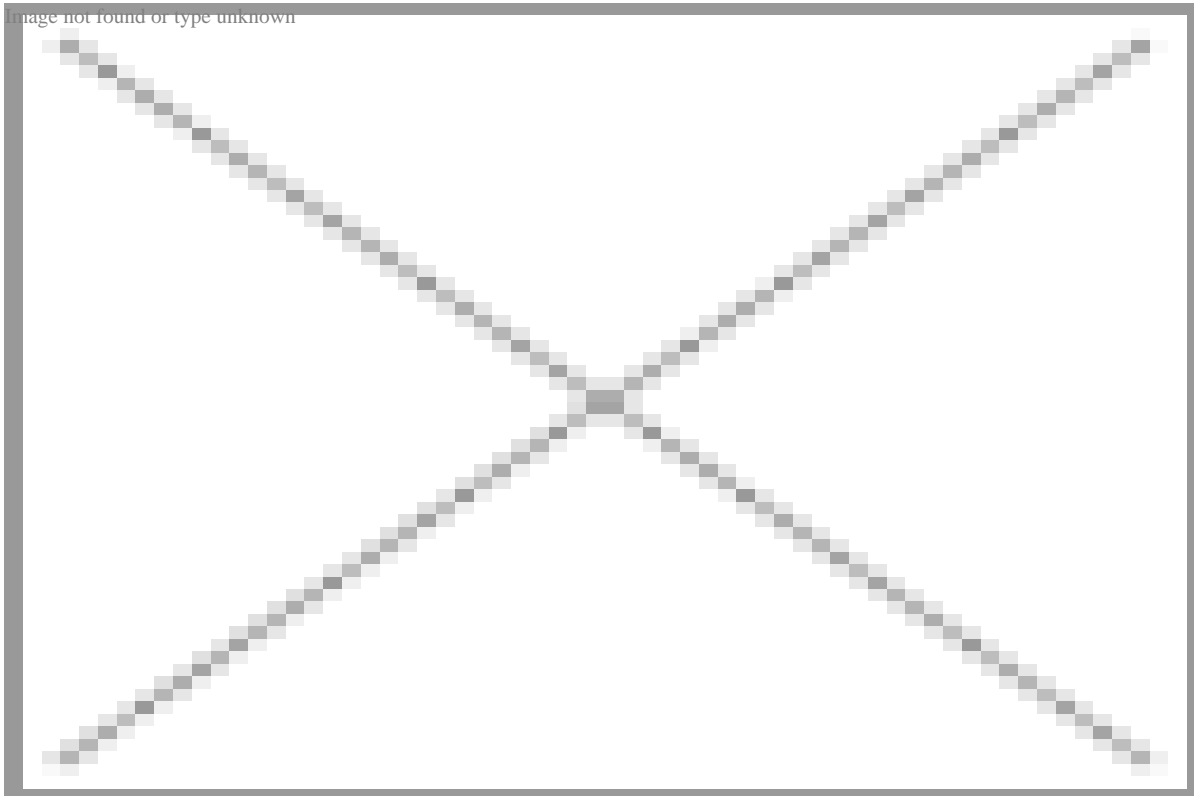
Three of the seven competing nations Great Britain (Murray/Muir), Germany (Schoeneborn/Schleu) and Korea (Yang Soo Jin & Kim Sunwoo) enjoyed maximum Riding points while Russia (Petrova/Serkina) maintained a strong advantage by incurring only 10 penalty points on horseback.

The hosts had a 32-second cushion in the Combined Event, but from the outset Petrova was slow to land her shots and the British and German teams sensed their chance. Petrova managed to maintain a slight lead at the halfway mark but Serkina (RUS) froze and was easily swallowed up by Schoeneborn (GER) at the 3rd Shoot and the world No.1 was never going to relinquish her advantage.

Behind her, Murray (GBR), a former Olympic silver medallist and world champion, built on good work by Muir (GBR) to take an equally strong grip on silver and Belarus (Arol/Prasiantsova) overturned a starting handicap of 1:02 to give their country a place on the podium at the expense of the host nation.

In the end, Serkina (RUS) summoned the determination to fight off Bonessio (ITA) to finish 4th but her dejection at the finish line was plain to see. The Russian duo had a tantalising glimpse of gold only to end up with nothing, emphasising the drama and unpredictability of this sport even at the highest level.

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Schormann, UIPM President said: "After a very exciting Opening Ceremony with culture and typical music and ballet dancing and the presentation of Olympic champions of Russia, we had a great Women's Relay competition and you could see that several nations had presented their best athletes.

"We saw good performances from the start and Germany won, so as a German I am happy about that. But I wish all nations the very best for the Men's Relay tomorrow and for the rest of the week.

"This facility is unique, with only the swimming happening outside the venue, and to be under one roof with all the disciplines is what we want to achieve in the future for our sport."

Automatic qualification for the 2016 Olympic Games is available for the top three finishers in the men's and women's individual events this week.

The action continues on Tuesday, April 24 with the Men's Relay and concludes on Sunday, April 29 with the Mixed Relay. The individual finals take place on Friday, April 27 (women) and Saturday, April 28 (men).

The Combined Event of all finals will be available to watch via live stream at UIPMTV.org while a full results service will be available at pentathlon.org.

Tomorrow the stream will begin at 5.25pm local time (3.25pm CET).