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UIPM 2018 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP SOFIA: FRENCH (GBR) SAVOURS SECOND GOLD MEDAL



Kate French of **Great Britain** secured her second UIPM Pentathlon World Cup gold medal with a superb performance at Pentathlon World Cup Sofia.

French (GBR) started the Laser-Run 10sec behind the leader, **Natalya Coyle** of **Ireland**, but showed stamina and nerves of steel to overtake her rival and make sure she was never going to be caught.

Coyle (IRL) refused to be fazed and held on to secure silver, her first-ever individual World Cup medal, and another first-time medallist followed her across the line after an intriguing battle for bronze.

It was **Uliana Batashova** of **Russia** who secured 3rd place after refusing to bow to pressure from the Olympic champion, **Chloe Esposito** of **Australia**, who finished 4th ahead of **Tamara Vega** of **Mexico** (5th) and **Ilke Ozyuksel** of **Turkey** (6th).

As she savoured the second major title of her career, having enjoyed her maiden success at 2017 Pentathlon World

Cup Cairo, **French (GBR)** said: "I'm very, very happy. I had a bit of a break at the end of last season so to be able to come back and do that, I'm over the moon."

Coyle (IRL) added: "It was a really good day, I swam 2sec better than in qualifying, so that was great and then I fenced really well."



"That set me up and I was a bit nervous for the

Riding because it didn't go very well in Los Angeles, but I only had some time penalties and that was great.

"That put me 1st in the Laser-Run and I ended up 2nd, so I am delighted. I've never won a senior individual medal before. Now I get to have a rest tomorrow while Arthur [Lanigan-O'Keeffe] competes in the Men's Final and I can't wait for the Mixed Relay."

Swimming

Three athletes – **Esposito (AUS, 2:11.58)**, **Elodie Clouvel of France (2:11.69)** and **Samantha Murray (GBR, 2:11.85)** – each came away with 287 points after some incredibly competitive racing in the pool.

Bian Yufei of China, **Zsafia Foldhazi of Hungary** and **Ieva Serapinaite of Lithuania** also swam strongly.

Fencing

The balance of the competition shifted significantly on the piste, and it was the eventual medallists who moved into the ascendancy with some high-class Fencing.



Coyle (IRL) was top performer on the day with an excellent return of 27V/8D, while **French (GBR)** managed 26V/9D and added two bonus points.

Marie Oteiza (FRA) joined **Vega (MEX)**, **Volha Silkina** of **Belarus** and **Kim Sunwoo** of **Korea** on 22V/13D, while **Esposito (AUS)** added five bonus points after struggling in the Ranking Round with 16V/19D.

Riding

There were no maximum scores in the Riding arena but 10 riders came within 10 points of perfection, and overall pace-setters **Coyle (IRL, 293)** and **French (GBR, 294)** were among them, making sure they would be among the first starters in Laser-Run.



Other riders who put themselves in overall contention with a solid ride were **Batashova (RUS, 295)**, **Oteiza (FRA, 295)**, **Ozyuksel (TUR, 293)** and **Vega (MEX, 293)**.

Rio 2016 Olympic silver medallist **Clouvel (FRA)** picked up 29 penalties during Riding and was unable due to injury to finish the competition.

Laser-Run

Coyle (IRL) started with a 10sec advantage over **French (GBR)** and protected her advantage through the first two circuits. **Oteiza (FRA)** had set off in 3rd position but she was immediately swallowed up by **Vega (MEX)** and **Batashova (RUS)** who made an early dash for the podium.

Another athlete showing intent was Esposito (AUS), who had started 10th but soon moved up to 5th.

The 3rd visit to the shooting range was the moment the initiative changed hands, as **French (GBR)** took advantage of a sticky shoot by **Coyle (IRL)** to move into pole position. Thereafter the main excitement surrounded the battle for bronze, which seemed destined to be settled by the Olympic champion after her impressive win at World Cup Kecksemet.



To the crowd's surprise, however, **Esposito** (

AUS) failed to produce her usual accuracy on the final shoot and it was **Batashova (RUS)** who kept her nerves under control to move into a podium position with a sub-10sec shoot. Right to the line the top three defended their positions well and were rewarded with the glittering prizes in this final outing before the Pentathlon World Cup Final in Astana (KAZ) in June.

The fastest Laser-Runner on the day was **Gintare Venckauskaite (LTU)**, who timed an impressive 11:47.93 to finish 23rd and end a difficult day on a high.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "It was a very high-level final and we could see that younger athletes are coming more and more to the top level, with the Olympic champion trying to get to the podium and finishing in 4th place.

"This gives us a lot of encouragement for the future, especially for the next two years with the Olympic qualification for Tokyo 2020.

"I thank all the athletes and the organisers, too - the impressive venue here at the university campus in Sofia has underlined the capacity of the National Federation here in Bulgaria."

Andrey Kuzmanov, President of the Bulgarian Modern Pentathlon Federation, said: "It was an excellent final, an excellent first day. I hope the next two days of this competition will be at the



same very high standard.

"Of course I would love to see our Bulgarian athlete Dimitar Krastanov competing well alongside the other pentathletes."

Pentathlon World Cup Sofia continues on 26 May with the Men's Individual Final and concludes on 27 May with the Mixed Relay.

Live stream of the finals is available on UIPM TV and up-to-date results of all competitions are available at the UIPM website.