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UIPM 2016 WORLD CUP #1 - ITALIAN DUO CRUISED TO VICTORY



CAIRO - Italy claimed the first Mixed Relay gold medal of the 2016 UIPM World Cup series after an outstanding performance by Lavinia Bonessio and Auro Franceschini.

The Italians were in front with an unassailable lead for much of the day, and Mexico (Tamara Vega & Jorge Camacho) battled all the way to the line to secure silver ahead of bronze medallists Kazakhstan (Elena Potapenko & Vladislav Sukharev).

As the sun set on a terrific start to the elite Modern Pentathlon season in Cairo, Lavinia Bonessio and Auro Franceschini (ITA) said after receiving her gold medal: "We are very happy with the competition today. All the way through qualifying our Fencing was bad but today we won the Fencing, which was a fantastic result and it allowed us to get the gold medal."

Tamara Vega (MEX) added: "I am so happy and I think I can speak for Jorge and me and all of the team because Mexico now has a great team with lots of young athletes with a lot of talent."

"That speaks of the hard work that we have all put in, and I hope in Rio de Janeiro at the Olympic Games we can repeat this achievement."

In the pool, Kazakhstan was fastest with the only sub-two-minute time, but Italy was ranked second.

Bonessio & Franceschini (ITA) were particularly hard to beat on the Fencing piste as they marched through the Ranking Round with a superb record of 25-7. Italy also won the Bonus Round, as Bonessio held off Vega (MEX) in a tiebreaker.

As the teams headed to the Riding arena it was clear that Bonessio & Franceschini (ITA) were going to be hard to catch.

On horseback, only two teams managed clear rounds: Argentina (Ayelen Zapata & Leandro Silva) and Egypt (Reem Yakout & Sherif Nazeir), with Kazakhstan incurring only one penalty point which allowed them to go into the Combined Event in second place.

With Italy so far ahead, Bonessio & Franceschini were relaxed and efficient at the Shooting range and the real drama surrounded the battle for silver. Vega & Camacho (MEX) showed a lot of determination and composure to overtake Potapenko & Sukharev (KAZ) and consign them to bronze.

Guatemala (Isabel Brand & Jorge Imeri) finished 4th, Argentina 5th and host nation Egypt 6th.

Sherif El-Erian, President of the Egyptian MP Federation, said after the Medal Ceremony: "I feel very glad that UIPM has given us the honour of hosting a World Cup again and I think it was a wonderful World Cup.

"It was especially wonderful for us to at last have one of our own athletes, Amro El Geziry, on top of the podium and to hear our national anthem.

"You could see that the crowd were very happy to experience this and I thought it was a wonderful World Cup. The weather was perfect, the horses were very good, there was no trauma in anything and it was an exciting event so I am very happy."

Also today, UIPM advanced the credentials of Modern Pentathlon as a potential Paralympic sport as Cairo hosted the second official Para-Pentathlon Test Event, which doubled as Egypt's first Para-Pentathlon National Competition.

A 14-strong local team took part in Swimming, Fencing and Combined Event after three months of intensive training. The winners and other medalists were awarded their prizes at the official World Cup awards ceremony.

Sherif El-Erian said: "We are very happy to be the second nation to host a Para-Pentathlon Test Event.

"We formed the team straight after the first test in Argentina in September last year. Our national team consists of 10 girls and four boys and we are working to prepare more disabled athletes in Egypt to participate in Para-Pentathlon.

"I am very happy that we could host together with the World Cup the first ever national competition of Para-Pentathlon."

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann added: "The Para-Pentathlon competition is very important for us and today we made was another big step after the first event in Argentina.

"I am so thankful to my UIPM staff and the organisers of this event for what they have achieved with this group. Looking at the faces of the parents and the competitors, I think they were very happy and proud and I think we are going about this the right way."

The series resumes with World Cup 2 in Rio de Janeiro (March 7-13), which will double as an official Test Event for the 2016 Olympic Games.

Stay tuned to the main UIPM site (pentathlon.org) for news and visit our new dedicated TV site (uipmtv.org) to watch highlights of World Cup 1.