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UIPM 2026 PENTATHLON JUNIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS: BRILLIANT BOVENZI (ITA) BREAKS THROUGH FOR GOLD IN MEN'S FINAL



Matteo Bovenzi of **Italy** began his afternoon in Kaunas (LTU) by taking a selfie as he strode out on to the Fencing piste. He ended it being the subject of so many more photographs as the 21-year-old broke through in spectacular fashion for the first major prize of his career, claiming Men's gold at the UIPM 2026 Pentathlon Junior World Championships.

Mere hours after **Malgorzata Karbownik** of **Poland** had impressed in winning the Women's Final with an eight-second lead on the field, Bovenzi (ITA) blitzed his rivals by 12 seconds with a final tally of 1608 points thanks to another breath-taking Swimming performance and remarkable consistency.

The charismatic Bovenzi (ITA) belted out the Italian national anthem from the top step of the podium. Below him was **Danylo Sych** of **Ukraine** who repeated his feat from 2025 as he again

claimed a World Junior silver medal. **Mohamed Hassan** of **Egypt** tried to sprint hard in an exciting Laser Run finale to haul in Sych (UKR) but settled for bronze.

Sebastien Forrest of **Great Britain** finished fourth, three seconds ahead of **Dan Vorlicek** of **Czechia** with **Botond Tamas** of **Hungary** rounding out the top six.

Vorlicek's efforts were enough to help **Czechia** to team bronze with **Egypt** claiming silver and gold going to **Ukraine**.



MEDALLIST REACTION

Gold medalist Bovenzi (ITA) said: "I mean, honestly, I still can't believe it. It feels insane. I've been wishing for this for so many years. Finally, it's come true. Some things can be perfected but it's five disciplines, everything can't be perfect. Overall, it's an insane race. I've been having some issues with some shooting lately, even yesterday. The nerves can get to you in the first one. Starting first, that advantage, I managed to keep it cool and collected today. Just amazing!"

Silver medalist Sych (UKR) said: "Today I think the best was my Fencing. It's a really amazing competition and my last year at Junior World Championships and for me — it's a very important medal. I want to thank my coaches, my team, my family for all of their support."

Bronze medalist Hassan (EGY) said: "I don't have many words to say but I'm so grateful and happy. I have a lot of feelings because my qualification wasn't the best. Today it was a hard day mentally before physically, I had to focus on shooting a lot. I wouldn't be on the podium without shooting well. I had talked with my dad and mental coach and we said we need to forget yesterday and just be here and now. Today is a new day. Everything went fine. Lesson learned. I wouldn't have been here without them."

Fencing

Liutauras Valeika of **Lithuania** had ensured the energy and excitement started at a high pitch with a prolific run to secure the third seed. He would raise it all again in Direct Elimination with a brilliant performance on the piste.

First, Valeika (LTU) knocked off **Alessandro Boero** (ITA) with a composed 4-2 victory but really brought the drama with a gripping victory over medal rival Bovenzi (ITA) in the Top 8 when the decisive strike arrived with less than three seconds to go.

The afternoon surge had come from **Oleg Rybak** (UKR) who began ranked 15th of the 18 finalists but then knocked off **Jed Collins** of **Ireland**, **Yusei Takano** of **Japan** and most impressively second seed Ernest Burgot of France to join compatriot Sych (UKR) in the Top 4.

Having used his priority to account for Bovenzi (ITA) on a 3-3 scoreline, Valeika (LTU) repeated the trick in the Top 4, progressing past Rybak (UKR) thanks to a stubborn 3-3. He was joined in the final by top seed Sych (UKR) who accounted for Hassan with a stellar 5-3 win. Valeika (LTU) would flip that scoreline on Sych (UKR) to come out on top and claim the 250 points and he was duly saluted by his home crowd.

Obstacle

Collins (IRL) had turned heads with his dynamic Obstacle performance in the Semi-finals and was fast again, clocking a 22.68sec but gave a signal of what was to come with a late wobble on the swinging globes. Only two finalists would go quicker: Hassan (EGY) fastest of all in a blistering 21.15 and Forrest (GBR) catapulting up the leaderboard with 21.78.

Bovenzi (ITA) kept up his gold medal hunt, looking smooth in the day's fourth-fastest time, 23.40. But behind him there would be much drama when Rybak (UKR) was penalised on the penultimate obstacle before labouring to a finish of 58.35 while Boero (ITA), Brugot (FRA) and **Kivanc Tasyaran** of **Türkiye** were all eliminated on the swinging globes.

Swimming

Bovenzi's challenge was already looking solid but given his prowess in the pool, his rivals would have been fearing the worst as the action moved on to the third discipline.

Already holding multiple world records in Swimming, Bovenzi (ITA) would actually be nearly a second off his Semi-finals time as he clocked 52.13sec. However that was still over 2sec faster than any other contender, Tamas (HUN), second-fastest in 54.45 with Vorlicek (CZE) next in 55.46.



Laser Run

His swimming skills were more than enough to propel Bovenzi to the top of the leaderboard and he would enjoy a 12-second head-start over Hassan (EGY) to begin the decisive Laser Run. Sych (UKR) was a further 13 seconds back with Forrest (GBR), Vorlicek (CZE) and Valeika (LTU) the only others within striking distance of the front-runner.

For any to have a hope, however, they would need Bovenzi (ITA) to falter. In a near-faultless display of running and shooting, the 21-year-old barely showed a flicker of a nerve.

While he had claimed Team and Relay medals at UIPM and continental European events in his career to date, by far the biggest prize of Bovenzi's sporting life lay ahead and he surged to glory. A sparkling first couple of visits to the range, putting up five green lights in just 7.07sec on his second shoot, laid the groundwork.

Behind him, Hassan (EGY) was running hard but then found peril on his second shoot, the fifth target a tricky one as he clocked 26.87. That allowed Sych (UKR) to close the gap with Forrest (GBR) and Tamas (HUN) lurking just a little.

When Forrest (GBR) struggled to 30.19 on his third shoot, the top three on the podium looked locked in, just the placings to be confirmed. Sych (UKR) overtook Hassan (EGY) and ran hard and true towards silver.

Ahead of him, Bovenzi was savouring a performance of his young lifetime. Fully 20 metres from the finishing line he looked behind him and the tears began to flow.

European Junior champion Rybak (UKR) put in the fastest Laser Run time of the day in 10:08.26 and there was a hugely impressive run from **Nikolaos Papadimitriou** of **Greece** who was second-fastest in 10:09.78, good enough for him to clinch a top-8 finish.

Watch and follow

The UIPM 2026 Pentathlon Junior & U17 World Championships take place from July 23-29. The remaining schedule is as follows:

Tuesday July 28

- **U17** Women's Final
- **Junior** Women's Relay & Men's Relay

Wednesday July 29

- **U17** Mixed Relay
- **Junior** Mixed Relay

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