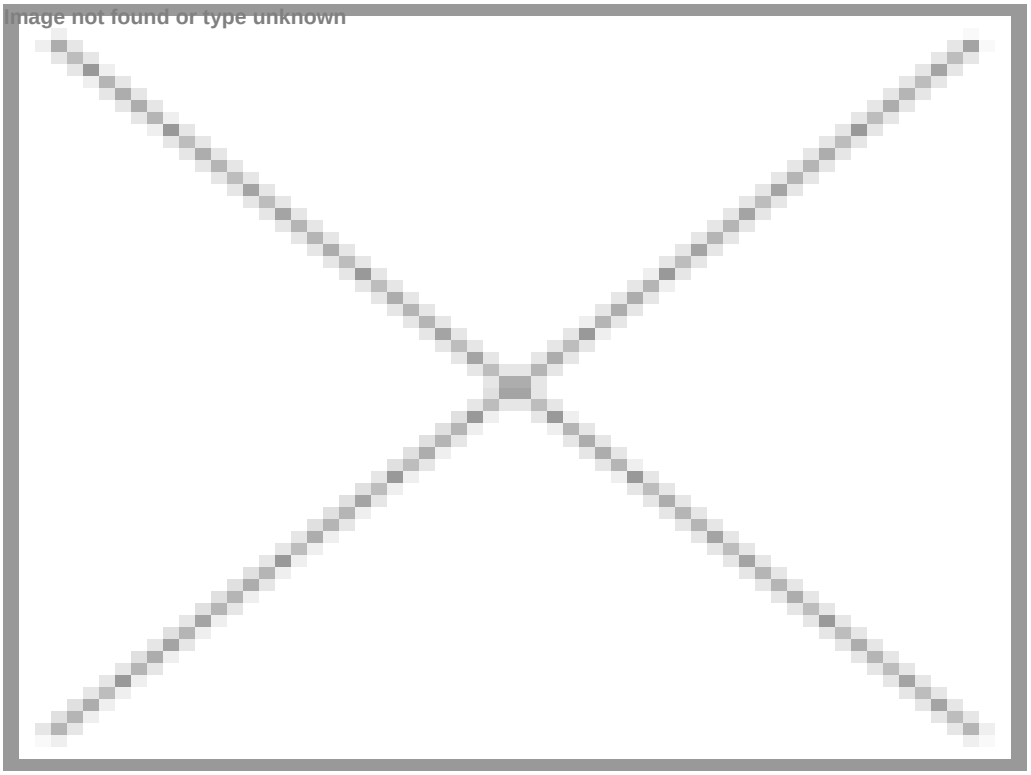
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SPORTACCORD PRESIDENT: LASER-RUN IS ‘A NATURAL FIT’ FOR URBAN GAMES



One of the most influential figures in international sports governance has given a glowing endorsement of UIPM’s youngest sport, Laser-Run.

The President of SportAccord, Patrick Baumann, believes that Laser-Run is “a natural fit” for his vision of the future of the Urban Games.

The sport was conceived in 2015 and UIPM has already staged two successful World Championships, in Perpignan (FRA) and Lisbon (POR). The latter competition attracted 421 athletes from 22 countries, aged from under-11 to over-60, and the 2017 version will take place in Cape Town (RSA).

The brand awareness of Laser-Run is also growing, and the 68th UIPM Congress in November 2016 approved the incorporation of the terminology into Modern Pentathlon and Tetrathlon. Laser-Run has thus replaced Combined Event as the official terminology for the run/shoot event.

Speaking during a gala dinner at the conclusion of UIPM Congress in Frankfurt (GER), Patrick Baumann told pentathlon.org that he sees Laser-Run as exactly the kind of urban-friendly, youth-friendly sporting experience that his organisation exists to promote.

When the Urban Games is revived, said Mr Baumann – it is currently the subject of a working group seeking to turn it into a manageable proposition with a sustainable future – it will be time for Laser-Run to be given serious consideration as a part of the programme.

“It’s fair to say that Laser-Run is a concept with a lot of future potential and one that is very accessible,” said Mr Baumann, who is also an IOC Member and Secretary General of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA).

“I haven’t seen Laser-Run in isolation yet but from watching the big Modern Pentathlon events I understand the concept and I believe it has been successful as a sport in its own right and is already really mature.

“For an organiser, you don’t have to think about horse riding, swimming and fencing, so I think the Laser-Run is probably a very simple way to get to people. You can bring it to people and you can do that in a very innovative way.

“We have a working group that is considering what is the core of an Urban Games, and what is necessary to make it sustainable? Sustainable means that we will have hosts without difficulties and it’s not going to be an impossible task to find hosts for the Urban Games.

“We also need to include new innovations, because it’s not about just sticking with the status quo. We need to find novelties that could help, by bringing added value, but also that work on their own as a standalone thing.

“When you look at marathon, and triathlon – as long as there is water it can take place in a city – I think Laser-Run is a very simple addition to that mix. It just fits, so it’s quite natural.”

Laser-Run has many unique selling points. It has the potential to take place in any urban space, even without the need for water. It can be easily transported to parkland, beach or stadium venues. What makes it even more special among Olympic sports is the fact it stretches outside the traditional athletic audience and crosses over into the vast consumer group of gaming.

Running and shooting with harmless, environmentally friendly laser pistols is a marriage made in heaven in terms of bringing sport and youth recreation together.

So how will this concept fit in with Mr Baumann’s vision for the Urban Games?

“In the past they had more than 15 sports in the Urban Games, more than 2,300 athletes – it was run over 10 days with a multi-million-dollar budget, and then it was supposed to be run every four years. I am more of the opinion that the Urban Games should be shortened, that it should be over an extended weekend and that it cannot be so many sports because it doesn’t make sense,” he explained.

“But if it is done over an extended weekend, there is no reason why it should not happen every year. If it is the right size, the organisational model can be easily taken from city to city. The core package stays in your luggage and you take it with you.

“There are other federations that are working very well like this. My federation, basketball, has 3 x 3 and we are in a different city every weekend during the summer. But if we do it well, it could be a

good thing to have once a year. And the second thing is that if SportAccord can pull it off, it's going to be a good test for the urban cluster at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, where climbing and skateboarding will be.

"There is an ambition to bring sport to the people where they are, in the city, instead of bringing the people to the stadiums."

Modern Pentathlon has its own unique place. It is the ultimate sporting test of mind and body and it has been a constant in the core programme of the Olympic Games since 1912. Laser-Run, when separated from the five-sport giant, is a completely different proposition and offers every aspiring pentathlete in the world a route into the sport, such is the simplicity of its appeal.

"You need participants. You need as many as possible. Obviously the traditional modern pentathlete is a very complete athlete who is able to excel in many disciplines where a normal human being can't. For example, I can play basketball but I can't play anything else," said Mr Baumann.

"In Laser-Run, you may have an ability to get a younger audience that does not yet have the necessity to be so complete. Either it's a starting path or simply people come from marathon or other sports can just cross over from other sports because they see that it is fun.

"Sport has to be fun. If they don't have fun, the people are not going to be there. If it fun, I think you will probably have cross-entrance, not just from the bottom.

"I'm sure it will be appealing because there already millions of people running on the streets. We all see them every day. Now, this is running and shooting so at some point you have to be careful to promote it in the right way, to focus on the fun part of shooting and make sure it is not viewed as unethical to have in the city. You need to control the message, but there is a link to gaming which can help with that.

"I think it's fantastic that this sport goes close to the gaming industry, which is huge. This is becoming a very hot topic for SportAccord because we have the e-sports which want to come in and join us. So it's an attractive feature of Laser-Run.

"Just running can be boring."

For more information see:

- The Laser-Run section of this website

- Our report from the Lisbon 2016 Laser-Run World Championships

- Our Lisbon 2016 highlights video on uipmtv.org