

22 MAY 2019

UIPM 2019 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP PRAGUE: FRANCE AIM TO STAY ON TOP OF THE WORLD



As an incredibly tight Pentathlon World Cup season draws closer to its finale in Tokyo, **Marie Oteiza** and **Valentin Prades** of **France** are the athletes to beat at the top of the standings.

No country has won more than two medals in the individual finals so far, but the gold medal for Oteiza (FRA) in **Sofia (BUL)** and silver for Prades (FRA) in **Szekesfehervar (HUN)** enabled them to capture the No.1 slot in the individual world rankings, each with a points total of 190.

The two world leaders will face an intense examination this week, with nine of the 10 top-ranked male athletes and seven of the top-ranked women competing in **UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Cup Prague (May 23-27)**. All of them are driven by one common goal.

ROAD TO TOKYO

Qualification for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games will be firmly on the minds of all participants on the start line in **Prague (CZE)** .

For everyone except the African athletes who have already had their continental qualifier, the UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Cup Final in **Tokyo (JPN)** in June offers the first chance to seal the Olympic dream. If they accrue enough points in Prague to add their existing scores, they will be there.

Find out more about the Tokyo 2020 qualifying process .

ONES TO WATCH

In the absence of the Pentathlon World Cup Szekesfehervar gold medallist, Tamara Alekszejev of **Hungary** , Oteiza (FRA) is sure to face a stern examination from No.2-ranked **Sarolta Kovacs** (HUN) and **Russia** duo **Uliana Batashova** (3) and **Gulnaz Gubaydullina** (11).

Rio 2016 silver medallist **Elodie Clouvel** (FRA, 13) is another athlete likely to pose a threat, along with **Natalya Coyle** of **Ireland** (5), **Annika Schleu** of **Germany** (6), **Kate French** of **Great Britain** (8) and **Ilke Ozyuksel** of **Turkey** (10).

In the men's event, Prades (FRA) and one of this season's breakthrough athlete, World Cup Sofia champion **Manuel Padilla** of **Mexico** will find themselves up against another tough field, with all of the top eight men from the world rankings fighting for the podium in Prague.

Korea have been conspicuous by their absence from the podium so far this year, and **Jun Woongtae** (2) and **Jung Jinhwa** (11) will be aiming to change that in the Czech capital before the circuit moves on to Asia in June.

Expectations will be high in the **Czech Republic** for **Jan Kuf** (4), who was silver medallist at World Cup Cairo in March on the back of finishing 4th in the UIPM 2018 Pentathlon World Championships in Mexico City (MEX).

Arthur Lanigan-O'Keeffe (IRL, 3) and **Patrick Dogue** (GER, 5) will be looking for a confidence-boosting podium finish, while reigning world champion **Jamie Cooke** (GBR, 6) and compatriot **Joseph Choong** (7), who won silver in Sofia, have already proved their form, and **Pavlo Tymoshchenko** (UKR, 8) is never far away.

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HOST NATION

After two large entries (more than 20 competing nations) in the Mixed Relay in Sofia and Szekesfehervar, it will be hard to call who will end the championships on top of the podium, but the Czech Republic will certainly be in the mix, especially if Kuf and **Eliska Pribylova** are available for selection.

Pribylova has become something of a Mixed Relay specialist, winning silver at Pentathlon World Cup Cairo with **Ondrej Polivka** on the back of gold at 2018 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia alongside Kuf.

Local pentathlon fans will also have fond recollections of August 2018, when **Marek Grycz** and **Martin Vlach** (CZE) won gold in the Men's Relay at the UIPM Junior World Championships.

All the home athletes will take inspiration from the world-class form of Kuf (CZE), who said: "Competing at a Pentathlon World Cup in my home country is something not everyone can experience.

"Most of my friends know what I do for living, but they never had the chance to see me do it, except at the Olympics, where it didn't really go the way I wanted.

"So this will be the perfect opportunity to show them what I do, what I love to do and why I don't have much time to hang out with them most of the year."

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann commented: "Throughout this Pentathlon World Cup series we are seeing pentathlon at its best, as athletes from all countries plot their journey in Tokyo and aim to achieve peak performance.

"Behind the scenes we are continuing to develop and grow our sport through projects like the Pentathlon Stadium and the Mixed Relay, which we are targeting for inclusion in the Olympic Games Paris 2024.

"We are creating a tradition here in the Czech Republic, where we enjoyed a successful UIPM Junior Pentathlon World Championships in Kladno in 2018 and many other high-level competitions in the past.

"I would like to thank our hosts, the Czech Modern Pentathlon Association, the Czech Olympic Committee, city and national government partners and all sponsors and suppliers. Of course, a special thanks and our appreciation go to our wonderful volunteers, media representatives and the spectators surrounding and supporting the high performance of our athletes.

"I wish good luck to all athletes, competing in a spirit of fair play and peace and remembering the heritage of our founder Baron Pierre de Coubertin in a year when we celebrate 125 years of the international Olympic movement."

COMPETITION SCHEDULE

UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Cup Prague begins on Thursday, May 23 with qualification for the Women's Individual Final (Saturday, May 25). The action continues on Friday, May 24 with qualification for the Men's Individual Final (Sunday, May 26). The Mixed Relay closes the competition on Monday, May 27.

WATCH AND FOLLOW

During each finals day you can watch a live stream of the Fencing Bonus Round, Riding, Laser Run and the medal ceremony on UIPM TV and YouTube , with no geographical restrictions. The Laser Run and medal ceremony can also be watched live on Facebook .

Follow World Pentathlon on Facebook , Twitter and Instagram throughout the Pentathlon World Cup series for additional content, and visit the UIPM website or download the “UIPM Central” app to keep track of results.