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EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019: EIGHT WOMEN JOIN CHAMPION ASADAUSKAITE (LTU) IN TOKYO 2020 LINE-UP

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- Medallists French (GBR) and Prasiantsova (BLR) secure Olympic places
- Tokyo preparations can begin for Schleu (GER), Coyle (IRL) and Venckauskaite (LTU)
- Oteiza (FRA), Ibatullina (RUS) and Kovacs (HUN) also qualify

A dramatic final day of the 2019 European Championships saw eight women earn the right to become Olympians in Tokyo in 2020.

Laura Asadauskaite of **Lithuania** was crowned European champion after a typically strong Laser Run finish, but she had already qualified for the Olympics by winning the UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Cup Final in June.

Behind her, **Kate French** of **Great Britain** and **Iryna Prasiantsova** of **Belarus** led the way to

Tokyo, securing silver and bronze respectively and booking their Olympic berths.

They can now start making plans to compete on the ultimate stage next August, as can six other athletes who finished in the top 13 in Bath: **Annika Schleu** of **Germany**, **Natalya Coyle** of **Ireland**, **Marie Oteiza** of **France**, **Adelina Ibatullina** of **Russia**, **Sarolta Kovacs** of **Hungary** and **Gintare Venckauskaite** of **Lithuania**.

It was a thrilling finish to six days of top-quality pentathlon, and the calibre of the women's field was underlined by the identity of those who fell short of Olympic qualification, including 2018 world champion **Anastasiya Prokopenko** (BLR) and Rio 2016 Olympic silver medallist **Elodie Clouvel** (FRA), who was leading until she was eliminated in Riding. The Rio 2016 Olympic bronze medallist, **Oktawia Nowacka** of **Poland**, finished 14th, one place away from Tokyo qualification.

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Fifteen of the 36 participants in the women's pentathlon in Tokyo have now been confirmed, with 21 opportunities remaining. The next opportunity to qualify will be the UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Championships in September in Budapest, where three more places will be at stake.

Asadauskaite (LTU) said: "It's been a good day. I was composed in the shooting and I ran fast, so I'm very happy."

Silver medallist French (GBR) added: "I'm over the moon with second place. I had to really fight

today, nothing really came easy. I had a really good ride, which I was so pleased with and that put me in a good position for the final event.

"I just had to hold on, really – I had Laura chasing me down. I did try and stay with her but she's so fast."

Prasiantsova (BLR) said: "I feel so happy because it's the first time that I got the podium. All day I worked and tried to stay confident and focused on my event.

"It was a tough race and I knew that before the Laser Run that Laura would keep pressuring me, so I am so happy that I have got third place. I enjoyed the whole day."

The European qualifiers join 10 athletes from North, South and Central America and two from Africa, as well as the UIPM Pentathlon World Cup winners, on the list for Tokyo – in accordance with the UIPM qualification process.

A number of the top 10 finishers today were not eligible for Olympic qualification: Pentathlon World Cup champion Asadauskaite (LTU), Joanna Muir and Francesca Summers (GBR) and Volha Silkina (BLR).

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Another eight nations have secured Olympic qualification places after a very exciting Laser Run climax to the European Championship Women's Individual Final.

"Some athletes were unlucky in the Riding, but they know what they have to do and where they went wrong. And again we saw Laura Asadauskaite show her incredible running and shooting ability, coming from 6th to 1st.

"Congratulations to all the athletes on their performances – this is the first big step to Tokyo and the second one is the UIPM Pentathlon World Championships in Budapest. Then next year we will have other possibilities.

"Thanks to the organising committee here in Great Britain, who have prepared a fantastic European Championships."