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ROAD TO TOKYO: HALFWAY TO HEAVEN FOR THE OLYMPIC GLADIATORS OF MODERN PENTATHLON

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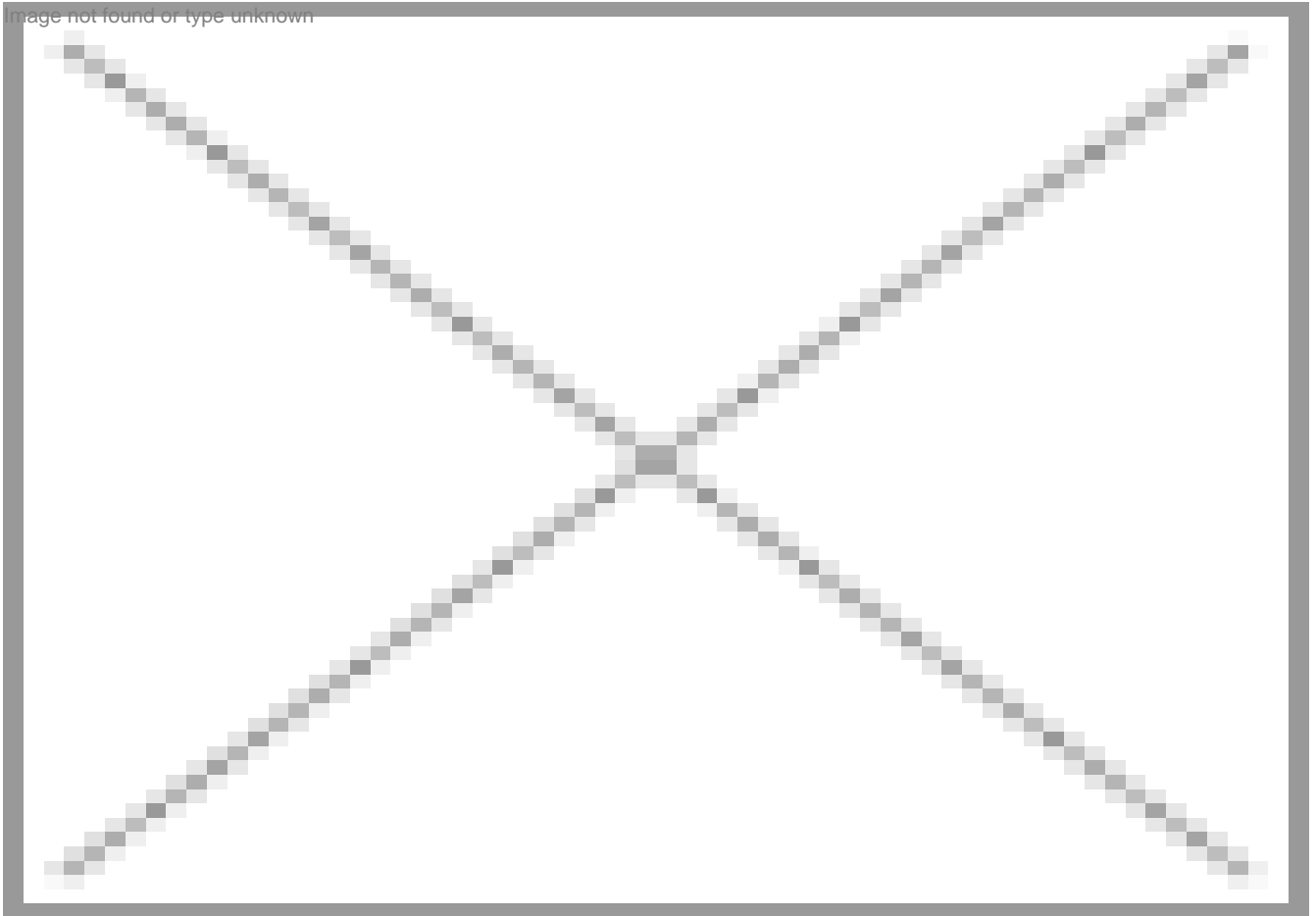


The entry list is almost halfway to completion. The sense of anticipation is growing.

With nine months to go until the 25th Olympic Modern Pentathlon, 17 female and 17 male pentathletes have secured a qualification place on behalf of their nations. Pending selection* by their National Olympic Committees, each of these athletes can start to live the dream, to plan their course to the podium that will be erected in Tokyo Stadium, where the ultimate prize in sport awaits.

In some countries, there will be tough conversations about which two athletes of each gender to select. In Belarus, qualification places have been earned by the 2019 women's individual world champion, Volha Silkina, and Iryna Prasiantsova. But the 2018 world champion, Anastasiya Prokopenko, could also earn qualification next year. All three stood atop the podium as team world

champions in Budapest (HUN), but only two can go to Tokyo.



Similarly, Lithuania's women athletes have already earned two quota places, while the men of Great Britain and France have done the same. Internal rivalries are sure to come into play in the coming months.

For the majority of the 34 qualified athletes who will have a sense of assurance about their position, the relief will be immense. With the primary pressure of qualification out of the way, they can start to tackle the secondary pressure – performing to their best in Tokyo.

So who else will be among the 72 gladiators competing in the capital city of Japan next August, and how will they get there?

The next qualification opportunity comes in November (11-21), when the Asia/Oceania Championships and Olympic Qualifier will take place in Wuhan (CHN). Ten athletes from Asia (five women and five men) will earn qualification places here, along with one female and one male from Oceania. The reigning women's Olympic champion, Chloe Esposito (AUS), is aiming to overcome injury in time to compete.

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After that, 26 places will remain up for grabs, with a range of pathways in 2020 promising to lead the world's most versatile athletes to their coveted destination.

Six automatic places (three each for women and men) will be on offer in Xiamen (CHN) during the UIPM 2020 Pentathlon and Laser Run World Championships in May.

Japan, as host nation, will be guaranteed at least one place per gender, and two places per gender will be reserved for the Tripartite Commission, which has the right to allocate berths by invitation to NOCs that apply before 17 January, 2020.

That leaves about 12 places to be earned by right, and this will be where the key battleground takes place next year. The UIPM Olympic World Ranking List will be closely monitored throughout the Pentathlon World Cup season as athletes vie for position, hoping to secure one of 12 places (six female, six male) when the final list is published on 1 June – one day after the end of the World Championships.

In June 2020, the process of selection will be formalised as NOCs and National Federations are officially informed of the number of quota places they have earned, with the option of handing any or all of them back, leading to a reallocation according to the ranking list. July 6 is the deadline for all entries to Tokyo 2020 – the day when we will know for sure the identity of those 72 gladiators.

Visit the UIPM website for a full explanation of the Tokyo 2020 qualification process.