

26 JUN 2020

ALEXANDRE DALLENBACH (SUI) ON #LASERHOMERUN: I WANTED TO GRAB THE OPPORTUNITY



UIPM launched the #LaserHomeRun competition in May 2020, creating the world's first virtual laser shooting event and allowing hundreds of athletes around the world to connect and have fun together online.

Among our 'living-room champions' was Alexandre Dallenbach of Switzerland, a senior pentathlete living on the island of La Reunion (FRA). He recently published an article in local newspaper Le Quotidien de la Reunion, in which he wrote about his experience in #LaserHomeRun.

For Dallenbach (SUI), the competition resulted in "hundreds of participants and a great atmosphere". The article, published in late May, is reproduced below in English.

Finally, we can get out, breathe the fresh air and sing our lungs out to the lyrics of *Frozen* – “Let it go, let it go, they will never confine us again”.

The world of sport is slowly restarting and all around we can see hope growing. While our confinement was nearing an end, on May 7, UIPM took the great initiative to organise its first-ever virtual competition.

They took inspiration from the Laser Run event, a sport composed of running and shooting and fast-growing around the world. Of course, the rules had to be adapted for it to be accessible to all during the confinement.

Running made impossible, it was decided to replace it with “jumping squats”, and to reduce the shooting distance from 10m to 5m. Not sure that in the UIPM Monaco-based office they were ready for as many as 800 registrations in less than 72 hours, with athletes aged from six to 82! So, it became a real battlefield in terms of organisation.

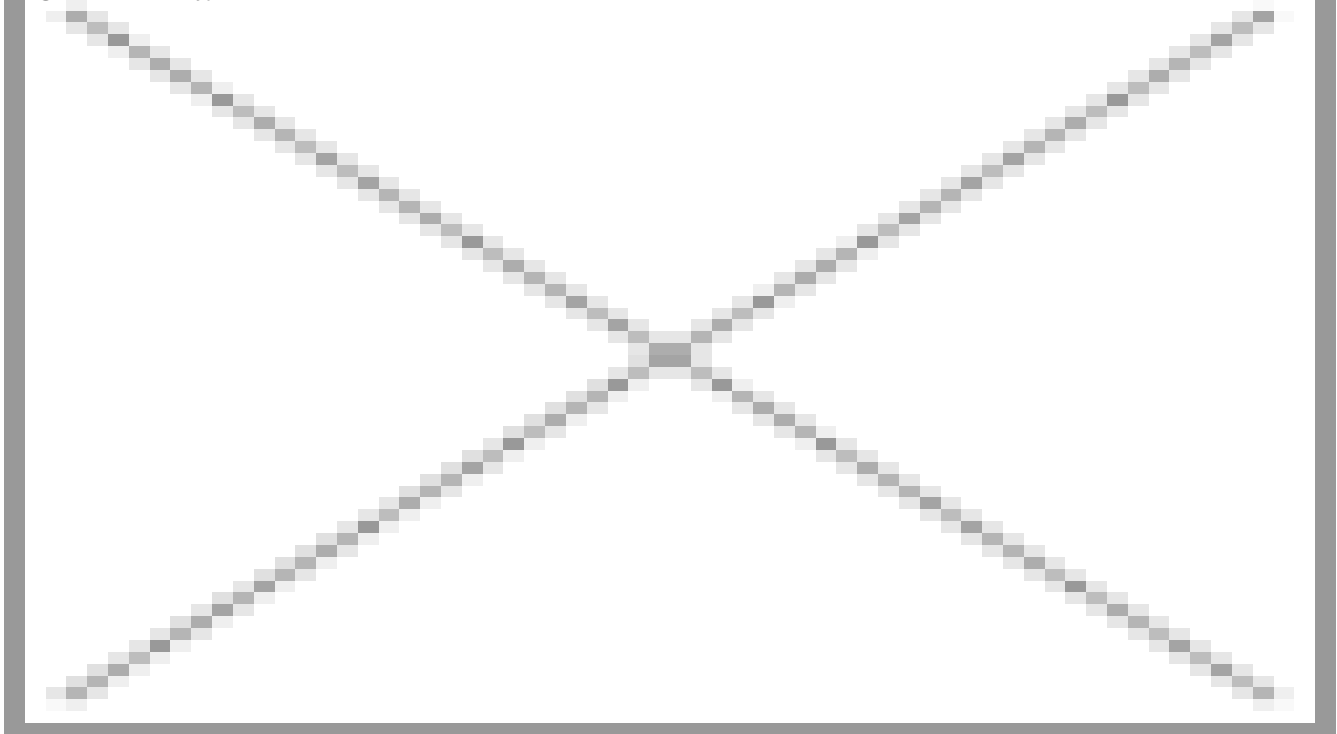
The brave UIPM organisers had to coordinate more than 600 athletes (80% participation rate). We normally fight our opponents with our sword, this time we had to fight off bugs and bad internet connections. After the first round, only six athletes per category were left to battle for the title. All of it was live on UIPMTV.

James Tzanoudakis, who usually commentates on Pentathlon World Cups, honoured us by commentating from his couch after vanquishing the Coronavirus and sharing his experience with the world. What an inspiration!

I was happy to go through the first round, by a few seconds only, in 5th position. We met a couple of days later for the exciting final. Just before the start we had the chance to exchange a few words with the other athletes about our situation in our countries and how we were coping with the confinement.

What a pleasure to see some familiar faces, and more importantly to know that we are not alone in our struggle.

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We'll have to admit it was a hectic first edition and we already have to think about things to improve for next time. In particular to respect the notion of fair play so important to our founder, Baron Pierre de Coubertin.

In the meantime, it has been the only competition within months. So, I wanted to grab the opportunity. I gave it my all, shot perfectly and won the very unofficial title of #LaserHomeRun champion.

If you had told me a few weeks ago that I would have won an “online” competition, that I would be a “couch champion”, but moreover that I would be very happy about it, I would have laughed so hard. But times are hard, we find happiness in the little things.

Happiness is to spend more time with our children, to educate them, to see them grow and to love them. It is to realise, a little more, how much merit teachers deserve, for helping us to forge the future of our children.

It is one thing to transmit knowledge, but to do so with patience and passion, is another level of competence. This week, I should have been in Xiamen (CHN) to participate in the UIPM 2020 Pentathlon and Laser Run World Championships. It would have been the last opportunity to grab a ticket before the end of the qualification process for the Olympics. All of that seems so far away now – no competition has been announced until March 2021.

Moreover, doubt is still poisoning the organisation of the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

It is therefore so hard to plan training, but more importantly a more basic problem is presenting itself: finding sponsors and re-conducting existing contracts is going to be very compromised. Times are hard for businesses, sponsoring won't be a priority. Plus, I can understand the lack of meaning for an enterprise to sponsor an athlete who is not racing and wearing the “colours” of the brand.

This problem will be worldwide and will affect the poorest. We have already seen Kenyan runners calling for help as they cannot run on weekend and earn money to survive. We have to consider

that Olympics, if they take place, may do so without many great athletes. It would be very sad. But it seems hard to send an SOS while people are between life and death because of the virus and that the medical workers need all the support they can get.

Despite all of that, despite my “relative unemployment” and the very real unemployment of my wife – she manages a restaurant – and despite the lack of short-term goals, despite the heavy atmosphere whenever we get out, I cannot help but looking towards the future with hope and desire.

I hope that things will get back to normal soon, and even better, the desire to live life to the fullest. I can only encourage you to do the same. And to all of those who have discovered the joy of sport during the confinement, I hope with all my heart that you keep going with regular physical activity.

I want to tell you “high spirit and down the masks” but let’s keep it safe, let’s wear our masks in all circumstances and let’s keep protecting and loving our neighbour. Safety precautions are our shield of faith. The faith that we will vanquish this virus. The fight starts now. Strength and honour in adversity.