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## ROAD TO TOKYO: FERNANDEZ (GUA) ON FAIR PLAY, HIS FATHER AND THE FIRE WITHIN



Charles Fernandez of Guatemala is the kind of athlete who always looks right at home on the top of the podium.

The 24-year-old has a strong track record of winning individual gold medals that stretches right back to the NORCEA Junior Championships in Santo Domingo (DOM), when he was 17. Two years later he sprang a real surprise by winning the Modern Pentathlon at the Pan American Games in Toronto (CAN).

In 2016, shortly after his debut Olympics, Fernandez (GUA) became UIPM world junior champion, and since then he has won gold at the 2018 Central American Caribbean Games in Cali (COL) and snared a second Pan American Games title in Lima (PER) in 2019.

A natural ambassador who served as an Athlete Role Model at the Buenos Aires 2018 Youth Olympic Games, he also put his communication skills to use as MC during the UIPM 2019 Pentathlon and Laser Run World Championships in Budapest (HUN) in 2019 while sitting out the

competition through injury.

Fernandez (GUA), a devout Christian whose family runs an evangelical ministry, was born on Christmas Day. Is he destined to be part of an Olympic miracle in Tokyo or Paris?

**Q: How did it feel in 2019 when you won gold at the Pan American Games in Lima (PER) and secured a qualification place for the Tokyo Olympics?**

A: Being able to win the Pan American Games a second time in a row was such a breakthrough point in my career. Being able to overcome a lot of obstacles and responsibilities in my life – such as finishing school with two degrees and overcoming a big mental battle with myself at the beginning of 2019 – just showed me that when you work hard and give everything you have, it'll be worth it in the long run.

Winning the Pan American Games and securing my place for Tokyo was such a huge celebration for everyone who had continued to believe in me through the years after Rio 2016, and a huge motivating boost to continue working hard and never let that Olympic dream fade away. I couldn't have been happier throughout the span of my sports career after crossing that finish line.

