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ROAD TO TOKYO: GINTARE VENCKAUSKAITE (LTU) PREPARES FOR SECOND COMING



It was no disgrace for a 19-year-old athlete from Lithuania to play second fiddle to her team-mate in her first Olympic Games.

In fact, Gintare Venckauskaite achieved a remarkable 12th place in the London 2012 Games, and it was only because Laura Asadauskaite (LTU) won gold that her feat has been easy to overlook.

Of course, there is also the fact that Venckauskaite (LTU) has achieved many exceptional results in her career since then.

As a strong junior career was coming to an end, she started to make an impact at senior level, finishing 4th at UIPM 2015 Pentathlon World Cup Cairo and the UIPM 2016 Pentathlon World Cup Final in Sarasota (USA).

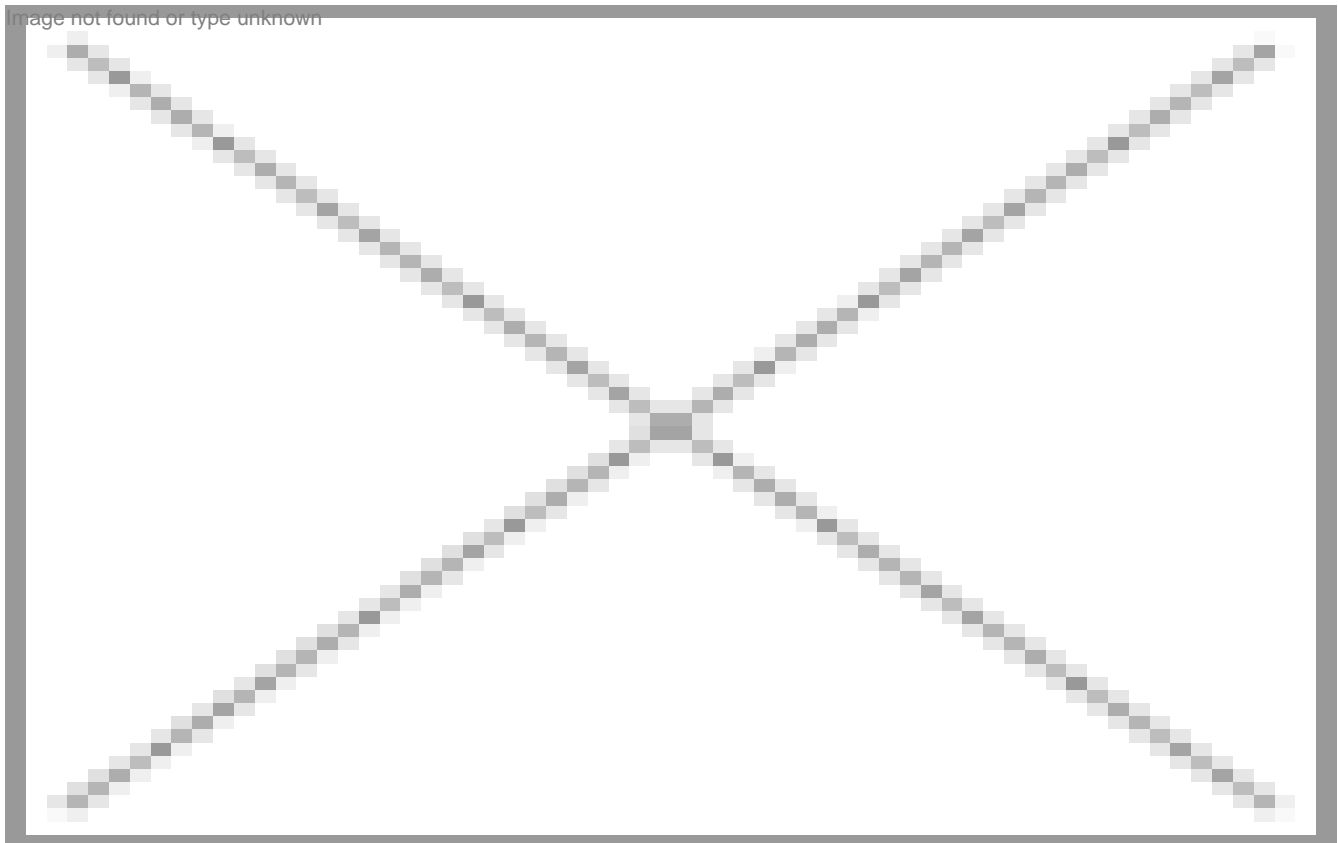
Still, major medals continued to elude Venckauskaite (LTU) – another 4th place in the 2016 European Championships followed – until she became a mother. Having missed the 2017 season,

she returned in 2018 in fantastic shape and the reward came at the UIPM 2018 Pentathlon World Cup Final in Astana (KAZ).

In the Women's Final she delivered an exceptional Laser Run (more than 30sec faster than anyone else in the field) to collect a hard-earned bronze medal.

Remarkably, another 4th place in the UIPM Pentathlon World Cup Final followed in 2019 in Tokyo (JPN), but she held her form for when it mattered most to secure a quota place for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the European Championships in Bath (GBR).

In the latest Road to Tokyo interview, the 28-year-old savours the prospect of a second appearance at the world's biggest sporting event.



Q: How did it feel in 2019 when you earned a qualification place for the Tokyo Olympics at the European Championships?

A: The plan was to win a ticket at the European Championships, so the result was not unexpected. However, I was still both surprised and happy.

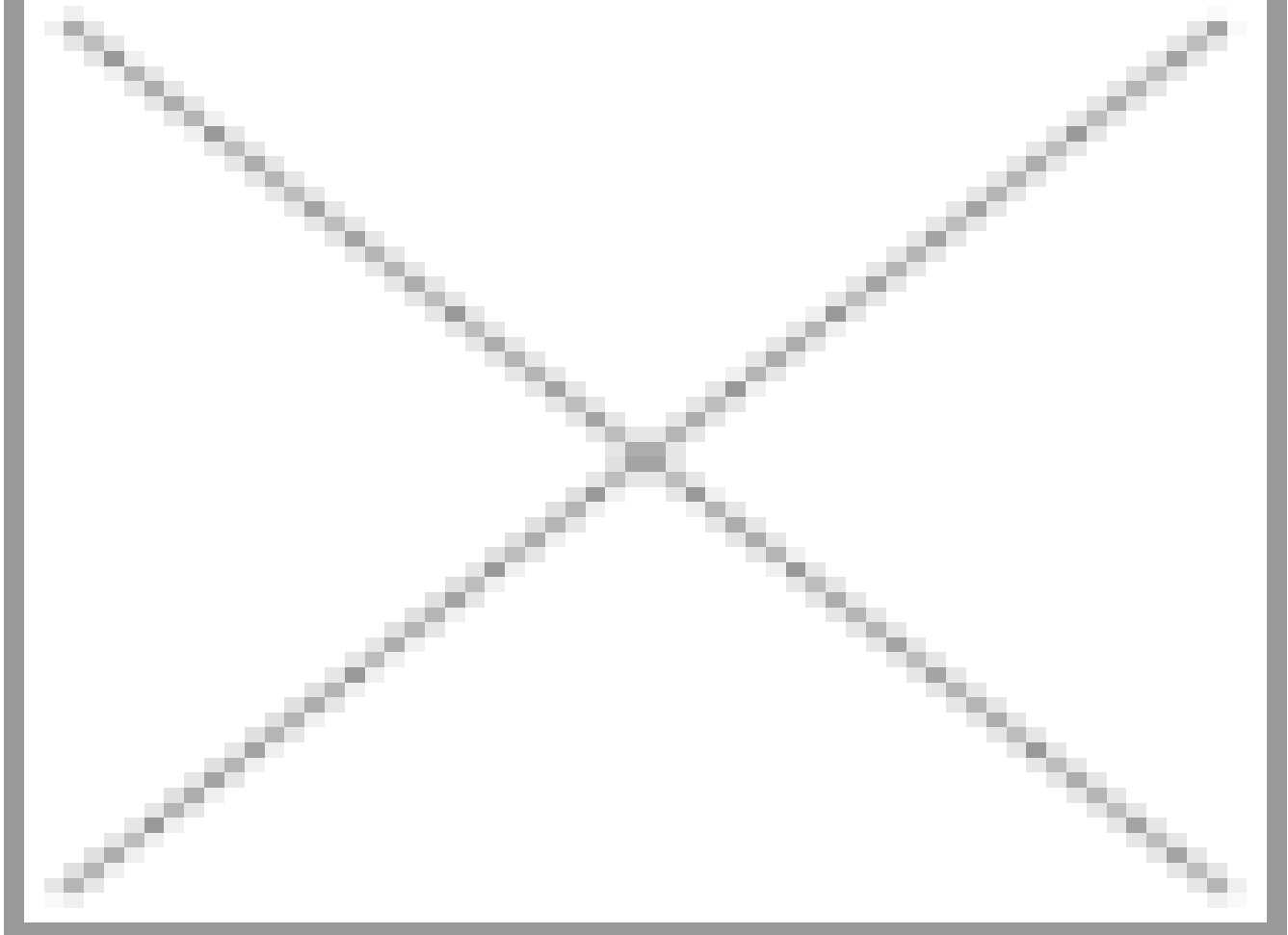
Q: Did you watch the Rio 2016 Olympic Games on TV? What were you thinking?

A: Yes, I watched. It was my dream to participate in a second Olympics. However, I knew full well that I would come back after giving birth and do my best to be even stronger.

Q: You finished 12th at the London 2012 Olympic Games. What are your memories of that competition?

A: Memories are very vague ... I only remember certain moments of a few seconds from each discipline. I don't remember the Swimming, the look of the pool or how I swam ... but I remember the fans, who were so loud from the tribune that we couldn't talk to Laura before the Laser Run started. Sounds weird, but it feels like I was in a dream...

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Q: What will it mean to you if you are selected to compete for Lithuania at Tokyo 2020 (in 2021)?

A: That will mean I did everything I had planned.

Q: What do you think about the Olympics being postponed until 2021?

A: I think this is a great opportunity to reflect on both the wrong and the right ways to achieve the goal. It's also a great time to work more with our thoughts, to be with ourselves and the family we spend little time with. There is no such thing as a bad thing that does no good.

Q: How have you been keeping up your training and your mental health during the Coronavirus crisis?

A: We didn't have the opportunity to swim in the pool during the first wave, so little has changed. There was little live communication, but we are perfectly adapted to the current conditions.

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Q: What has been the most challenging part?

A: It was hard to exercise alone.

Q: And what positive things have you seen?

A: I spent more time with my family. I also had the opportunity to read more books, do the work I planned to do after the Olympics.

Q: When, and why, did you take up the Modern Pentathlon?

A: I attended swimming workouts but couldn't fully realise my potential. In 2007 after finishing my Swimming career, I agreed to participate in the Lithuanian Modern Pentathlon competition. I was very scared of the running, but after the first successful race I agreed to come to a few more workouts. That's how I stayed in this sport!

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Q: What motivates you in training?

A: At this point, when we don't have competitions, I set myself daily or weekly goals. This makes it easier to motivate myself.

Q: Describe yourself as an athlete in three words.

A: Responsible, strong, endurance!

Q: Who are your role models in sport, and in life?

A: In sports my idol is the figure skater Alina Zagitova. In life – my family and friends!

Q: What is your ultimate ambition in Modern Pentathlon?

A: Become the best version of yourself!

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