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ROAD TO TOKYO: SERGIO VILLAMAYOR (ARG) FINDS COMFORT IN FAMILY AHEAD OF OLYMPIC DEBUT



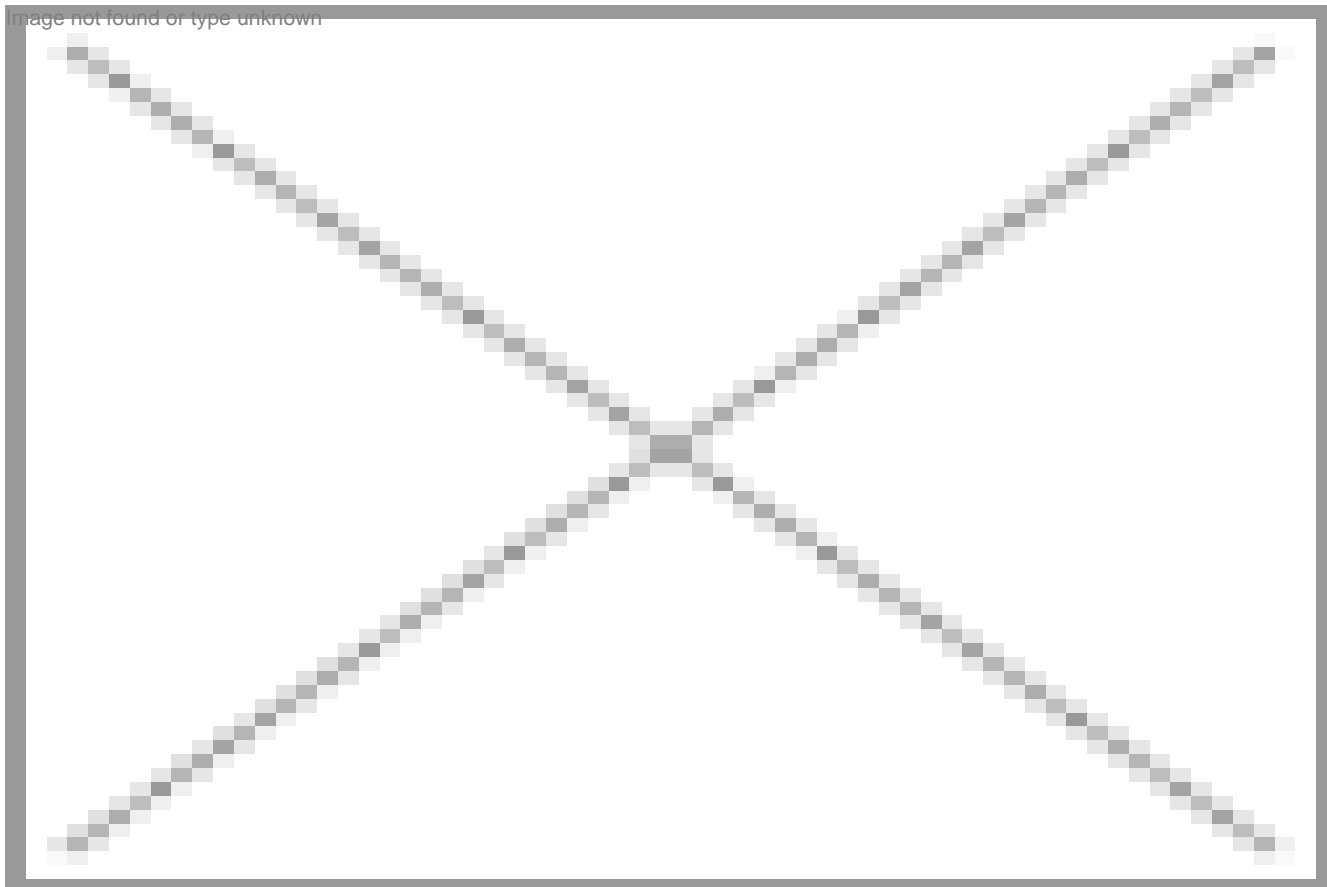
Argentina was not represented in Modern Pentathlon at any of the Olympic Games between 1964 and 2012.

Four years ago in Rio (BRA), husband and wife Emanuel Zapata and Iryna Khokhlova brought the anomaly to an end and now, in Tokyo (JPN) in 2021, Argentina will again be represented. Sergio Villamayor (ARG) secured a qualification place in 2019 when he won men's individual bronze at the Pan American Games in Lima (PER).

Since then, the tall pentathlete has had more time than he anticipated to prepare for his Olympic debut because of the postponement of Tokyo 2020.

In the latest Road to Tokyo interview, Villamayor (ARG) describes his emotions during this unprecedented time...

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Q: How did it feel in 2019 when you won bronze at the Pan American Championships and secured a qualification place for the Tokyo Olympics?

A: It was a very special feeling to qualify for the Games since I had worked very hard for many years. It gave me more tranquility and will allow me to focus on the preparation for the Games to achieve the best results possible.

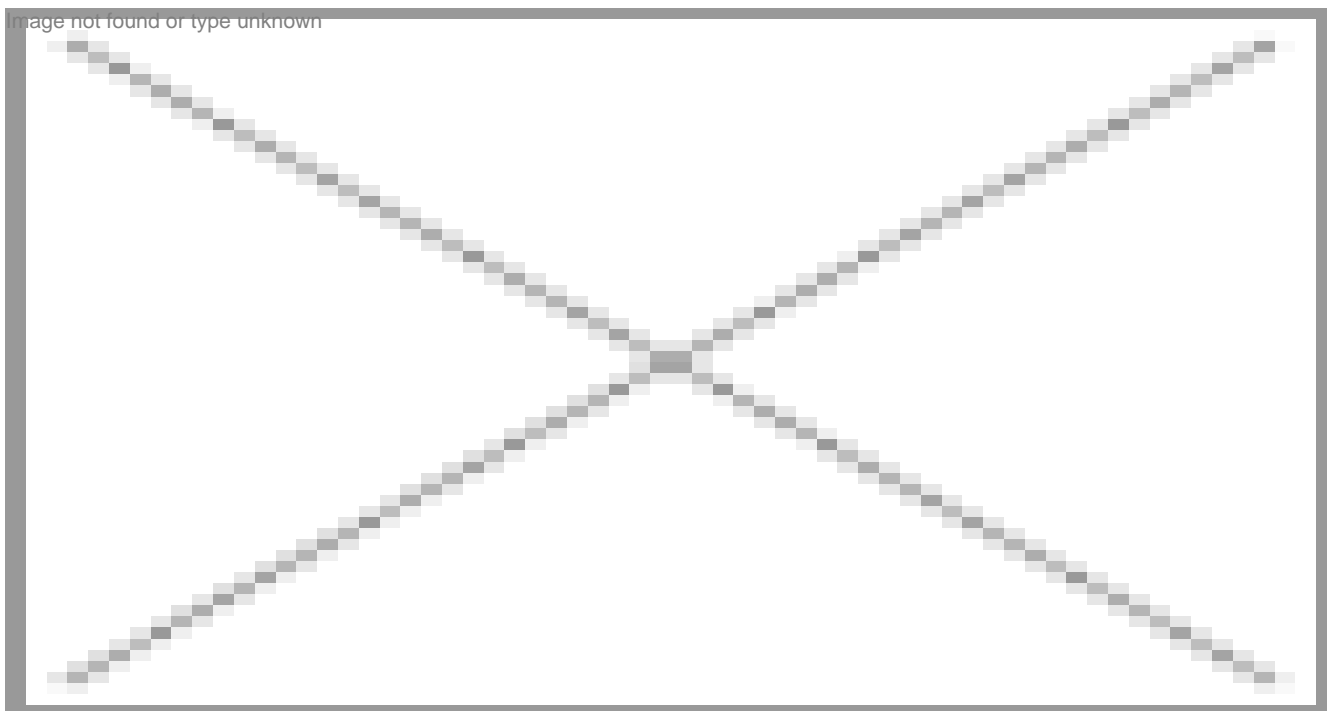
Q: Did you watch the last Olympic Games (Rio 2016)? What are your memories?

A: Yes, of course, I like to watch all kinds of sports. Obviously, I was not going to miss watching the Games and even less Pentathlon as it was 56 years since Argentina had a representative in the Games (my friend and his wife). It was also very exciting to see the battle for bronze between the men and that at the end Ismael Hernández got it!

Q: What would it mean to you to be selected to compete for Argentina at Tokyo 2020 (in 2021)?

A: It's a big responsibility and it fills me with pride to be part of the Argentinean delegation.

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Q: In what ways has Modern Pentathlon in Argentina benefited from the Youth Olympic Games taking place in Buenos Aires in 2018?

A: Modern Pentathlon grew up from 2000 onwards thanks to the huge work of Jorge Salas and Guillermo Filipi, which they are still doing now, and we benefited a lot from the YOGs. The same goes for other individual sports, as we have a culture of team sports mostly (football, basketball, volleyball, hockey and rugby).

Q: What do you think about the Tokyo 2020 Olympics being postponed until 2021?

A: I don't think there was any alternative, and I think that as an athlete I only have to be ready when the day comes for me to compete. To be already qualified gives me a lot of tranquillity in that matter.

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

A: Thanks to the Honvéd Club and the Hungarian Modern Pentathlon Federation, I have been able to keep up with my training while respecting the health protocols. Personally, it helped me to change how I look at things and value to things which are really important: time with my family or to drink maté [a South American hot beverage] with friends, for instance.

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Q: What has been the most challenging part?

A: Personally, it was really good to be able to spend time with my daughter, for example, trying to always find the positive side of things. Things have been a little complicated for me because of the crisis we face in Argentina and I couldn't manage my money because of restrictions which we face, although this was already the case before the pandemic and these are political matters which are out of my hands!

Q: And what positive things have you seen?

A: Spending time with my family. It's an important thing that me and my loved ones are healthy, but it's also important to enjoy the time with them. My daughter reminds me about this every day as she grows older: time goes by and does not come back!

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

A: I got to know this wonderful sport when I was 18 years old, this was my age when I started practising it. I knew it while studying in the military academy. But they say that it's never too late to start something new and I am happy to now be part of the great Modern Pentathlon family.

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Q: What motivates you in training?

A: This goes for all the things I undertake: to do it always the best way possible and to be a better person each day.

Q: Describe yourself as an athlete in three words.

A: Responsible, persevering and tenacious.

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

A: In sport: the footballer Lionel Messi. In life: my parents.

Q: What is your ultimate ambition in Modern Pentathlon?

A: That one day it will be possible to compete for clubs internationally, as for most sports.

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