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HUNGARIAN INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS 2021: GULYAS (HUN) OPENS SEASON WITH STYLISH GOLD

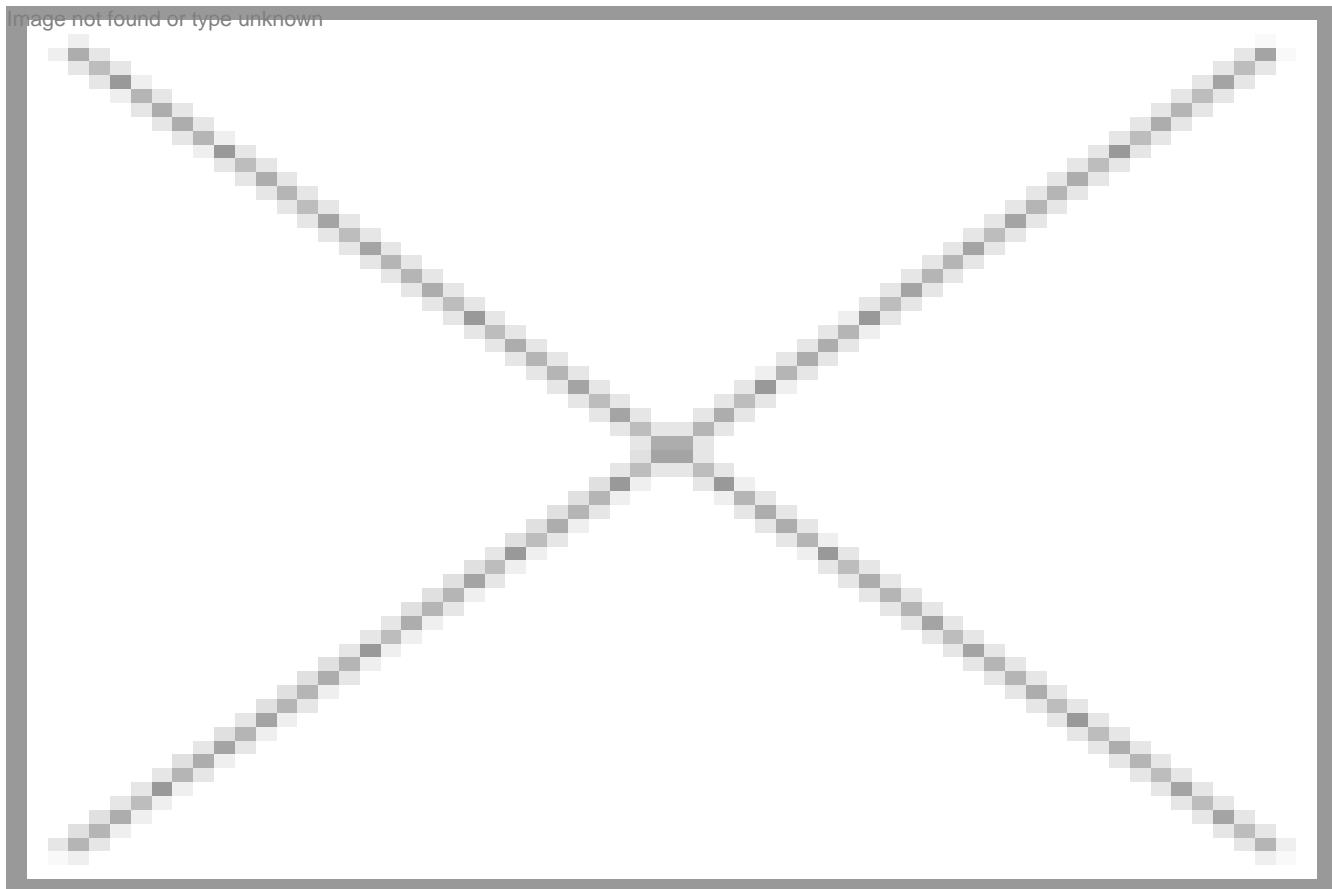


Michelle Gulyas of Hungary produced an impressive Laser Run to conquer a high-class field and win gold in the Women's Final of the Hungarian Open Indoor Championships.

The climax of the competition was dominated by two athletes who had set off with a significant time deficit, and the home favourite (8th starter) earned huge credit by holding off a stiff challenge from the Laser Run world record holder **Ilke Ozyuksel of Turkey**, who had started 15th.

In the end, Gulyas (HUN) held off Ozyuksel (TUR) with a strong sprint to earn gold, with the pair closely followed across the finish line by **Marie Oteiza of France**, who had started in first place. Reigning world champion **Volha Silkina of Belarus** finished just outside the medals in 4th.

The annual indoor event in Budapest (HUN) has become an unofficial season-opener and while it wasn't the first international competition of the year, it was the first to draw participants from multiple continents, with 20 nations sending athletes eager to sharpen their competitive instincts after a largely fallow year in 2020.



Earlier, **Gulnaz Gubaydullina** of **Russia** had been a familiar pace-setter in Swimming, timing 2:05.32 to touch first comfortably ahead of Gulyas (HUN, 2:07.72) and **Elena Micheli** of **Italy** (2:08.79).

Competition was tight in Fencing, and there was an unfortunate end to the day for **Anna Matthes** of **Germany** as she retired due to injury. **Sarolta Simon** (HUN) emerged as the top performer with 23 victories.

The upshot of the first two disciplines was that Oteiza (FRA) and her compatriot **Elodie Clouvel** (FRA) held the top overall placings, and this remained the case after Riding, leading to the dramatic Laser Run when only Oteiza (FRA) was able to protect her podium place.

Gulyas (HUN) said: "I am very happy with the victory because it was the first time I won a national championship and a Peridot [competition sponsor]. The shooting and running went very well, thanks to the fact that I have had eight weeks of running-centric preparation."

Ozyuksel (TUR) said: "My first and second shooting was so bad, and if I hadn't done this I could have won easily. So I'm sad, but Michelle is a good athlete too and I'm happy for her."

"It's a good start to Olympic year, and I will compete at the World Cup and World Championships to qualify. My body feels ready for the Olympics and today was a good experience."

Oteiza (FRA) added: "I'm really, really happy – this was my first competition in one year so I

couldn't be happier to finish with a medal. I was here to see if I worked well during the past year and I can leave this competition really happy.

"I know I still have to work hard for the Olympics but this was a good start."

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann, who is attending the competition, said: "The 7th Hungarian Open Indoor Championships has been such a successful competition already.

"Today we had the Women's Final and it was wonderful to see the athletes with full motivation to be happy to have the chance to compete again, together with international colleagues from 20 nations. I have to underline that this competition that the Hungarians have organised has become a key element of the Olympic season 2021.

"We are all looking forward to have a successful Olympic Games organised in Tokyo this summer. I have also had important meetings with the Olympic sport and political society here in Hungary that confirmed to me that this is a great pentathlon country with a great heritage.

"I am more than happy to be able to be here at this very dramatic pandemic time to see the discipline of our athletes taking care not only about their sport but also human beings and friendship and the way they communicate with each other.

"These days in Budapest is a big challenge for the Union, for the Hungarian federation and for all the athletes, so I am very thankful in the name of the Union to Dr Gyula Bretz and his team for what they have achieved here."

The competition concludes with the Men's Final on Tuesday, March 2. Live stream is available at the competition website.