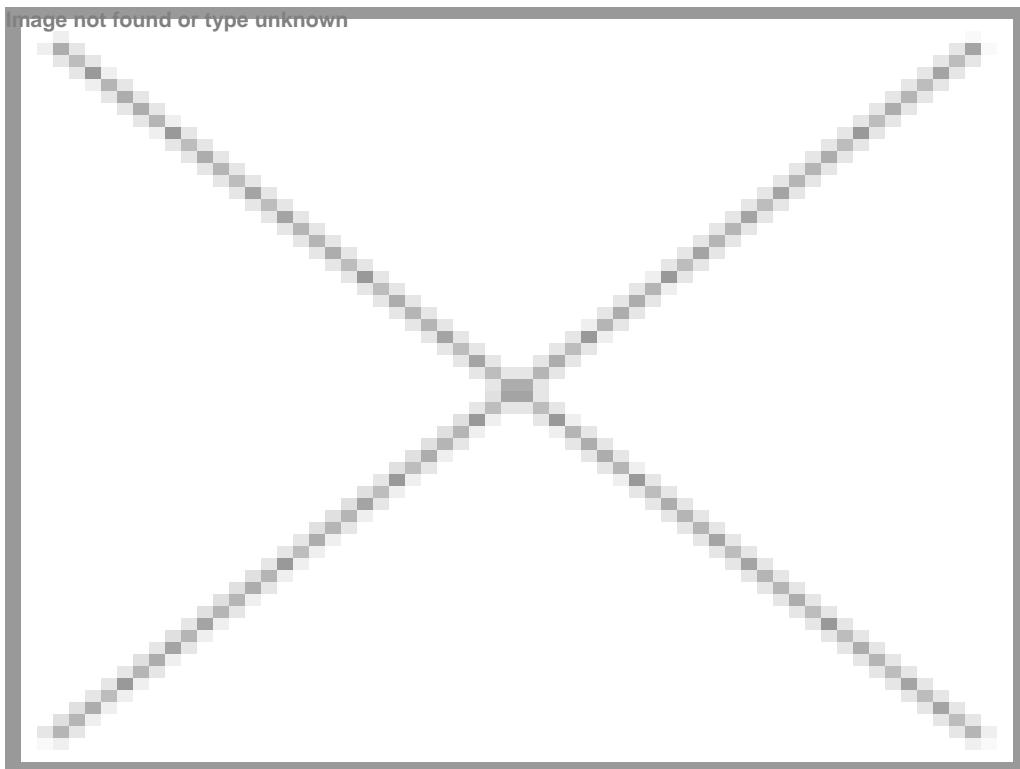


06 APR 2021

UIPM 2021 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP SOFIA I: RACE TO TOKYO HOTS UP AS WORLD GATHERS IN BULGARIA



- First instalment of double-header draws 195 athletes from 40 nations
- Olympic champion Asadauskaite (LTU) returns along with athletes from China
- Strict COVID-19 Coronavirus protocols in place for competition

Almost 200 of the world's leading pentathletes have come together for a double-header that will go a long way towards determining the remaining qualifiers for the rescheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

The first of two UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cups begins in Sofia (BUL) tomorrow (April 7-11), with another leg at the same venue following immediately in its wake next week (April 15-18).

The double-header comes on the back of a successful season-opener, UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Budapest, which reignited the race to Tokyo after the suspension of UIPM competitions for 13 months due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus.

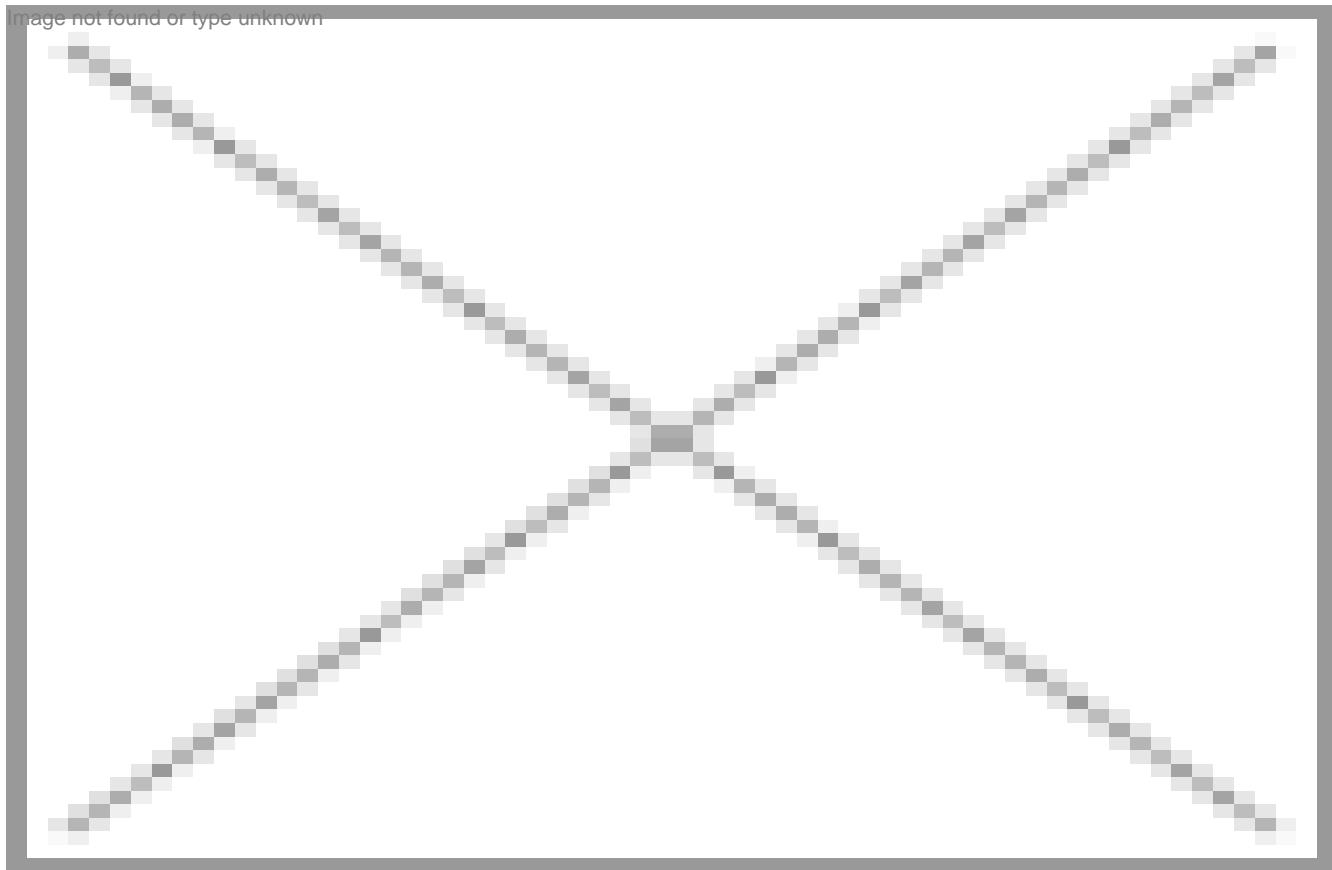
With so many qualification points on offer in Sofia (BUL), as well as opportunities to sharpen preparations for the Games in August, a huge field of 199 athletes from 40 countries has gathered in the south of Europe.

Ones to watch – Women

One of the favourites for Olympic gold this summer, London 2012 champion **Laura Asadauskaite** of **Lithuania**, makes her first appearance of the season in a four-strong team alongside **Gintare Venckauskaite**, who won bronze last time out in Budapest (HUN).

They will expect tough competition to come from **Great Britain**, who are prominent in the UIPM Olympic World Rankings (OWR) with Budapest silver medallist **Joanna Muir** at No.1 and Budapest gold medallist **Kate French** at No.7.

France have only sent two female athletes to Sofia (BUL) but world No.1 **Elodie Clouvel** and her team-mate **Marie Oteiza** (OWR No.2) are sure to be influential, as will strong teams from **Belarus**, **Egypt**, **Germany**, **Hungary**, **Italy**, **Korea**, **Mexico** and **Russia**.



UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Cup Final winner Laura Asadauskaite (LTU) returns to competition

Ones to watch – Men

The surprise winner in Budapest, **Pavels Svecovs** of **Latvia**, continues his bid to qualify for Tokyo 2020 as a one-person team after his gold medal moved him up to No.28 in the OWR.

As in the women's field, star-studded teams from northern Europe such as France (**Valentin Prades**

and **Valentin Belaud**, Great Britain (**Joseph Choong** and **James Cooke**) and Germany (**Patrick Dogue** and **Marvin Dogue**) are among the favourites on paper, but the last competition showed just how unpredictable Modern Pentathlon can be.

Egypt will again be represented by high-quality athletes such as **Ahmed Elgendi** and **Ahmed Hamed** (silver medallist in Budapest) as they seek to earn their second Tokyo 2020 quota place through the OWR, while **Korea** are looking for the same outcome while wrestling with the dilemma of which two athletes to select for the Olympics should **Woongtae Jun**, **Jihun Lee** and **Jinhwa Jung** all be available.

The presence of four male athletes (and one female) from **China** in Sofia (BUL) for their first appearance of the season underlines the strength of the field, while Asia is also represented by athletes from **Japan**, **Kazakhstan**, **Kyrgyzstan**, **Thailand**, **Uzbekistan** all looking to get to the start line in Tokyo (JPN) in the best possible condition.

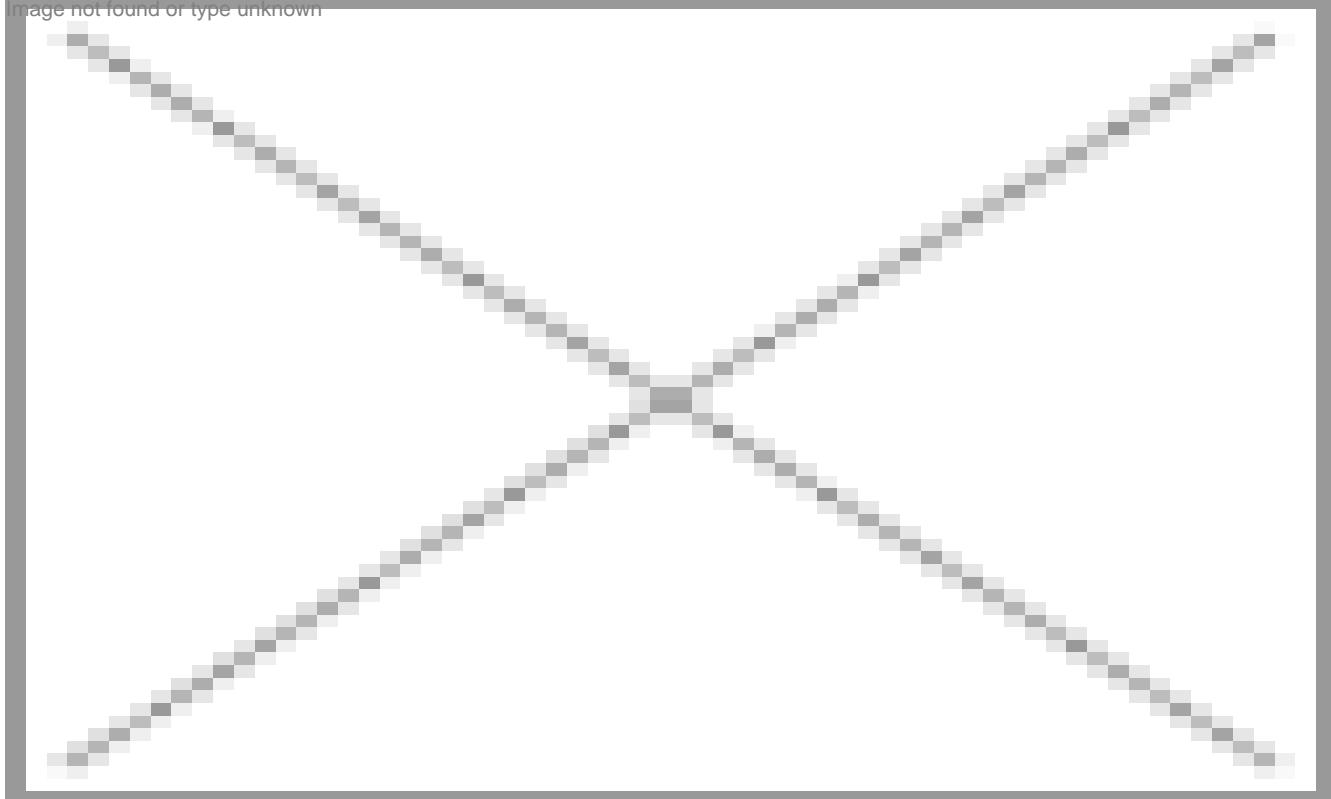
Road to Tokyo

With 46 quota places for the Olympic Modern Pentathlon allocated so far, and 72 places in total up for grabs, there are still opportunities for many of the world's most versatile athletes to reach their coveted destination.

Six automatic places (three for women and three for men) will be on offer during the seasonal showpiece – the UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Championships – taking place in Cairo (EGY) from June 8-14.

Between now and then, the key battleground will take place around UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia I & II, after which the top-ranked 72 athletes will earn a place at the UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Final in Szekesfehervar (HUN).

Athletes can accrue points at each of these competitions and improve their standing in the OWR, which will determine most of the remaining places at the Games. Click to see the latest rankings for women and men.



Many of the world's strongest male pentathletes will chase Olympic qualification points in Sofia

COVID-19 protocol

UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia I and II will be run according to a set of COVID-19 protocols designed to prioritise the health and safety of all participants – athletes, coaches, technical officials and organisers.

The protocol is applied to all aspects of the competition from inbound and outbound travel to accommodation and local transportation, with the intention of minimising risk of COVID-19 infections. Special publications including the *Event Organizers Infection Prevention Guidelines* and *Operational Vade Mecum* can be found at UIPM's COVID-19 information page.

President's statement

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann commented: "In Budapest we had our first UIPM Pentathlon World Cup since Cairo in February 2020 and it was a very important week for our athletes who are trying to collect points for the UIPM Olympic World Ranking.

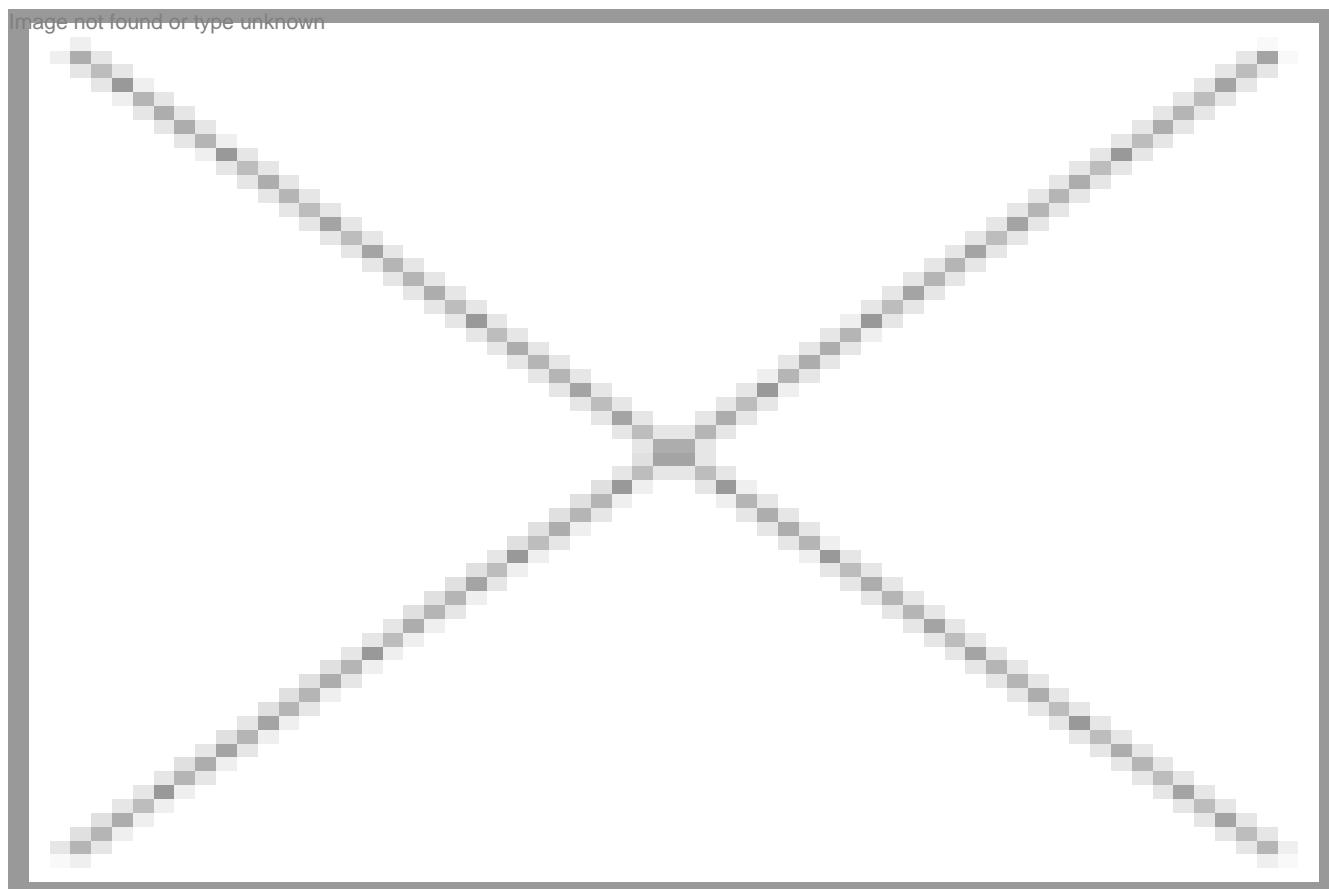
"The high level of organisation underlined that Hungary is one of the strongest pillars in our movement, and now we are in Bulgaria where we can expect to see the same level of high-level competition from our athletes and the same attention to detail from our competition organisers.

"This is a season like no other, and on behalf of the UIPM Executive Board I express my gratitude to the entire global community for showing courage and determination and working together to make sure our athletes have equal opportunities to qualify for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 taking place in 2021.

"I ask all athletes competing in Sofia in the next two weeks to remember their responsibilities and compete in a spirit of fair play and respect, as envisaged by our founder Baron Pierre de Coubertin.

"Whether you are here in Sofia or following the competition on television or via the internet, I hope you enjoy the next days of the women's and men's competition and also the Mixed Relay, which will close the first competition on Sunday and which is a very important demonstration of our commitment to gender equality.

"Once again the health and safety of all participants is our priority, and let's continue enjoy a great Olympic year while taking care of our health. We can overcome the pandemic through discipline, following all advice from the medical experts."



Natsumi Takamiya and Sho Onishi (JPN) will be two of many Asian athletes competing in Bulgaria

Competition schedule

UIPM 2021 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia I begins on Wednesday, April 7 with qualification for the Women's Final (Friday, April 9). The action continues on Thursday, April 8 with qualification for the Men's Final (Saturday, April 10). The Mixed Relay closes the competition on Sunday, April 11.

Watch and follow

As of March 15, 2021, the majority of Modern Pentathlon content on UIPM TV (UIPMTV.org) became available only to subscribers. Live coverage of the Laser Run in each competition – together with highlights from earlier in the day – remains free to view.

Annual subscriptions will be priced at €29.99 with a special 50% discount (code: UIPM50%OFF)

available throughout 2021, reducing the price to €14.95.

- Sign up here for your UIPM TV Yearly Pass or register for free content

Viewers who do not wish to subscribe can register their details on the site to access the free coverage, which will not be available anywhere else online. More information.

Follow World Pentathlon on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram throughout the Pentathlon World Cup for additional content, and visit the UIPM website or download the “UIPM Central” app to keep track of results.