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UIPM OFFICIAL STATEMENT: HORSE WELFARE AND ATHLETE SAFETY IN MODERN PENTATHLON



The events of August 6, 2021 in the Tokyo Stadium have caused distress both inside and outside the global UIPM Sports community.

Riding is an integral part of the Modern Pentathlon, as envisaged by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who aimed to create the ultimate test of moral and physical qualities. The ability to control a horse in a competitive situation is part of the pentathlon toolkit – the Olympic champion must prove they can swim, fence, ride, shoot and run to a high level to earn the coveted gold medal.

The unpredictability of athletes riding on unfamiliar drawn horses, with only 20 minutes to establish an understanding, is part of the dramatic spectacle that makes Modern Pentathlon unique and compelling.

While the number of refusals and falls on August 6 was slightly above average, the Olympic Games is designed as the most challenging of all competitions. The experience of Annika Schleu (GER) and Gulnaz Gubaydullina (ROC) on Saint Boy was unusual in high-level Modern

Pentathlon, especially for riders of their proven ability.

That said, UIPM has a duty of care to all participants in the competitions it oversees; this includes the Olympic Games and it includes horses.

Not only will UIPM conduct a full review of the Riding discipline of the Women's Modern Pentathlon at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, it will also reinforce the importance of horse welfare and athlete safety across the entire global competition structure. UIPM regrets the trauma suffered by Saint Boy in this high-profile incident and has penalised the coach who violated the UIPM Competition Rules by striking the horse from outside the ring.

Although no athlete or horse was physically injured on August 6, the best possible safeguards must be in place to minimise risk in future.

Changes in Riding were already in the pipeline due to the new Modern Pentathlon format coming into force in 2022 for the Paris 2024 Olympic cycle. Horse welfare and athlete safety will be at the centre of this process and the UIPM 2021 Congress in November will provide an opportunity for UIPM's national member federations to participate in a collective effort to secure the future of Riding in Modern Pentathlon.