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# ‘I FEEL LIKE I’M GOING TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH IT’ – HUNGARIAN ATHLETES ENJOY FIRST OBSTACLE DISCIPLINE PRACTICE



Hungary has become the first nation to give its athletes an opportunity to train for Obstacle Discipline, the proposed New 5th Discipline of Modern Pentathlon.

Ahead of the first official Test Event in Ankara (TUR) on June 27/28, a group of Hungarian pentathletes practised on an obstacle rig on the outskirts of Budapest (HUN) – and according to a report in *Nemzeti Sport* the feedback was very positive.

Gergo Bruckmann, 26, said: “This obstacle course is an exciting approach to the pentathlon. You can feel right away which muscle groups we haven’t used before, but we need them here.

“To be honest, I really liked it. My favourite may be the ring pack, but there wasn’t much of a barrier type that I didn’t like. As a child, I climbed trees and jumped through everything, so I

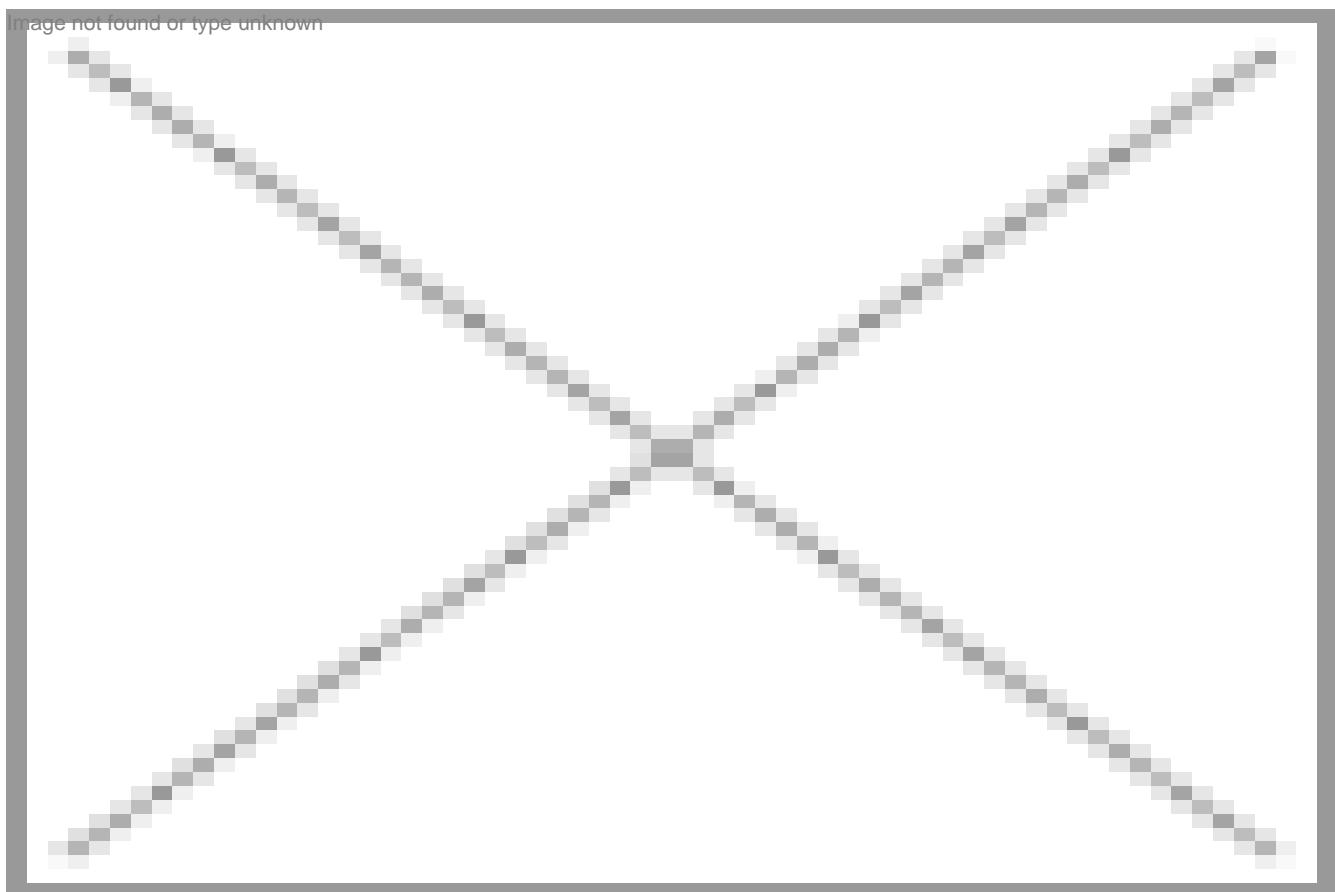
enjoyed it too.

"In terms of idealism, it can't replace Riding in any way, but it's going to fall into place, and so at first I feel like I'm going to be able to make friends with it."

Gergo Salga, 23, said: "Honestly, I really felt like a monkey a little bit, but it was good, interesting and enjoyable. We tried exercises where I thought, 'ah, I'm going to catch this easily', and then it didn't work the way I imagined it to.

"Our forearm muscles are not as elaborate as they would need to be, and it is completely different to catch a static element, such as a wooden rod, than, say, to catch the rope and glide on it from a stroke.

"I've been thinking a lot about whether I'm going to continue my pentathlon after changing the ride, I can't answer that yet, which is why I'd like to go to a test race to see if I like it at all."



Peter Barany, 21, said: "I hope you achieve your goal of obstacle running and ensure that your Pentathlon stays in the Olympic programme.

"I feel that it requires similar skills to the ones we already have, I think it will be possible to fit it into the preparation. Somehow I expected that my palms might blister when, for example, we exercised, my skin reacted similarly – and even when riding, I had injuries of this kind. I think we will be able to cope with this."

The session was observed by coaches Akos Kallai and Janos Martinek (winner of two gold medals at the Seoul 1988 Olympic Games), Sandor Karman, competition manager of the Hungarian Modern Pentathlon Association (HMPA), and Zsolt Stepan, president of the Hungarian Obstacle Sports Federation.

President Stepan said: "It does not matter what part of the body they go into the obstacle with, because even though they work with their arms in the first place, the hips and feet are also important. And if the part of the body with which they should work most is tired, we also need to know what can be helped – this requires complex thinking."

"When riding, decisions must also be made on the track, according to the characteristics of the track: it is important, for example, at what speed the athlete leads the horse onto the obstacle, because if it is too slow, he can run out of time, and if it is too fast, the animal may not jump over it.

"In obstacle racing, decision-making is made without a horse, but you have to make a decision very quickly, from one moment to the next."

Sandor Karman admitted he had held major reservations about the concept but was encouraged by what he saw during the practice session.

He said: "I was in a race of a similar nature on Saturday where it was worrying what I saw, I didn't feel that it was possible to safely set up obstacles in a race, but I am happy to see that there will be a solution [and] it is not as deplorable as I thought it would be.

"Our athletes are good, and the obstacles can be safe. They must be stable so that they are not dangerous to the physical integrity of the athletes and are not at all as dangerous as they seemed to be. Or the pentathletes are too good at it.

"I think we will be able to adapt to that, there will probably be races over the summer where we can show the juniors a little bit what to expect if they want to be pentathletes – or stay."

*Photo credit:*

*Nemzeti Sport/Tumbász Hédi*