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UIPM 2023 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP FINAL: MICHELI (ITA) AND SHABAN (EGY) SECURE OLYMPIC QUALIFICATION

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- Paris 2024 quota places secured by champion athletes from Italy and Egypt
- Ozyuksel (TUR) and Oteiza (FRA) claim medals in thrilling Women's Final
- Late slip denies Choong (GBR) glory as Hernandez (MEX) takes Men's Final bronze

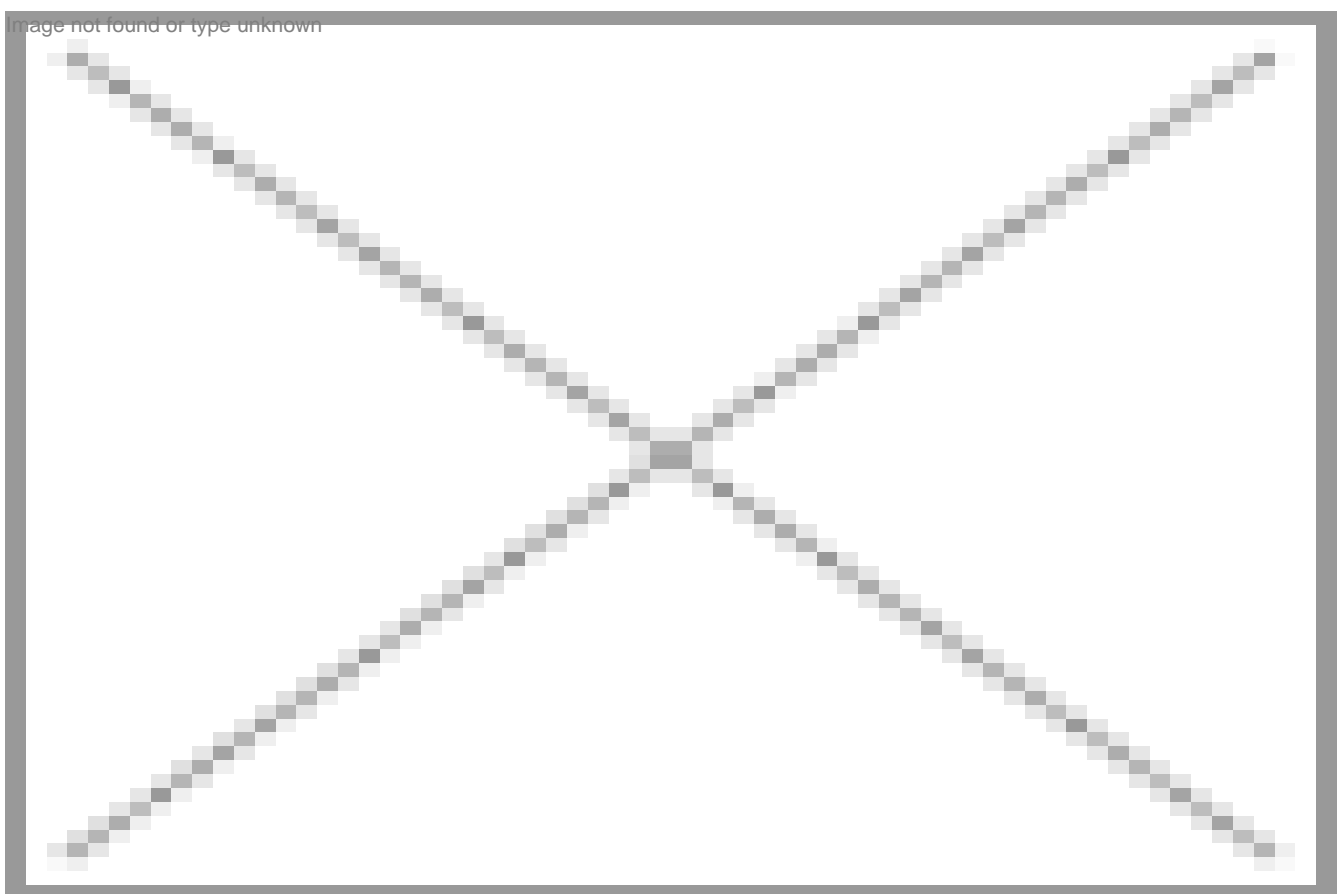
Elena Micheli of **Italy** and **Mohanad Shaban** of **Egypt** have secured the first two direct qualification quota places for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games after winning individual gold at the UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Cup Final.

Micheli (ITA) won a thrilling Women's Final after holding off the challenge of local favourite **Ilke Ozyuksel** of **Türkiye**, who delighted the home crowd with silver, and bronze medallist **Marie Oteiza** of **France**, with **Alice Sotero** (ITA), **Gintare Venckauskaite** of Lithuania and **Kerenza Bryson** of **Great Britain** completing the top six.

The Men's Final almost had to be abandoned due to heavy rain, but it finally took place after a three-hour rain delay. And slippery conditions were a major factor in a heart-stopping Laser Run climax.

Shaban (EGY) ended up on his back at the first corner, but it was a slip from Tokyo 2020 Olympic champion **Joseph Choong** of **Great Britain** in the final metres that determined the winner as Shaban (EGY) prevailed in one of the most dramatic sprint finishes Modern Pentathlon has seen.

Emiliano Hernandez of **Mexico** held off pressure from **Csaba Bohm** of **Hungary** to secure bronze, while **Woojin Park** of **Korea** and **Marek Grycz** of **Czech Republic** completed the top six.



Medallists' reaction

Women's champion Micheli (ITA) said: "I can't actually believe it, because I stayed at home for one week because of a little injury, and I came here thinking 'OK, let's try it for some experience, to add it to my baggage', and now I did it!"

"Everything was happening, I was trying a new gun and also my dog threw me on the ground three days ago. So I came here to try, and then I noticed I was gaining points and moving up many positions, and I thought 'maybe I can do it today, I just need to believe in myself'.

"It's funny because something always seems to happen before the competition. I don't know if I have to expect my life to go this way every time, but if the conclusion is like this today, OK, I can

live with it.

“I really have to thank all the staff, the ones that follow me every day. Thanks to Gigi, thanks to my parents, to my brothers, to Pierpaolo who stays at my side, to my friends. Thanks to all at the Carabinieri Sports Centre because it would be impossible to do this without you.”

Silver medallist Ozyuksel (TUR) added: “I fell down at the beginning of the Laser Run, same as I did one month ago in the same place, so during the competition I felt so much pain.

“I’m happy. I wanted to take the first place for Olympic qualification, but with 2nd place I am happy too. We will look for qualification in the future at the European Games and World Championships.

“We will see – our preparation is going very well and I can focus so much better than I could last year. I can control myself more, so I am happy. Looking in future for the gold medal.

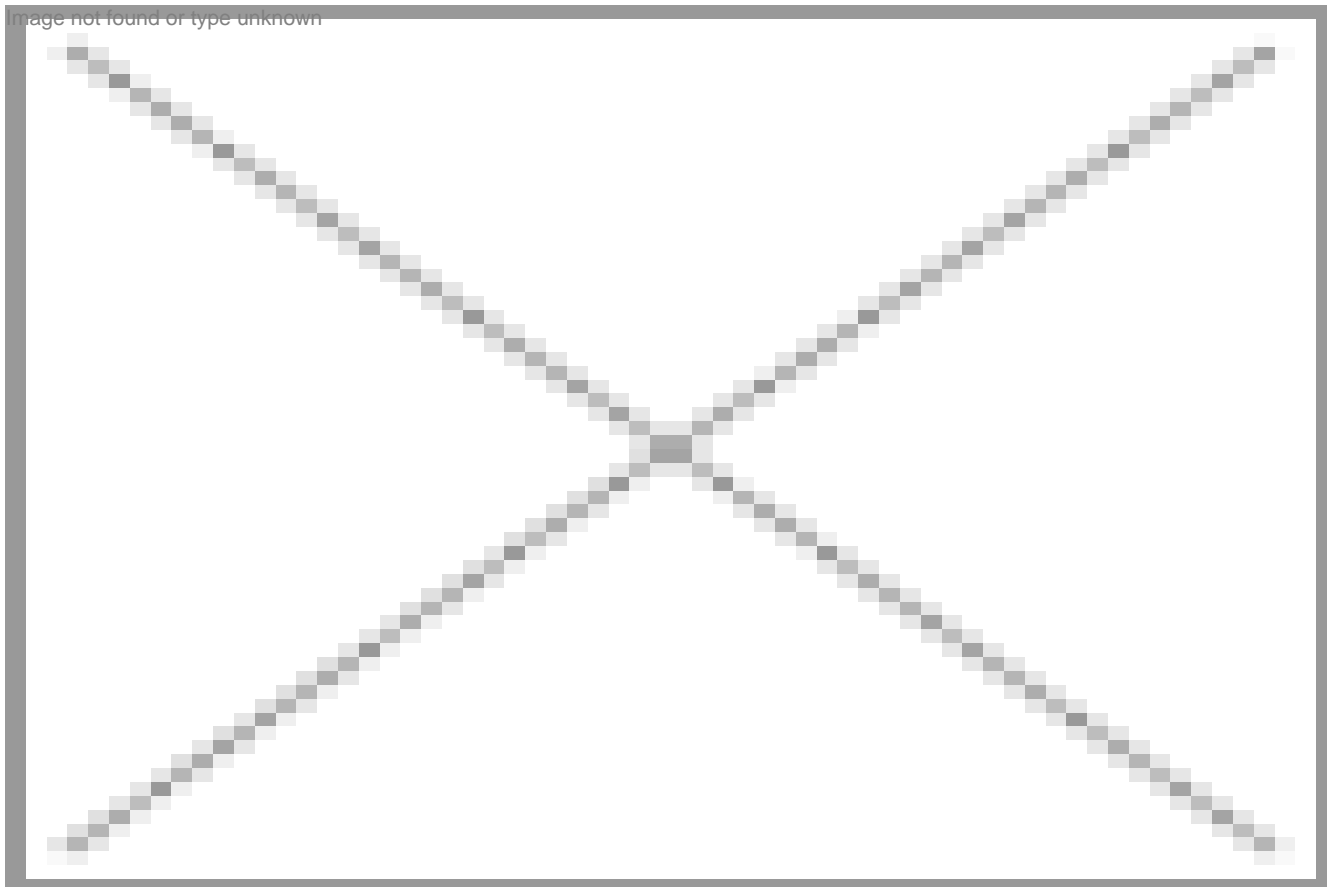
“It’s unbelievable [to win a medal in a home event], and actually I was thinking about the 1st place and I got so stressed in the final shoot because I was too excited, I couldn’t control myself. But 2nd place is good too.”

Bronze medallist Oteiza (FRA) said: “It’s a long process to be back at this level, and I am happy because my technical disciplines are better and better, and now it’s just Swimming and Running that are coming back slowly.

“I’m really happy with this competition, which has the Olympic format – 3rd place is really nice. Shooting was OK but there were really good shooters and runners with me, and it was a battle – the last 600m was a real battle.

“Elena was better than me today, also Ilke, but I’m really satisfied with this race. I hope my family watched and my boyfriend, and I am really proud to show them that slowly, but surely, I am coming back.”

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Men's champion Shaban (EGY) said: "In my first World Cup of the season, in Egypt, I took the 4th place; then I got the gold here in Ankara and then the silver in Budapest. Then I came back here for the World Cup Final and I took the gold from the Olympic champion and the best finisher I think in Pentathlon – I'm so happy.

"I hope to do it again in Paris 2024, and nothing is impossible. Maybe I could."

Silver medallist Choong (GBR) added: "It was a great finish. We came down the slight slope and people had their phone lights on trying to light the floor – but it doesn't do anything, occasionally you hit a muddy bit and you slip.

"There was a bit of jostling, as there always is, but I hit the last corner and then hit a puddle and tilted forwards. From then I'm sliding, splashing around, a bit like ice skating, to be honest.

"But all credit to Mohanad, he's got a good finish and I think it's the first time someone has outsprinted me. Fair play – I'm not particularly happy about it but I'll have it next time.

"I choose to see it as a positive. In the last cycle I got that first Olympic qualification spot, and then it was a bit of a weird feeling at the Europeans because that's the best chance to get the Olympic qualification, and it's coming up in a few weeks.

"For me not to have it now is almost a good thing because it keeps me hungry and excited for the next competition.

"Becoming European champion would complete my collection, and I don't know how many pentathletes have ever got the whole package, so that's a big goal for me. Also the other guys like Shaban and Jun and other great athletes won't be there, so hopefully I'm in with a good shout."

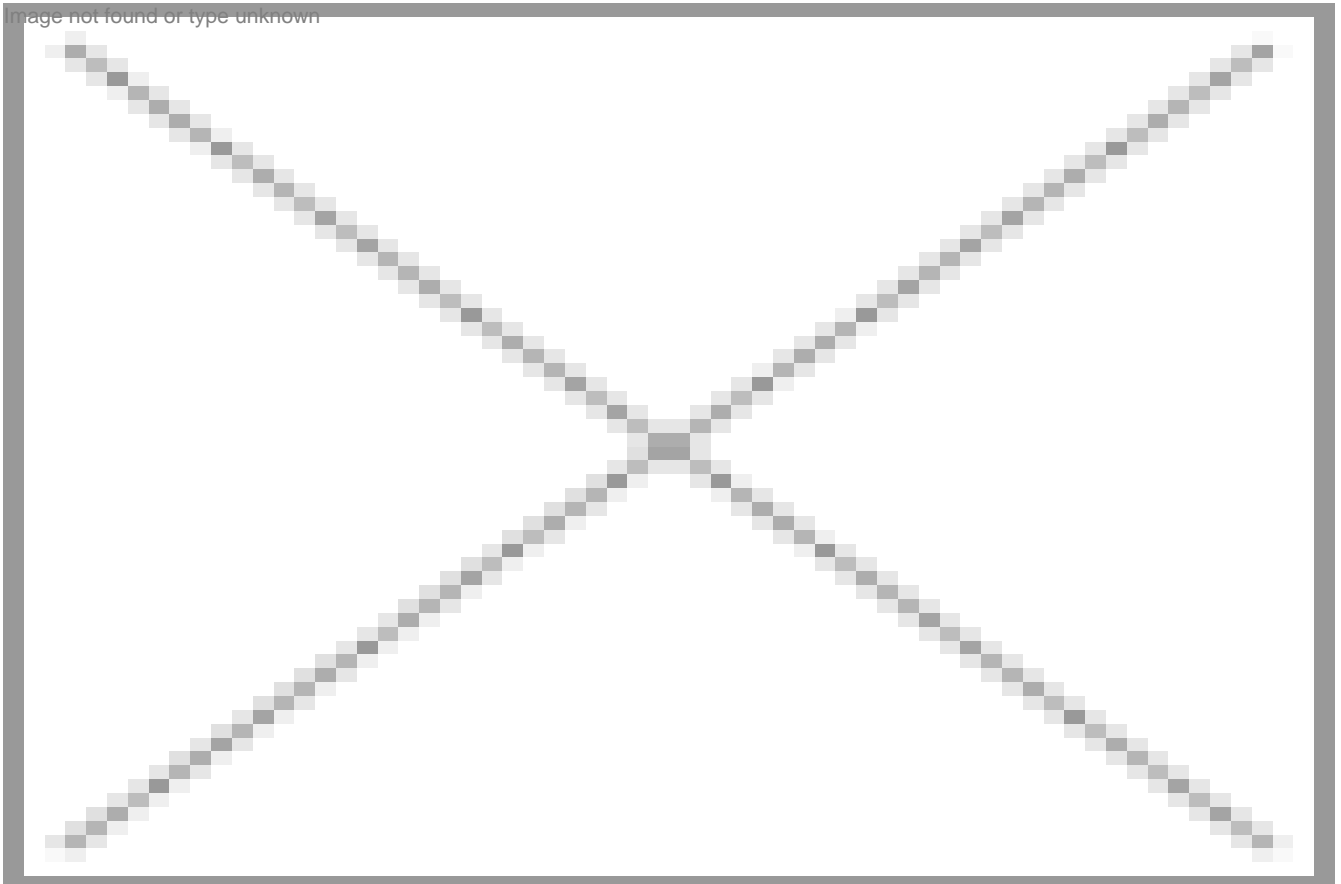
Bronze medallist Hernandez (MEX) said: "I'm amazed. We did so much hard work this season,

and I have a special coach who told me 'it's time to put the game in play, nothing to lose, everything to win'.

"I am amazed because that coach changed my mentality in this competition, and I am super happy. I hope everyone at home is happy and enjoying that Mexico is on the podium.

"My goal was to qualify for Paris 2024, but they say when you aim to the stars, maybe you will arrive to the moon. And right now it's the moon – I just finished 3rd in a World Cup Final and it's amazing.

"There are several months of hard work ahead, but I know that with my team I can have an amazing Pan American Games."



Women's Final

Riding

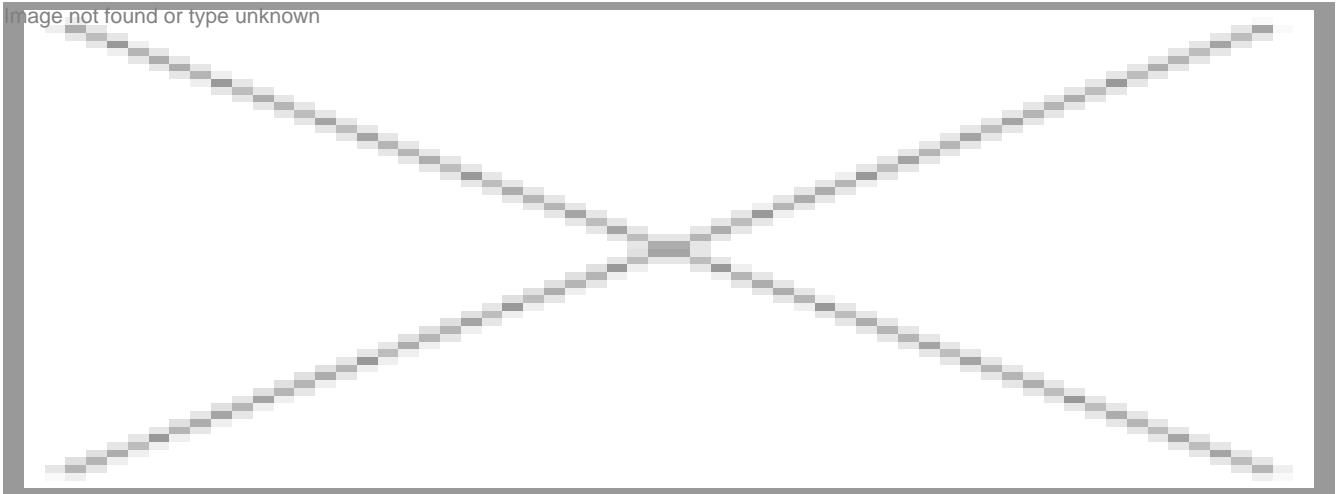
The nerves of competing on this elevated stage were apparent as athletes undertook a challenging Riding course, but Ozyuksel (TUR) did her best to calm the tension with a 293.

The big mover was **Olivia Green** (GBR), whose flawless round took her from 16th all the way up to 5th overall. Lithuania trio Venckauskaite (286), **Laura Asadauskaite** (279) and **Ieva Serapinaite** (286) stayed in contention and then the world champion announced her claim.

Micheli (ITA) rode serenely to register an immaculate score of 300 that moved her into the top three, and she was only denied further progress by a 300 from **Karolina Krenkova** (CZE) and a 299 from ice queen Oteiza (FRA), who moved 14 points clear overall.

It was a tough round for **Rebecca Langrehr** of **Germany** and **Elodie Clouvel** (FRA), each of whom incurred 28 penalties, while **Mariana Arceo** (MEX) and **Seungmin Seong** (KOR) reached

the end of the road with elimination.



Fencing

Having moved into the top 10 overall, the star of the Bonus Round was Ozyuksel (TUR) as she scored four victories for another eight points boosting her podium prospects.

Asadauskaite (LTU), Micheli (ITA) and Krenkova (CZE) also moved four points closer to their goal, but Oteiza (FRA) had the final word with a victory over Clouvel (FRA) that maintained her 14-point cushion.

Oteiza (FRA) had achieved the highest score of 24V/11D in the Fencing Ranking Round, with defending champion Clouvel (FRA) only one victory worse off.

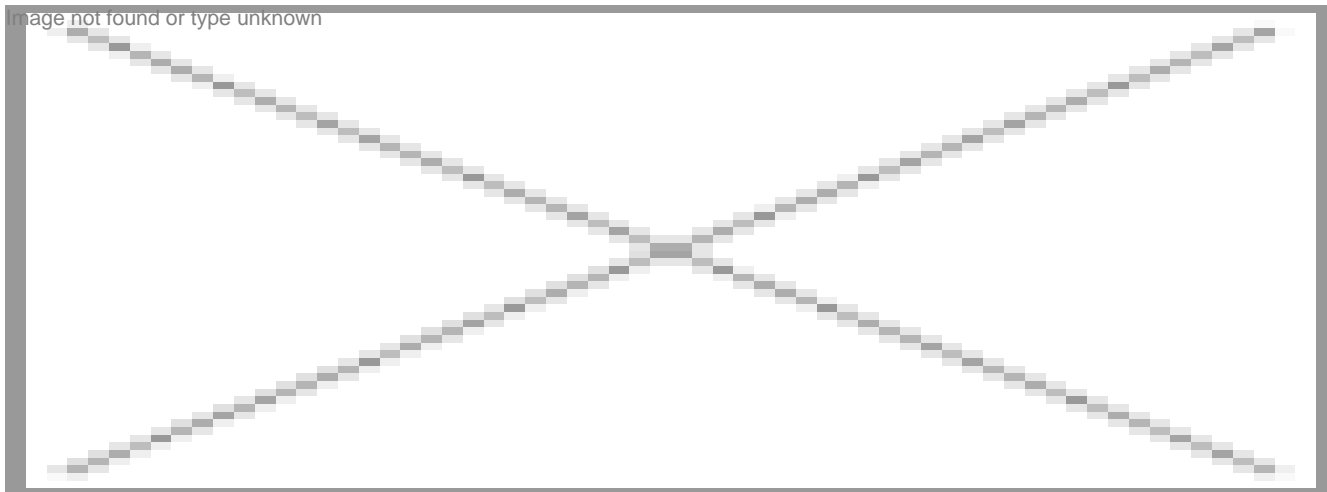
Three athletes qualified for the Final after scoring a competitive 21V/13D – Langrehr (GER), Krenkova (CZE) and Seong (KOR).

Swimming

The swim was destined to be a showdown between the women who won the two biggest annual prizes in Modern Pentathlon last year.

And it was the 2022 world champion Micheli (ITA) who touched first in the final heat in 2min 14.77sec, beating the defending Pentathlon World Cup Final champion Clouvel (FRA) by 0.63sec. The overall lead of Oteiza (FRA) was cut to 12 points as Micheli (ITA) strengthened her position and Clouvel (FRA) gained six points on her team-mate.

The fastest swim of the day came in the second heat, won by a huge margin by Sotero (ITA) as she moved from 11th to 5th overall with a terrific 2:10.94.



Laser Run

Immediately Oteiza (FRA) looked vulnerable in pole position, as her lead was eroded in the first run and then she suffered a 26sec shoot, allowing Micheli (ITA) and Krenkova (CZE) to take advantage. In fact it was Krenkova (CZE) who caught the eye most in the first half of the race and took the lead briefly after a second rapid shoot.

Behind the top three, Sotero (ITA), Ozyuksel (TUR) and Asadauskaite (LTU) were all advancing well, but Micheli (ITA) had the race-management experience and stamina to know that if she could control her shooting, she could win the race, and so it proved when a clamour of athletes arrived at the range for the final time and it was the world champion's clinical 10sec shoot that proved decisive.

Micheli (ITA) ran powerfully and held on to win by 3sec, leaving all the drama behind her. Having cut her knee so early in the race, the tenacious Ozyuksel (TUR) seemed to have enough momentum to achieve an unforgettable home win, but her final shoot let her down, like it had for Asadauskaite (LTU) on the third circuit.

Their struggles enabled Sotero (ITA) to leave the fourth shoot looking good for an Italian one-two, but she was caught by Oteiza (FRA) and then by the marauding Ozyuksel (TUR).

They were joined on the podium by Venckauskaite (LTU), whose Laser Run time of 11:26.30 was easily the best of the day, and Pentathlon World Cup Sofia champion Bryson (GBR, 11.47.10), who was quicker than everyone else except Ozyuksel (TUR, 11.41.90).

Men's Final

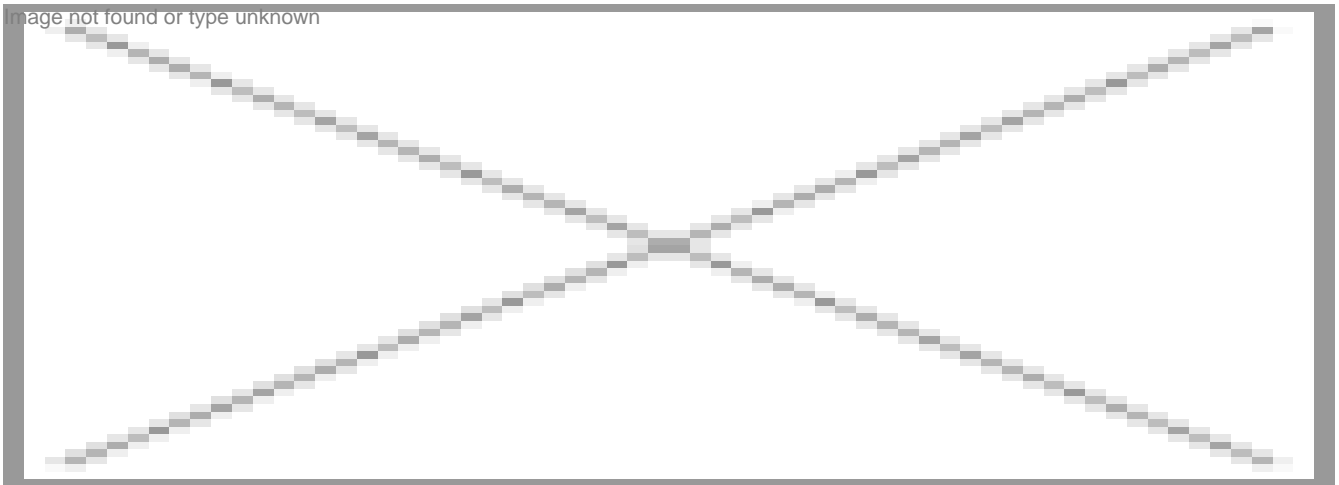
Riding

After a long wait for the rain to cease and the venue to become playable, another tense Riding round brought out the best of horsemanship in numerous athletes.

Clean rounds enabled Grycz (CZE), Hernandez (MEX) and Park (KOR) to move up the overall standings, with Hernandez (MEX) vaulting from 10th all the way up to 2nd.

Choong (GBR) and leader Shaban (EGY) each stayed in contention with a 286, while **Matteo Cicinelli** (ITA) and Bohm (HUN) remained prominent with only one knockdown in their rounds.

The field of 18 contenders was reduced to 15 with elimination for **Marvin Dogue** (GER), **Pavlo Tymoshchenko** of **Ukraine** and, to the relief of the other medal favourites, defending champion and world No.1 **Woongtae Jun** (KOR).



Fencing

The Fencing Bonus Round is not the most heavily-weighted part of the sport but sometimes in the final analysis, victory in a single bout can appear to be a decisive factor. So it proved when Shaban (EGY) took his opportunity to add four points to his tally and, in doing so, deny Choong (GBR) two points to the six he had already gained from three wins.

The other stars of the Bonus Round were **Changwan Seo** (KOR) with four wins and Grycz (CZE) with three.

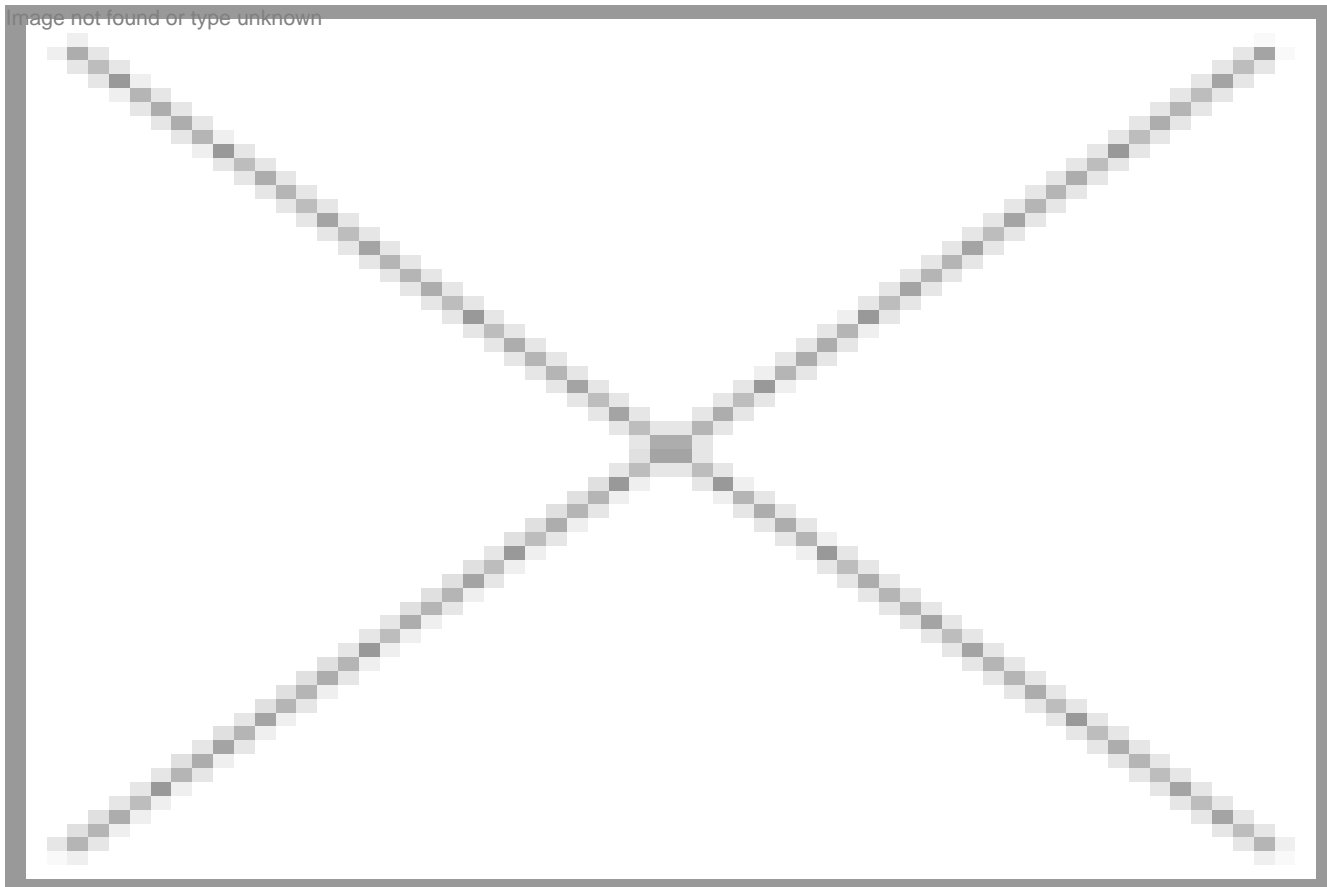
The Ranking Round had been dominated by **Shaban** (EGY), continuing his irrepressible form of 2023. With an impressive 25V/10D, he managed one more victory than **Jun** (KOR) and **Linbin Zhang** of **China**. **Choong** (GBR) was joined by **Manuel Padilla** (MEX) and **Park** (KOR) on a solid 22 victories.

Swimming

Predictably, world No.2 and reigning world champion Choong (GBR) boosted his victory bid in the pool, but only gained three points on Shaban (EGY) while Cicinelli (ITA) posted what was narrowly the best time of the day, 2:03.55.

Choong (GBR) also ducked under 2:04 in the Pentathlon Arena 25m pool for 303 points, while Bohm (HUN) added 301 and Shaban (EGY) 300 to their overall tally.

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Laser Run

There had to be an element of improvisation in the way the venue was rearranged to enable the Men's Final to take place, and there were areas of the running course that the floodlights could not reach. Shaban (EGY) found this to his cost when he ran into the opening corner and lost his footing completely in a puddle.

It was remarkable how well the 22-year-old Egyptian recovered from that mishap to protect his 10sec starting lead. Once again he shot with masterful consistency (12sec/12sec/8sec), only giving Choong (GBR) a chance at the last visit to the range when he took 17sec to fire his shots.

Choong (GBR) seemed to have seized his chance as he muscled past his rival before entering the darkened wooded section of the cross-country course, where overtaking was unlikely. But Shaban (EGY) gritted his teeth and stayed right on the elbow of the more celebrated athlete, setting up a frantic sprint to the line that evoked memories of the epic duel between James Cooke (GBR) and Valentin Prades (FRA) at the UIPM 2018 Pentathlon World Championships in Mexico City (MEX).

Speaking of Mexico, winning bronze was a monumental achievement for Hernandez (MEX), younger brother of Rio 2016 Olympic bronze medallist Ismael Hernandez (MEX). Especially as he held off the challenge of one of the hottest athletes of this Olympic cycle, Bohm (HUN).

Conditions being as bad as they were, those who mastered the conditions best could be truly proud of their efforts, as **Balazs Szep** (HUN) managed the day's best time of 10:30.57, with Seo (KOR, 10:31.99) next-fastest ahead of Choong (GBR, 10:36.60).

President's reaction

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: “The Women’s Final this morning included a lucky situation with the weather conditions that enabled us to see an excellent competition in this fantastic facility with five disciplines in a Pentathlon Arena.

“The athletes performed so well, knowing that only the winning place would be a seat at the Olympic Games Paris 2024, and we saw a great final with the Laser Run which is always the most exciting part of our multi-sport Modern Pentathlon.

“I also want to underline that the volunteers and referees and everyone who is vital to a successful competition created a great foundation for our sport. The athletes were fantastic and let’s see now what they can achieve in the continental championships and the UIPM Pentathlon World Championships in Bath coming up soon.

“It was also super to see the host nation celebrating their silver medal won by Ilke Ozyuksel.

“In the men’s competition there was a really big challenge for all of us – for the organisers, for the Union and for the athletes and coaches – when we saw this unbelievable rainfall that almost stopped the event.

“After a long discussion with the coaches – and it was very important to listen to the athletes – we finally decided following the athletes’ wishes that we could replicate all that was needed to keep the competition at the same facility.

“But the Men’s Final was so exciting, and everybody thought the Olympic champion would win but the Egyptian athlete has a big heart, and to fight him down in the final metres was so exciting.

“I congratulate all athletes who were on the podium, all who reached today’s Finals and also all athletes who qualified for this competition. Thanks to the Turkish Federation and National Olympic Committee and all involved in this fantastic first Olympic qualification competition in Ankara.”

Watch and follow

The UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Cup Final concludes with the Mixed Relay on Sunday, June 4. Live coverage is available on UIPM TV and up-to-date results competitions can be found at the UIPM website and via the UIPM Central app.

The rest of the UIPM 2023 competition calendar, including the showpiece UIPM 2023 Pentathlon and Laser Run World Championships in Bath (GBR), can be viewed [here](#).

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