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NEW PENTATHLON DISCIPLINE: OBSTACLE INTEGRATION TAKES MAJOR STEP FORWARD AT EUROPEAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS IN LITHUANIA

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In a season of historic firsts, Lithuania is playing a lead role.

By hosting the 2023 European Youth Championships (U17 and U19) in Druskininkai in May and June, the Baltic nation became the first organiser to deliver a continental competition with the new Modern Pentathlon sequence of Fencing, Obstacle, Swimming and Laser Run.

In September, the same venue will play host to the UIPM 2023 Pentathlon Junior World Championships, bringing together a new world order with many nations expected to send athletes to compete in a full Pentathlon for the first time.

This was an important step, building on the experience of 12 nations that already organised competitions in 2023 with the new-look Modern Pentathlon. So how did it go? We interviewed the

following people for an in-depth update:

- **Justinas Kinderis** (JK), Secretary General of the Lithuania Modern Pentathlon Federation (LMPF), 2013 world champion
- **Andrea Dell'Amore** (AD), UIPM Technical Delegate
- **Alexandre Franca** (AF), UIPM Operations Director

THE ORGANISER

Doing something for the first time can be challenging. How was your experience of hosting the first continental competition with Obstacle?

JK: Well, the preparation was really challenging, because nobody knew how it would work and where we should get the obstacles, and this is still a challenge for other federations. But we had good support from UIPM, and the mat providers and obstacle providers did a really good job. Everything came on time. A few days before the competition we had the course fully set up with UIPM branding.

Did participating athletes get a chance to test the Obstacle course before the competition?

JK: One day before the start, we opened up the course for free training. We had really good facilities for the other disciplines too – 10am-7pm. This was really good for athletes. As a former athlete, I know it's good to have flexible time for training before a competition.

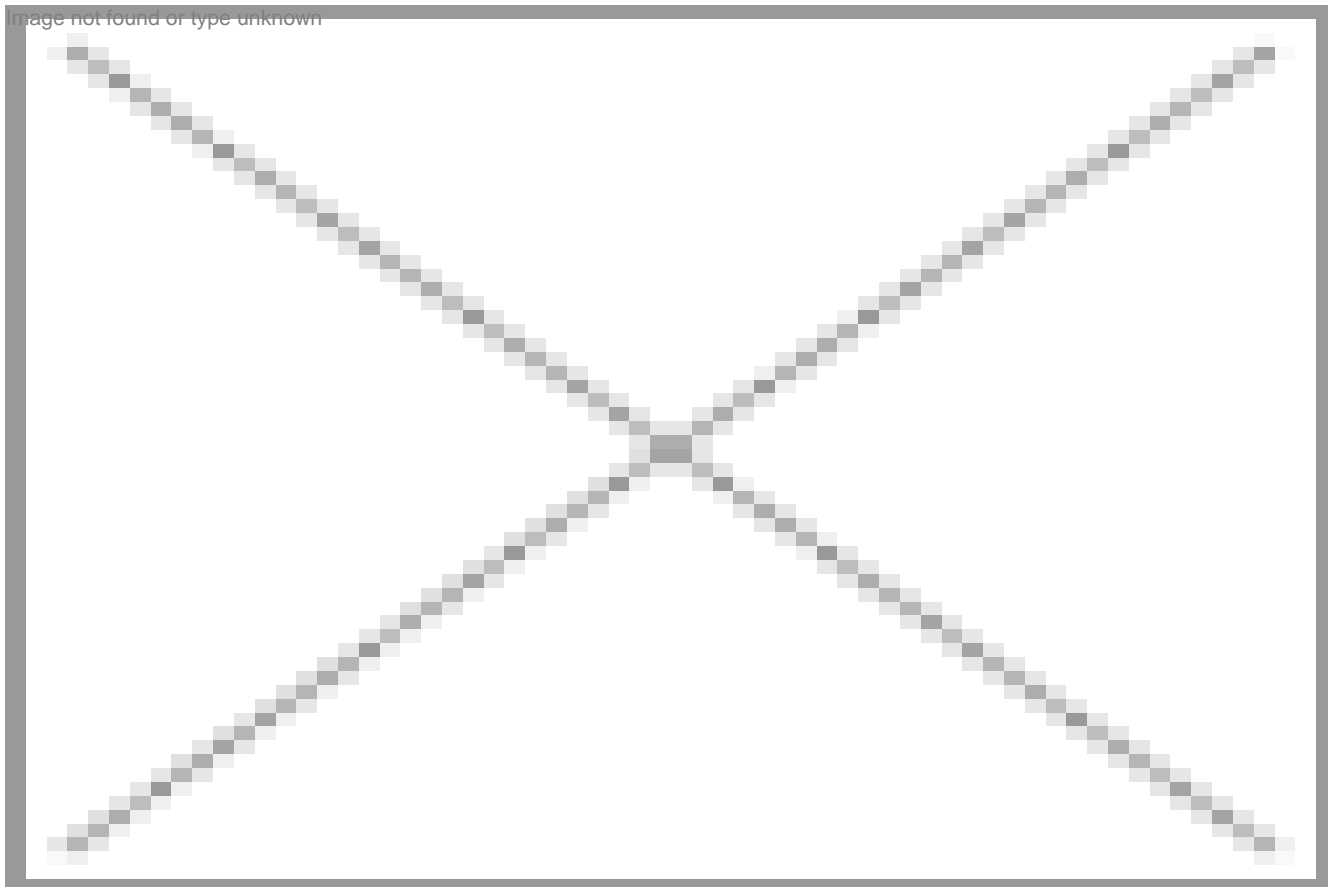
What kind of post-event feedback did you get from participants and where do you see room for improvement ahead of the World Juniors?

JK: From our side, we had so much good feedback from federations, athletes and coaches and international competitions. We invested a lot in this competition because we are looking to the future, and it won't be the last one. We want our National Federation to be associated not only with good athletes but as a good competition organiser, too. And it all starts with youth.

In September we are planning to have an even better quality competition in collaboration with UIPM. The competition part will be small improvements, can change facilities like branding, TV

broadcasting, we had normal levels for Youth but not enough for World Junior. For sure, more people will watch and we have to show that more people should join this sport.

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THE TECHNICAL DELEGATE

As the person with technical oversight of the competition in Druskininkai, can you please comment on the success of this first integration of Obstacle into Modern Pentathlon at continental level?

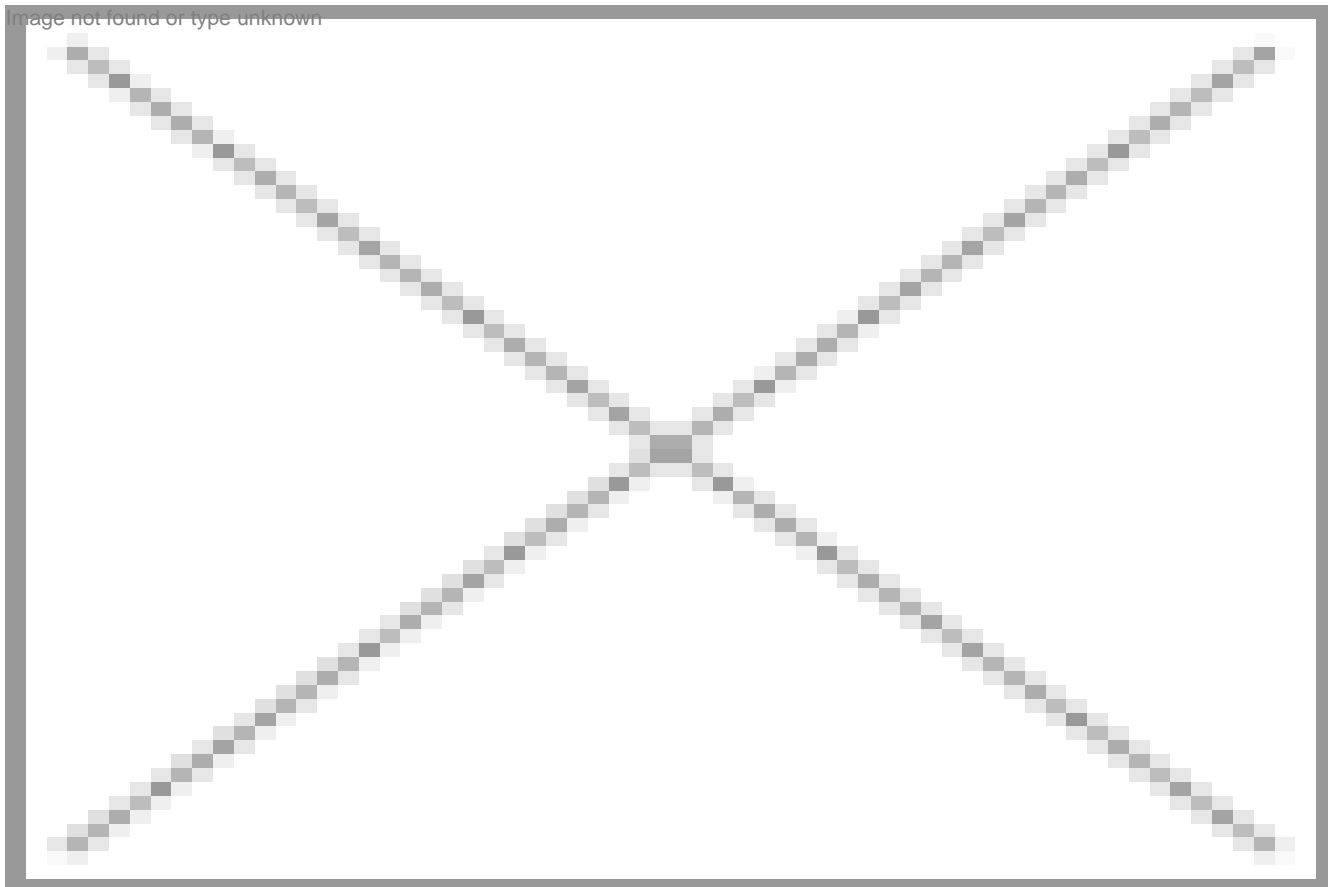
AD: Indeed it was my first official competition with Obstacle and on my personal side, everything was almost perfect, very good quality of the course and also everything fine in terms of safety. The level of our athletes is already very good, pentathletes can adapt themselves to any kind of sport, we had only very few eliminations due only to a lack of training.

Another crucial point was also the perfect integration of Obstacle into the new format. Almost all the athletes and the coaches were really satisfied, I had very good feedback.”

What was your personal feeling, experiencing the Obstacle discipline on the field of play for the first time?

AD: In my personal opinion, the Obstacle competition was really exciting. During the Men's Individual Final I felt like I was in a stadium with the cheering of the audience, and I hope this is only the first step in making our beloved sport known to the whole world.

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THE VIEW FROM HEADQUARTERS

Obstacle has been integrated into Modern Pentathlon in national competitions in more than 20 countries worldwide and now at European level. Can you comment on the successes and learnings of the process so far?

AF: The event in Lithuania was very well managed by the LMPF, setting up the first UIPM Obstacle Competition Kit provided via the tender conducted by the Union earlier this year.

The athletes enjoyed correct preparation, the quality of obstacles and safety mattresses was guaranteed, and the event passed without injuries.

Feedback forms were distributed to athletes and coaches and all collected info will be analysed for presentation to internal stakeholders aiming at the improvement of the new discipline quality standards.

We are grateful to all of the nations that organised competitions with the newly-integrated Obstacle discipline so far in 2023. Countries like Lithuania are leading the way for others to follow and we look forward to returning to Druskininkai for the UIPM 2023 Pentathlon Junior World Championships in September.

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