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VOYAGE TO PARIS 2024: PART VIII

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Leading off...

Pentathlon and Paris to get the 'cinematic look' as visions for Games and festivities begin to focus

How can you rehearse behind closed doors when there are no doors to close? This is the conundrum facing organisers of the Paris Olympic Games' groundbreaking Opening Ceremony as the vision for the entire event comes into sharper focus.

By deciding to hold the curtain-raising festivities across the French capital with as many as half a million spectators taking in a historic Parade of Nations taking place on the river Seine, Paris 2024 planners have dramatically cut with tradition.

But much like the majority of its preparations, things are already moving ahead of schedule with Thierry Reboul, the Paris 2024 Executive Director of Branding, Events and Ceremonies, recently confirming that the Opening Ceremony plans will be complete before the end of December.

Reboul is leading a team of 200 who are working on the ceremony but that will balloon to 8000 by the time July 26 rolls around. While some portions of the production can be worked on in private, Reboul admitted others will have to be rehearsed in public along the city's waterway. "They will serve as teasers," he said, with estimates that the TV audience for the spectacle could top 1.5 billion.

"You have to be able to have a type of writing that seduces both [live and TV] populations. Everyone will see a show. The day before yesterday, we had our first camera shot. In total, for the moment, we are on 130 cameras to film this extraordinary event."

In a city that sees itself as cinema's birthplace, the Games will fittingly have a "cinematic look" according to Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS), which will be beaming images and sounds from the event around the world.

"Paris and France are the birthplace of cinema," OBS chief executive Yiannis Exarchos said in August. "[So] we would like to give these Games a more cinematic look. That's why we'll be using a lot of cinematic lenses which will give the image a texture that you get on the big screen and not really on TV."

With Pentathlon already getting a dramatic backdrop at its Palace of Versailles venue, the movie theatre treatment will only add to the drama.

> Paris Pointer

The fourth — and the force — are with Asadauskait? (LTU) as she prepares for a remarkable fifth Olympic Games

Laura Asadauskait? (LTU) will turn 40 years of age in early 2024. The two-time Olympic medalist appears intent on showing her Pentathlon competitors and the wider that if life doesn't exactly begin at 40, it certainly doesn't end there.

After sitting out competition for well over 18 months, Asadauskait? returned to the elite level in April of this year at the UIPM 2023 World Cup Budapest (HUN). A gold medalist in London in 2012 and silver medalist in the delayed Tokyo Games in 2021, Asadauskait? also competed in the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the Rio Games in 2016. Simply put, she has nothing to prove.

However if anyone was expecting the Lithuanian legend, after 15 years at the elite level, to be beginning to wind things down a little, she has very much put them in their place.

At the UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Championships in late August Asadauskait? finished just a whisker away from the podium, settling for fourth place as Elena Micheli (ITA) claimed back-to-back titles.

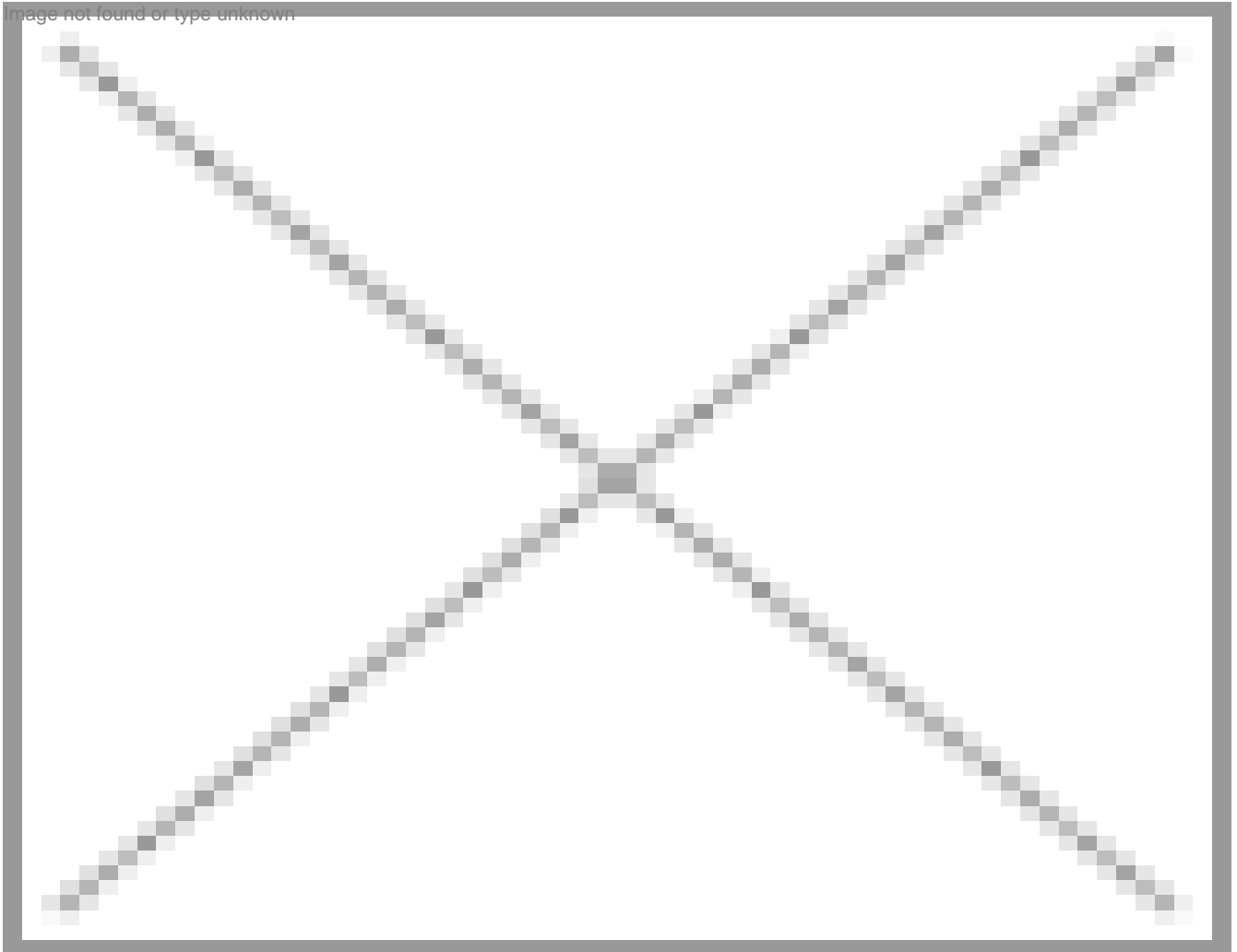
Remarkably it was the fourth time across five senior events this season that Asadauskait? has finished in fourth position.

At World Cup events in Budapest (HUN) and Sofia (BUL) and again at the 2023 European Games in Krakow (POL) she also finished just one place off the medals. That latter performance secured Lithuania a quota place for Paris 2024 with over a year to spare.

Meanwhile at the UIPM 2023 World Cup Final in Ankara (TUR) in June she also finished in the top

10. All of this has been enough to see Asadauskaitė rocket back to the upper echelon of the UIPM World Rankings where she currently sits in 6th.

Away from statistics, Asadauskaitė is passing the eye test too, pushing her younger rivals all the way to the podium. With Paris coming over the horizon, she's proving age is just a number too.



Numbers game

77,469 The number of people who have benefitted from Impact 2024 International, a Paris 2024 programme aimed at strengthening the social role of sport in Africa. The scheme has supported 45 projects implemented in 19 African countries all as part of the legacy of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Qualification latest

After the 2023 Pan Am Games in Santiago (CHI) from October 20 to November, 44 of the 72 quota places at Paris 2024 have now been claimed. Women: Italy (2), Great Britain (2), China, Japan, Korea, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Spain, Lithuania, France, Hungary, Germany, Egypt, Australia, Czech Republic (pending validation), Mexico USA, Brazil Ecuador and the International Athletes Team (EAI). Men: Egypt (2), Mexico (2), Italy, China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Kazakhstan, Great Britain, Hungary, France, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Switzerland, Australia, Ecuador, Cuba, Argentina and EAI.

Now that over half of the precious places at Paris have been secured, the focus will immediately

shift to the remaining 28 places. However the hectic qualification rush over recent months will now slow down a little with no further places being decided until 2024.

Full details of the Paris 2024 qualification process can be found at uipmworld.org/olympic-games