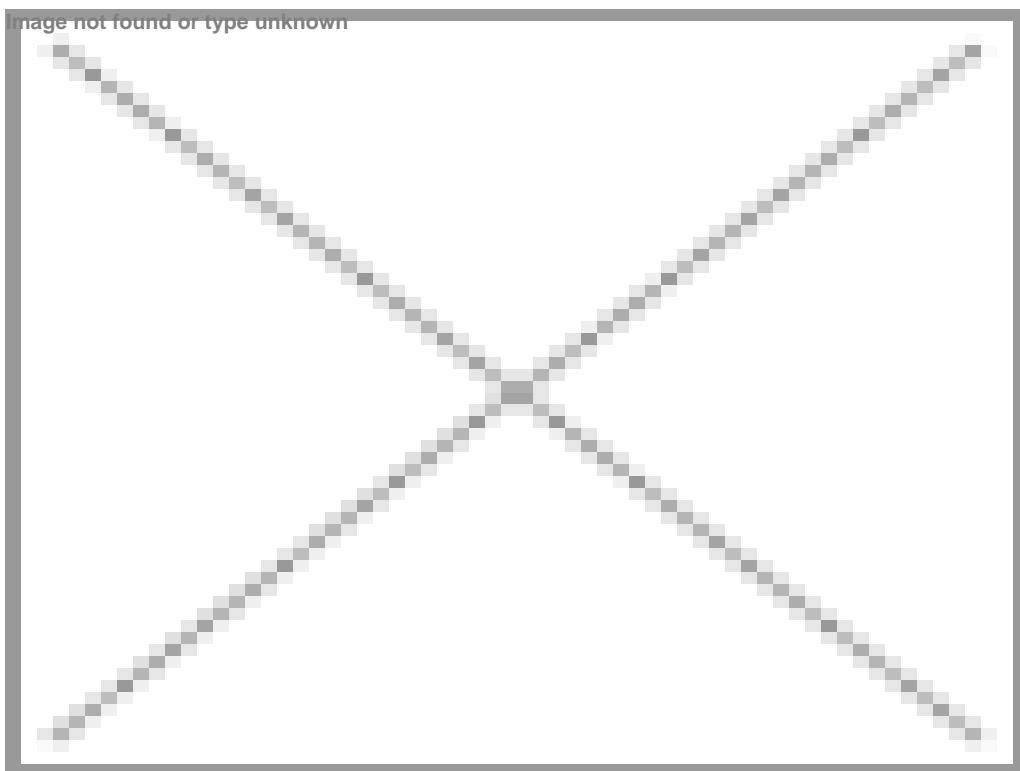


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# UIPM 2024 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP SOFIA: GOLDEN GLORY FOR GUZI (HUN) AND DEJARDIN (FRA)

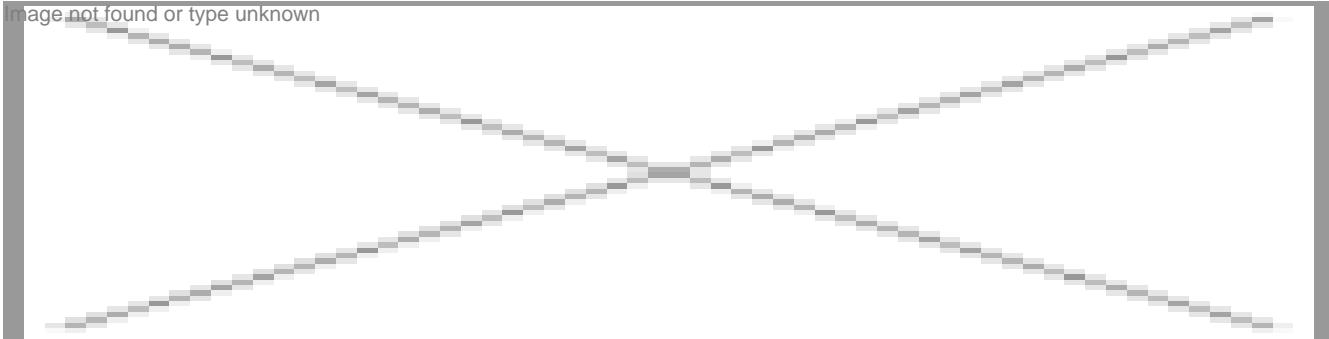


- Laser Run specialist climbs six places to claim second women's gold
- Paris 2024 Olympic dreams revived for first-time men's champion
- Medals for Varley (GBR) and Egypt trio Ismail, Shaban and Elgendi

**Blanka Guzi** of Hungary and **Pierre Dejardin** of France came from behind to enjoy eye-catching victories on Super Sunday UIPM 2024 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia.

In the Women's Final, Laser Run specialist Guzi (HUN) overcame a significant deficit from a Laser Run starting position of 7th to win her second Pentathlon World Cup gold, coming from behind as she did last year in Budapest (HUN).

Unable to resist the late charge, **Jessica Varley** of Great Britain was nonetheless overjoyed with a redemptive silver medal, and teenage prospect **Malak Ismail** of Egypt underlined her prowess with a second bronze of the season.



In reaching the podium, all three medallists overtook the ailing **Elodie Clouvel** (FRA), who enjoyed an almost flawless competition but was let down badly by her shooting, which caused her to lose a big lead in Laser Run and swap places with Guzi (HUN) for a final placing of 7th.

There was considerable consolation for a disappointed French team in the Men's Final, as they earned three top-eight places including the highest prize of all, a career-first gold for Dejardin (FRA).

The 30-year-old showed great perseverance to claim his first medal since collecting a bronze, also in Sofia (BUL), six years ago. And there was more success for the prolific Egyptian team as they continued their run of two medallists in every Men's Final this season.

This time it was **Mohanad Shaban** (EGY) who claimed the internal bragging rights after holding off a late charge from **Mohamed Elgendi** (EGY), whose run/shoot pace had threatened to turn bronze into silver. Egypt have now won a remarkable 11 medals in four Pentathlon World Cups this season, eight of them in the Men's Individual Finals.

### Medallists' reaction

Women's gold medallist Guzi (HUN) said: "I don't know what to say because I didn't expect this result. There were really tough weeks behind me, and due to my Fencing in Pentathlon World Cup Cairo, I was really disappointed. But in this competition, my hard work really came out.

"I'm extremely happy because God always helps me, and I think my whole life is a wonder.

"I just thought, 'OK Blanka', let's do a correct Laser Run', but I didn't expect 1-3 position. I hope I could stand in the podium as one of the top six athletes, but 1st position? It's a wonder.

"I knew Jessica is a really good runner, and I saw her in front of me and said that I had the happiest second position in the world, OK, smile. And then, oh, I could run faster, and I took the 1st position. I enjoyed the whole day."

Silver medallist Varley (GBR) added: "I don't think I've ever started a Laser Run so high up, so I knew I was absolutely capable of getting a medal today, and I'm so happy that I could come out and do it.

"I've had a rocky couple of years so I'm back on the podium, yay!

"I fell off a horse in training just before World Cup Final last year, and had a fracture in my spine, which meant I wasn't at full fitness for World Championships and the second half of last year, and it's so competitive with all the British athletes having two World Cups this year.

“At the first World Cup I did this year, I had a migraine in the Laser Run of the Qualifications and didn’t qualify, had an absolute disaster, and so this was my last shot. I had to come here and get a medal and I can’t believe I’ve done it.

“Good emotions at the minute and I’m just keeping everything crossed, and hopefully I’ve done enough to qualify for World Cup Final, that’s the next thing I’ll be checking. I couldn’t have done any more today and very happy.”

Bronze medallist Ismail (EGY) said: “It wasn’t easy at all. I started with a not very good Fencing, just 16 victories, and I didn’t think I could qualify to the Final and here I am now. A bronze medallist in the Final.

“In Swimming I did my personal best for this year, and in the Laser Run it was really hard but in the shooting I was in a totally good position mentally. I was able to shoot very well. In the last lap I went out with Rita Erdos from Hungary, I know she is a strong runner and it would be a strong battle with her, but I did it in the end.

“It feels really different to every previous year, and especially because this is Olympic year, I’m very proud that I’ve won a second medal.”

Men’s champion Dejardin (FRA) said: “I just had to focus on my work and my performance. Just shoot well, run well, and do my best. I didn’t think about the result.

“It’s a good thing. We have a strong team and it’s a good step, but it’s not the end. I want to go in the Olympics so I have to continue my work, and in the World Cup Final I have to get a good result again, and afterwards in the World Championships.

“We have a strong team, it’s a fight, and I will fight.

“I am very proud of myself and my team. Last year in the World Cup Final I broke my hand, so that was a difficult year and I’m very happy to come back at this level. But it’s just a step, I have to continue, it’s not the end.”

Silver medallist Shaban (EGY) added: “It’s a second medal, but like I say, I won silver but lost the gold. Not happy with my performance in Shooting. Maybe I had more confidence from the Semi-final, where I shot 21 from 20, and maybe today I thought it would be easy in my head.

“In the next Final I will be better.

“The Egyptian team is very good and this year in every competition we have had two men in the podium. We have so many medals. I’m not happy, but at least I’m in the podium.

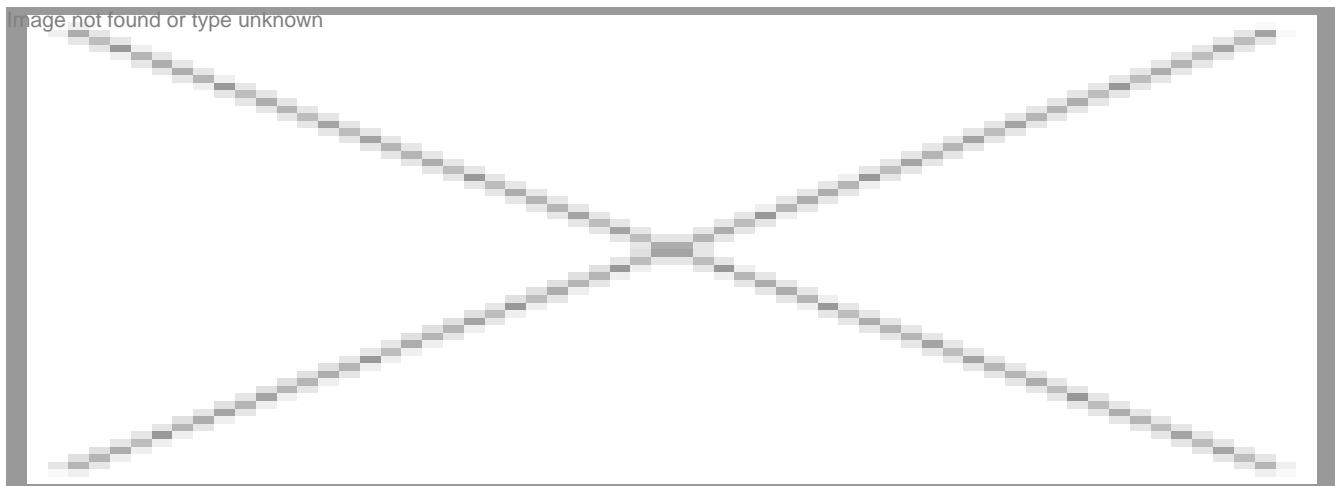
“I had this battle before, in Bath last year, the same situation and the same race and the same finish. I love racing with the Elgendys, we are so good this year.

“After the last shooting, I went again with Elgendi and I thought in my brain ‘finish or no, finish or no’, but I told myself ‘there is 200 metres, let’s go, let’s go’. And I did it.”

Bronze medallist Elgendi (EGY) said: “It was so hard for me. At the beginning of the race, I was just aiming for 3rd place but during the race, even after the third shoot, I was getting closer and closer.

"At the finish, I created a gap but I was unable to give any more.

"After the refusal in Riding, I thought everything was done, I couldn't make it. But when they were repairing the obstacle I just had a word with myself and said 'I can overcome'. This was the best thing for me today, that I overcame my Riding [setback]."



## Women's Final

### **Riding**

Ismail (EGY) became the first athlete to go clear, incurring only four time penalties, and among the early climbers were **Laura Heredia** of **Spain** and **Emma Whitaker** (GBR).

On a challenging course, there was a lot of damage limitation and several athletes showed true grit to avoid elimination, with only three failing to score. Even the highly experienced **Annika Zillekens** of **Germany** and **Kate French** (GBR) had numerous issues in negotiating the 10 obstacles.

Into the final five, there were some excellent rides that put athletes firmly in contention. Varley (GBR) broke the tension with a 297, before **Elzbieta Adomaityte** of **Lithuania** enjoyed the first perfect score and **Marlena Jawaid** of **Sweden** made only one error.

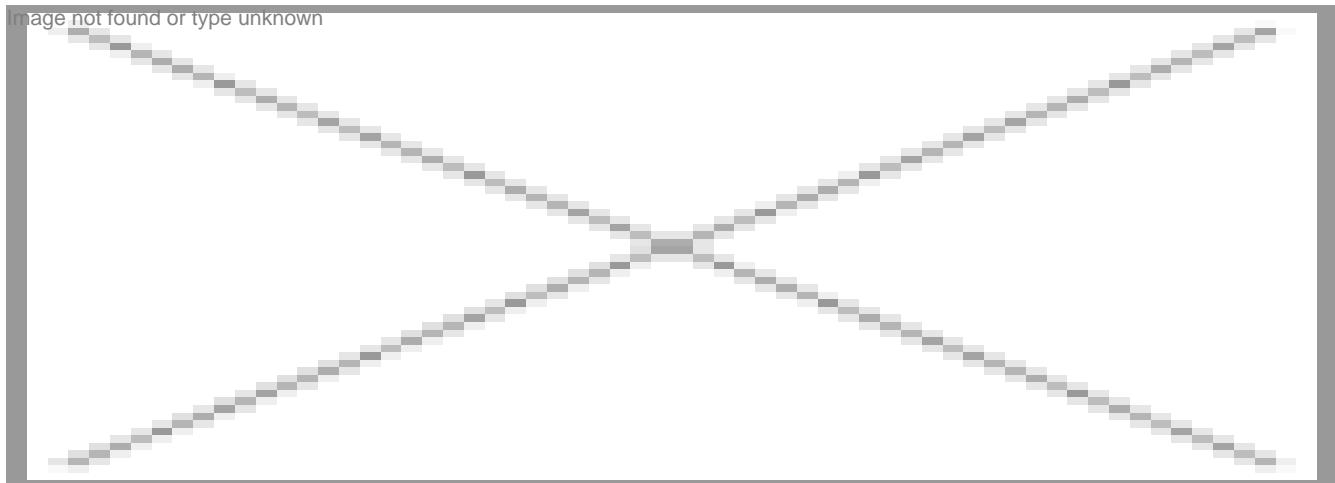
Those rides heaped pressure on Clouvel (FRA), but she handled it superbly and ended an immaculate ride with a whoop of delight and raised arm.

### **Fencing**

While form is temporary, class is permanent in Modern Pentathlon and Clouvel (FRA) is an athlete who exemplifies this. Having come into the competition knowing that she probably needed one more good result to secure a place in her home Olympics, after an eventful season so far, everything clicked in the Fencing Ranking Round as she secured 26 victories from her 35 bouts.

Two other fencers stood out, as Jawaid (SWE) scored 25V/10D and Adomaityte (LTU) managed 24V/11D.

At the end of a Bonus Round that saw **Seungmin Seong** of Korea add eight points to her score, Clouvel (FRA) extended her overall lead to 12 points by winning the final bout against Jawaid (SWE).



## Swimming

As the standout athlete in Riding and Fencing, Clouvel (FRA) repeated the trick in Swimming with the quickest time of the final (2min 15.73sec), enabling her to extend her overall lead and take a 33sec lead into Laser Run.

Team-mates Ismail (EGY) and **Salma Abdelmaksoud** (EGY) also improved their podium prospects, joining Guzi (HUN) in going under 2:18.

## Laser Run

Varley (GBR) started in 4th, 4sec behind Adomaityte (LTU) and 15sec behind Jawaid (SWE), and it took only one run/shoot circuit for her to move into the silver-medal position. She overtook Adomaityte (LTU) and then seized her chance on the shooting range with an 11sec shoot.

Could she pose a threat to Clouvel (FRA)? Two opening shoots averaging 25sec from the leader certainly gave her hope, and Varley (GBR) was even faster second time round. Guzi (HUN) also came into the medal equation as she moved past Jawaid (SWE) into 3rd.

At the third shoot, it all fell apart for Clouvel (FRA). Having scored three green lights in quick succession, she then froze completely and ended up timing out, with Varley (GBR) and Guzi (HUN) taking full advantage to move into the gold and silver positions.

Both leaders then held their nerve at the final shoot, each timing 13sec, setting up a thrilling duel on the last 600m lap. Around the 400m mark, Guzi (HUN) turned on the afterburners to pass Varley (GBR) and seal her second gold at the highest level with the day's fastest Laser Run time of 11:08.70.

With Clouvel (FRA) misfiring again, Ismail (EGY) made a typically decisive move into 3rd and held on to secure bronze under pressure from Whitaker (GBR) and **Rita Erdos** (HUN), who timed an eye-catching 11:10.10.

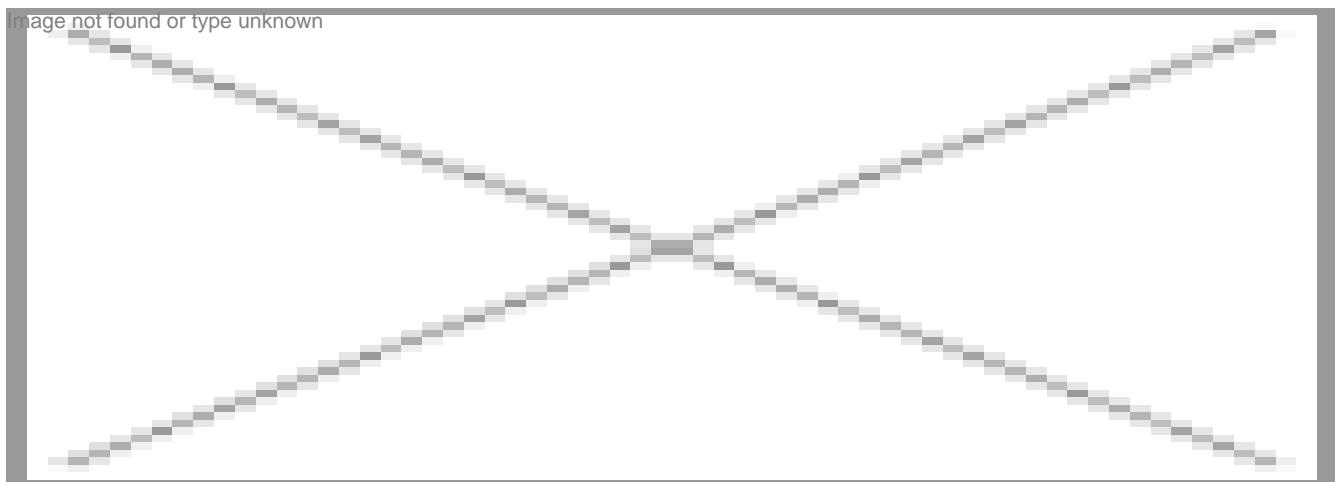
## Men's Final

### Riding

The technicalities of the Riding course again tested equestrian skills to the limit, but if the competition leaders were feeling any nerves, they did not show it. Shaban (EGY) recorded the first perfect score of 300 in the penultimate ride, and Dejardin (FRA) followed suit with another immaculate performance.

In fact, the Riding coach of Team France could be very happy with their day's work as **Valentin Prades** (FRA, 293) and **Jean-Baptiste Mourcia** (FRA, 299) also mastered the discipline. Teammates **Patrick Dogue** (GER) and **Fabian Liebig** (GER) also kept their chances intact, as did Elgendi (EGY) after overcoming an early refusal.

After their success in the Women's Final, Hungary had a damaging Men's Final experience as medal contenders **Bence Demeter** (HUN) incurred 42 penalty points and **Balazs Szep** (HUN) became the first of two athletes to suffer elimination, the other being **Alexandre Dallenbach** of **Switzerland**.



### Fencing

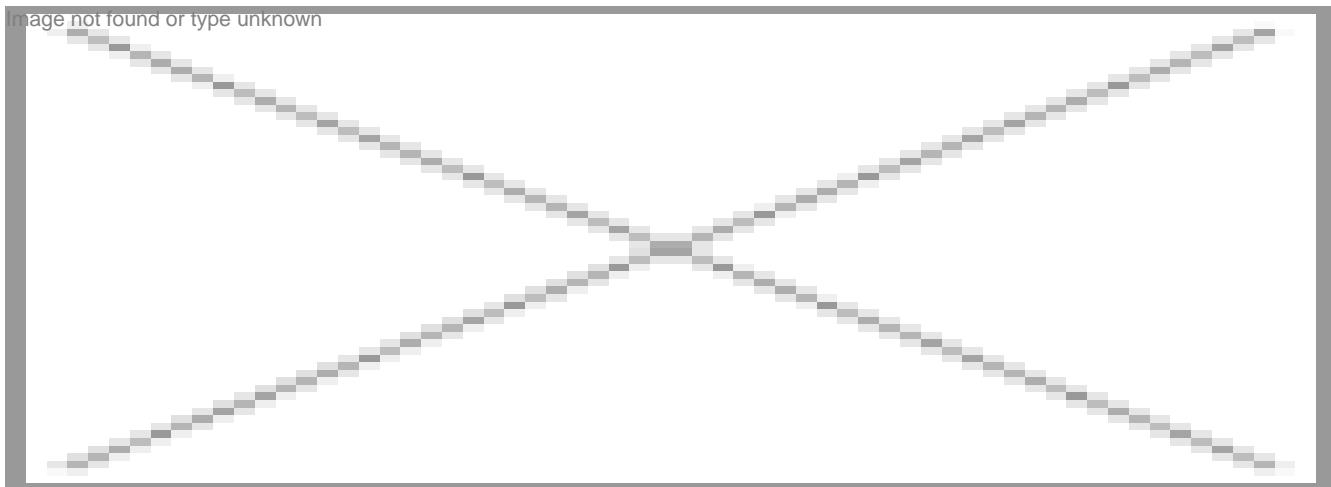
With a congested leaderboard, two athletes enjoyed a marginal advantage in the Fencing Ranking Round as Shaban (EGY) and Dejardin (FRA) each managed 23 victories from their 35 bouts, with Dallenbach (SUI), Dogue (GER) and **Christian Zillekens** (GER) staying in touch with 22V/13D.

With the top two athletes neck and neck on the scoreboard, Dejardin (FRA) and Shaban (EGY) met in the final bout of the Bonus Round and it was Shaban (EGY) who won the critical final bout to move four points clear overall.

The other big movers in the Bonus Round were **Changwan Seo** (KOR, five victories), **Marek Grycz** of **Czechia** (four) and Demeter (HUN, three).

### Swimming

Dallenbach (SUI) set the standard in Swimming with an excellent time of 2:01.64, with **Myles Pillage** (GBR) timing 2:02.95 and **Moutaz Mohamed** (EGY) 2:03.58. Shaban (EGY) was 4th-fastest, enabling him to extend his overall lead to 18 points with Dejardin (FRA) quite far down the list.



### **Laser Run**

Elgendi (EGY) was the early mover, edging ahead of Liebig (GER). Dejardin (FRA) cut the lead of Shaban (EGY) by 8sec at the first visit to the range, while Elgendi (EGY) moved decisively into 3rd with a 10sec shoot.

Shaban (EGY) responded well at the second shoot as Elgendi (EGY) faltered, and Seo (KOR) moved up to 5th. But Dejardin (FRA) attacked on the third run, moving into the race lead, and then delivered an exceptional 7sec shoot.

The final shoot intensified the drama, with Dejardin (FRA) taking much longer to get back out, but it was enough for gold as neither Egyptian was able to rein him in and they became locked in an internal duel for silver.

With narrow lanes limiting opportunities to overtake, Elgendi (EGY) attacked early in the final 600m but then Shaban (EGY) countered, showing extraordinary tenacity to kick for home and give the Olympic selectors more to think about.

While Dejardin (FRA) was the star of the day, his team-mate Mourcia (FRA) typically recorded the best Laser Run time (10:10.20) to finish 7th overall.

### **President's reaction**

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Here at UIPM 2024 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia the athletes had their last possibility to qualify for the World Cup Final in Ankara in two weeks.

"Based on the weather conditions, we started with awful rain but we have ended up with wonderful weather and fantastically selected horses, which is always the situation in Sofia. The level of the athletes who qualified for the Finals was unbelievably strong.

"Congratulations to the athletes who have trained so hard and done their best to compete, and thanks to the trainers who have prepared them so well to present themselves on the way to Paris

in the best possible condition.

"We saw the importance of shooting in the drama that was created for spectators, especially in the Women's Final. It means everything for leading athletes that they can have a good shooting series; otherwise the athletes coming from behind will catch up with them.

"We saw another very exciting Final in the men's competition, where we had athletes from three different continents in the top six. Our athletes never, ever give up on trying to achieve the best results, in this case trying to qualify for the World Cup Final.

"Tomorrow we are looking forward to another great Mixed Relay with lots of team spirit on show."

### **Watch and follow**

UIPM 2024 Pentathlon World Cup Sofia concludes tomorrow (May 12) with the Mixed Relay.

Live stream is available on UIPM TV and all competition results are available at the UIPM website and via the UIPM Central app.

