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‘I WAS ALWAYS HAVING THAT OLYMPIC DREAM’: PRE-GAMES REFLECTIONS FROM JURT (SUI) AND ELGENDY (EGY)

UIPM press conference preview for Paris 2024 Olympic Games

Six weeks ago, **Anna Jurt** of **Switzerland** was not on the list of Modern Pentathlon qualifiers for Paris 2024. Tomorrow she will not only embark on her debut Olympic Games, she will do so as European silver medallist.

This spectacular U-turn in fortunes is typical of Olympic sport, where the desire to attain the status of Olympian is as high as any motivation in sport, and we can always expect the unexpected. When Jurt (SUI) joined fellow athlete **Ahmed Elgendy** of **Egypt** at a press conference for Olympic media in Paris (FRA) today, she made no attempt to hide her joy.

“It was up and down,” said the 22-year-old world No.18 when asked to describe her 2024 summer. “I was always having that Olympic dream and ... I was not sure that I would qualify for a long time. But I was just giving my best and dreaming, dreaming of the big Games. Now that I'm here, I'm super excited to participate at such a historical and beautiful place like Versailles.”

President Dr Klaus Schormann (left) and Team Switzerland head of performance James Cooke (right)

Anna Jurt of Switzerland with UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann (left) and Team Switzerland head of performance James Cooke (right)

Elgendy (EGY) was another athlete who could barely stop smiling when meeting representatives of the international media. But his state of mind is slightly different to that of Jurt (SUI), as he already has an Olympic medal in his back pocket having won silver at Tokyo 2020.

“I'm excited to be here. Especially competing in Chateau de Versailles, amazing venue,” said the 24-year-old, currently ranked No.4 in the world.

“It's a big difference from Tokyo because we have a fully booked stadium. I think it will be more exciting. We will be happy to be watched by many people around the world, especially the 90 minutes format, and it will be a little bit more exciting for them because of that.

“I will try to do my best in the finals on Saturday. Last time in Tokyo, I came back from 15th position to 2nd, and this time I'm trying to make it a little bit easier, beginning with the fencing tomorrow and then the Semi-finals on Friday and the Finals on Saturday.

"I have big support from all the people in Egypt, especially after being the flagbearer at the Opening Ceremony. So I'm feeling excited for the competition, and excited to repeat the win from Tokyo, and hopefully this time to be gold."

The Elgendy family came close to having two brothers in the same Olympic team, but Mohamed Elgendy (EGY) narrowly failed to win selection despite a prolific season.

"I hoped that he could make it here but unfortunately he couldn't," added the elder brother. "But he is here supporting me, he was training with me last weekend here in Paris.

"We have a very strong bond. Maybe it was more pressure in the last year when we were both trying to qualify. But I'm excited that he got through this experience, and I hope he can make it to LA 2028."

Jurt (SUI) was also asked about the future of Modern Pentathlon, which will introduce a new format at all levels after Paris 2024, with Obstacle replacing Riding as one of the five disciplines. Her younger twin sisters, Florina and Katharina, have already demonstrated a mastery of the discipline by starring in two consecutive UIPM Junior Pentathlon World Championships.

"Right now I am focused on the Games – it's my biggest dream," she said. "But I'm looking forward to adapt to that new challenge. As someone mentioned before, my younger sisters are already in the obstacle. They're very excited to do it and it looks so much fun. So I'm looking forward to that new challenge."