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WORLD'S FINEST DESCEND ON KECSKEMET FOR WORLD CUP #4: WOMEN'S PREVIEW



The European leg of the World Cup Series is set to begin tomorrow in the Hungarian city of Kecskemet with some of the planet's best pentathletes expected to take part in what will be the last opportunity to qualify for June's World Cup Final in Sarasota, USA. Five days of competition, top class facilities, real pressure and an expectant crowd guarantee a great show.

Here we look at the women that will be lining up on Thursday 1 May for what promises to be two fiercely competitive qualification groups. 69 athletes from 25 countries will take part.

Zsophia Foldhazi

Hosts Hungary have some of the favourites for honours as reigning Junior

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World Champion **Zsophia Foldhazi** (pictured, left) and Budapest Indoor champion **Sarolta Kovacs** carry the hopes of the nation. They will be the leaders of a team that contains several debutants all keen to impress by making the cut for Saturday's Final.

32-year-old **Viktoria Tereshuk** of Ukraine came second at this event last year and was also crowned 2013 World Cup Final Champion so she will have eyes only for the top prize here. She needs valuable points on the board after only placing 12th at World Cup #2 in Cairo last month so her experience will be crucial. World No.11 **Iryna Khokhlova** joins her in the Ukrainian ranks.

Oktawia Nowacka

The in-form pentathletes has to be Poland's **Oktawia Nowacka** (pictured,

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right) who has gone from strength to strength since coming second at Champion of Champions at the end of last season. This campaign, the 23-year-old has claimed back-to-back silver medals at both World Cup #2 and #3. The question now is can she maintain this level. Having seemingly looked unfazed by her surge up the rankings, you would not bet against adding even more silverware to her collection come Saturday.

The German squad have looked sharp on focused in recent weeks and will once again be counting on the prowess of 2008 Beijing Olympic gold medallist **Lena Schoneborn** and the growing stature of **Janine Kohlmann** and **Annika Schleu** to lead the charges in the women's draw.

Former boxer **Xiaonan Zhang** and Asian Championships silver medallist **Wei Wang** have proved over the past couple of seasons that they can mix it with the best and this Chinese pair have the skills and the experience to aim for a podium finish.

Fresh from training in Ireland, Canada's **Melanie McCann** will look to improve on her 20th position at World Cup #3 in Chengdu a fortnight ago and with the 24-year-old being joined in the squad by **Mathea Stevens**, the pressure will be on for her to do the business.

London Olympian **Natalya Coyle** will make her first appearance on the World Cup Series circuit this year so it will be interesting to see how she fares whilst her Irish teammate **Kate Coleman Lenehan** will be keen to test herself at this level after her only previous World Cup Series appearance coming in a Mixed Relay early last season.

One squad to really keep an eye on is Italy which has travelled to Hungary with some of its best athletes, including Junior World silver medallist **Gloria Tocchi**, **Claudia Cesarini** and **Alice Sotero**.

Making her long-awaited return from injury, **Mhairi Spence** will lead a young British team at World Cup #4. **Kate French**, who recorded her best ever performances at a World Cup Series event in Chengdu, and **Alice Fitton** will look to cement their place in Team GB with Samantha Murray and Freyja Prentice not having travelled.

Mina Jeong

Russian hopes will lie with **Alise Fakhrutdinova** whilst without Margaux

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Isaksen representing the USA, the onus will be on her younger sibling **Isabella** and the improving **Samantha Achterberg**. Argentina's hopes lie with the 2013 South American Champion **Ayelen Zapata**. Top 20 ranked **Soojin Yang** and **Mina Jeong** (pictured, right) will have high hopes of claiming a podium for Korea. Also keep tabs on Czech Republic's **Barbora Kodedova**, Mexico's **Tamara Vega**, Finland's **Eevi Bengs**, Japan's **Rena Shimazu** and Dutch newcomer **Anne Bavelaar**. It will be very interesting to see which of these athletes qualify for the Final.

The qualification stages will see athletes compete in a round robin fence, 200m freestyle swim and finally the combined, which consists of 4 laps of 800m cross-country running each time prefaced by a stint at the shooting range where athletes have 50secs to hit a target placed at 10m correctly 5 times with a laser pistol. The riding event is added to the program only at the Final and takes place before the combined run/shoot.

Women's Qualification schedule:

- Group A 09:00 fence – 13:00 swim – 16:00 combined
- Group B 10:30 swim – 12:00 fence – 17:00 combined

Full Competition schedule

- Thursday 1 May: Women's Qualification
- Friday 2 May: Men's Qualification
- Saturday 3 May: Women's Final
- Sunday 4 May: Men's Final
- Monday 5 May: Mixed Relay

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