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TWO OLYMPIC PLACES UP FOR GRABS IN MINSK



MINSK, BELARUS - The Road to Rio has been a long journey for many but two pentathletes will reach their destination this weekend when the 2015 UIPM World Cup Series culminates with the Final in Minsk, Belarus.

The cream of the elite Modern Pentathlon world will be among the 72 athletes taking part in the Mix Relay (Thursday), Men's Individual (Saturday) and Women's Individual (Sunday) events. Twenty-five countries are represented, demonstrating the diversity of the sport at the highest level.

With the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro looming on the horizon 14 months from now, the winner of the Men's and Women's Individual events will not only be crowned World Cup Winners, they will be able to bask in the satisfaction of having qualified for the Olympics, the greatest stage in sport.

The first 12 places for Rio 2016 were decided last week at the Asia/Oceania Olympic Qualifier and the clamour to join those athletes in reserving their spots will see the likes of reigning Olympic women's champion Laura Asadauskaite (LTU) leading the charge.

In the Women's Individual Event, World No.1 Laura Asadauskaite will come under pressure from top athletes including Margaux Isaksen (USA) and Oktawia Nowacka (POL). Laura Asadauskaite won two of the four legs of the 2015 UIPM World Cup series.

In the Men's Individual event, competition will be hot between Valentin Belaud (FRA), Ilia Frolov (RUS), Pavlo Tymoshchenko (UKR) and James Cooke (GBR), all of whom performed strongly in accruing qualifying points for this Final.

At a press conference today in Minsk, Dr Klaus Schormann, President of UIPM, thanked his Belarussian hosts and predicted a spectacular event over the coming days in Minsk.

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"The relationship between Belarus and UIPM goes back

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to the era of UIPMB (Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne et Biathlon) as this country has been very strong in our sports", said Dr Schormann.

"We didn't have any doubt about the decision to award this event to Belarus and we were right to be confident. We know that we will have a world class competition here in Minsk and this will be a new milestone for the pentathlon family.

"The athletes that will compete here are the best athletes in the world and I'm sure that they will perform with distinction. I wish the best results to all - athletes, LOC, National Federation and the host country."

Dr Schormann encouraged the crowds who will spectate over the coming days to pay particular attention to the Mix Relay, an event that is rapidly growing in popularity and which could be on the Olympic programme by 2020.

"We intend to have the mix relay in the Olympic Games," said President Schormann. "It was not possible in Rio but we think that Modern Pentathlon Mix Relay event should be included in Tokyo 2020."

Dr Schormann was awarded a plaque, created for the 100th anniversary of Modern Pentathlon in the Olympic Games in 2012, by Belarus' First Deputy Minister of Sports & Tourism, Alexander Gagiev.

Mr Gagiev said in his own address: "We have worked very hard to create a high level of competition in our country. This year a lot of events are taking place in Belarus, for instance in gymnastics and biathlon and this experience will help our organisation to become accustomed to staging top competitions."

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Pentathlon Federation (BFMP), added: "We held the Youth European Championships in 2014 and other competitions to prepare in the best way to be ready for a huge competition like this.

"Our relationship with UIPM is very good and this provides us with a good basis to prepare this event and to raise interest in Modern Pentathlon in Belarus."

Shiny Fang, Secretary General of UIPM, said: "I would like to thank everybody involved in preparations, especially to the LOC for all their efforts in putting together what will be a fantastic competition.

"We really feel that this competition will be great and UIPM's efforts to share our sports and the work of our organisers is a big focus. We will have the TV highlights of this event shared in more than 100 countries."

The action begins with the Mix Relay on Thursday, June 11.

Follow tomorrow all the action of this UIPM 2015 World Cup Final with our live results and live streaming of the Mixed-Relay's Competition at www.pentathlon.org, our updates through Facebook at www.facebook.com/modpen and Twitter at https://twitter.com/UIPM_HQ

Editor's Note:

1. The first qualification places for the 2016 Rio Olympics were decided on June 2 at the Asia/Oceania Olympic Qualifying event in Beijing, China.

The six men who secured their places were Woongtae Jun (KOR), Dongii Lee (KOR), Haihang Su (CHN), Zhongrong Cao (CHN), Woojin Hwang (KOR); Oceania - Max Esposito (AUS). Through the rules of the qualification system, whereby National Olympic Committees are only allowed to enter 2 athletes per gender, Korea could only claim two places, meaning one place was also secured by Tomoya Miguchi (JAP).

The six women who secured their places were: Sunwoo Kim (KOR), Wanxia Liang (CHN), Xiaonan Zhang (CHN), Natsumi Tomonaga (JPN) and Chloe Esposito (AUS). Through the rules of the qualification system, whereby National Olympic Committees are only allowed to enter 2 athletes per gender, China could only claim two places, meaning one place was also secured by Elena Potapenko (KAZ).

2. For a full list of athletes competing in the 2015 UIPM World Cup Final please follow this [LINK](#).