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WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2020: UIPM CELEBRATES ECO IMPACT OF A DECADE OF LEAD-FREE LASER RUN



After a century of shooting with lead pellets and bullets, the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne (UIPM) began the 2010s with a new competition format that would be of profound benefit to the environment.

It wasn't called Laser Run at the time, but the new-look combined event that served as the climax of the Modern Pentathlon at the Youth Olympic Games Singapore 2010 and Olympic Games London 2012 did much more than help the sport become a more exciting spectacle. It also created an annual saving of 25 tonnes of lead, a colossal amount of metal previously required for shooting competitions and training around the world – and some of which found its way into the natural environment.



UIPM began in 2008 to introduce and develop laser shooting, moving away from air pistols following an earlier departure from .22 firearms in 1993. The effect was rapid and UIPM Sports quickly became a far more sustainable movement. Beyond the saving on lead, Modern Pentathlon was now a safer and more appealing prospect for many groups of people – from those who would have been put off the sport by the stigma of shooting to those new generations of ‘gamers’ who would be drawn to the challenge of turning red lights to green on a laser target in a tense race environment.

Laser Run was born as an entity in its own right in 2015, when the first UIPM Laser Run World Championships was held in Perpignan (FRA), and in 2016 it replaced the Combined Event as the official name of Modern Pentathlon’s dramatic finale. And today, as UIPM joins the celebrations of World Environment Day in marking 10 years of sustainable shooting worldwide, it is not only the fastest-growing UIPM Sport but a symbol of an eco-friendly sporting movement – highlighted by the International Olympic Committee as an IF Sustainability Case Study. Laser Run has also enabled UIPM to continue engaging its global community during the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, thanks to initiatives such as #LaserHomeRun and Online Laser Shooting.



Laser equipment has minimal security restrictions and is available to children, allowing UIPM competitions to be conducted in more diverse locations, such as city centres, public parks, clubs and schools – drawing new audiences.

Since the introduction of laser pistols, the number of athletes has more than doubled and UIPM has introduced new disciplines, enabling the engagement of youth and inspiring future athletes. The Global Laser Run City Tour was born in 2017 and reaches between 50 and 100 urban communities in cities across all continents each year, giving tens of thousands of athletes of all ages an entry point to UIPM Sports and the chance to try Laser Run – many for the first time.

“When I think of the journey we have taken by adopting laser technology in our movement in place

of traditional pellet shooting, it truly makes me smile,” said UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann.



“The UIPM Executive Board decided in 2009 to introduce laser shooting at the Youth Olympic Games Singapore 2010, seven years after I had first made a statement about the future of laser technology during the IOC Session in Mexico City (MEX). We knew that there would be a very positive environmental impact, and a financial impact, but perhaps we did not realise just how quickly the Laser Run phenomenon would grow – and how much this would come to underline the sustainability of our sporting movement.

“I speak for all my colleagues and friends who are ambassadors working on behalf of UIPM when I say that we are all very proud of the steps taken to make our beloved sport safer, more cost-effective and accessible and less damaging to our natural world. Sport must reduce its impact on the environment, and we are playing a part in this important global paradigm shift.”