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# TOKYO 2020 OLYMPIC GAMES MODERN PENTATHLON: CORONATION DAY FOR 'ICE QUEEN' FRENCH (GBR)



- First gold in 21 years for Great Britain after Schleu (GER) eliminated from Riding
- Legend Asadauskaite (LTU) rips through field to add silver to London 2012 gold
- Brave Kovacs (HUN) wins bronze after overcoming serious injury

She is known as the 'ice queen' in her team and **Kate French** of **Great Britain** wore the highest crown in sport after a nerve-shredding Women's Modern Pentathlon at the rescheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Having dominated the 2021 UIPM Pentathlon World Cup season, French (GBR) was many people's gold-medal favourite but she had to come from behind after falling a little short of her usual standards in Fencing.

The 30-year-old, who finished 5th at Rio 2016, kept herself in contention during a dramatic Riding session and started the Laser Run only 15sec off the lead after the shock elimination of leader **Annika Schleu** of **Germany**.



That kind of margin is not daunting to a pentathlete of her calibre and French (GBR) moved into the lead on the second lap, before gradually increasing it. Her final victory margin was 15sec and she set a new Olympic record of 1,385 points in becoming her country's second Olympic champion and first since Stephanie Cook in 2000 in Sydney.

Behind her, an intriguing battle for silver was finally settled by one of the true icons of the sport. **Laura Asadauskaite**, the London 2012 champion, emerged from the pack to win silver and give **Lithuania** their first medal of the Olympics in any sport.

The 2016 world champion has struggled to replicate the highs of the past in recent years, and almost didn't make it to Tokyo after struggling with injury. But there was a fairytale ending for **Sarolta Kovacs** of **Hungary** as she bravely held on to bronze, winning a ding-dong battle with 4th-placed **Alice Sotero** of **Italy**.

**Ilke Ozyuksel** of **Turkey** ended a typically brilliant Laser Run by finishing 5th, ahead of Rio 2016 Olympic silver medallist **Elodie Clouvel** of **France**.

### **Medallists' reaction**

Gold medallist French (GBR) said: "Amazing. It really hasn't sunk in yet, it's incredible.

"My fencing yesterday I was quite disappointed with, to be honest, it wasn't a particularly good fence for me. I really had to refocus and come out fighting today, so I'm so pleased I was able to



turn it around and produce a performance I was proud of.

"I'm so pleased I could do it in Japan, I've had such a great experience here. The Japanese have done such a great job putting it on despite the pandemic. I'm so grateful for everything they've done and Japan is always going to have a special place in my heart now."

Asked if she had contacted anyone at home in the short time after her victory, French (GBR) said: "I briefly got to speak to my husband [Leo Forster], so that was a bit emotional. I'd been holding it together quite well until I spoke to him. And I need to speak to my mum but I haven't had a chance yet."



Silver medallist Asadauskaite (LTU) said: "I don't believe it because my fencing was not good. It's been a crazy day, I'm happy.

"In London (2012) it was my first. In Rio (2016), with the Riding I got zero points. I wanted to try again and I believed. Today is a happy day for me and my country Lithuania – it's our first medal. I am very happy.

"My combined event is strong because I am a fast runner and I believe I can push. I say 'Laura, come on, come on, you can'. I ran fast. I know today is my day and it is my chance. It was amazing competing here with everything in one venue."

The 37-year-old Asadauskaite (LTU), who is married to two-time Olympic medallist Andrejus Zadneprovskis (LTU) with an 11-year-old daughter, Adriana, added: "My daughter said: 'Mama, maybe you are coming home with a medal? I said: 'Maybe. You stay home and I am coming.'"

Bronze medallist Kovacs (HUN) said: "I can't believe it really – I'm so, so happy. I feel like I deserve it. It's been so many years and it's not just my work, it's teamwork. My family, my club, my doctor - because I had a serious injury and now I'm here, I'm so happy.

"I had a knee operation and then a thrombosis. So I had to work on my mental training.

"This is my third Olympic Games. I was in London and in Rio but here in Tokyo there were no

spectators, but I feel the energy and love. I love this country.

“In the shooting range everybody had some mistakes, but I was focused. I knew I was third, so I just wanted to do what I can. I didn’t know about the others.”

## Swimming

**Gulnaz Gubaydullina** (ROC) completed a unique double as she set the first Olympic Modern Pentathlon world record in a 25m pool.

Gubaydullina (ROC) was already the owner of the 50m record having swum 2min 07.94sec at Rio 2016, and she paced her eight laps perfectly in the short-course pool temporarily constructed inside Tokyo Stadium.

Having overtaken Clouvel (FRA) and **Michelle Gulyas** of **Hungary** in the closing stages, 2017 world champion Gubaydullina (ROC) touched first in 2:07.31 to end a dramatic race. World No.1 Gulyas (HUN) timed 2:07.48 and Rio 2016 Olympic silver medallist Clouvel (FRA) was just 0.03sec behind in 2:07.51.



## Fencing

She didn’t capture any additional points in the Fencing Bonus Round but Schleu (GER) still stood alone at the top with 274 points gained in the Fencing Ranking Round, comfortably surpassing the existing Olympic record of 264 set by Oktawia Nowacka of Poland at Rio 2016.

**Kim Sehee** of **Korea** defeated Schleu (GER) in the final bout of the Bonus Round for a total of 246, with **Natalya Coyle** of **Ireland** and Batashova (ROC) seven points adrift on 239.

The stars of the Fencing Bonus Round were **Elena Micheli** of **Italy** (six victories) and **Mariana Arceo**



of **Mexico** (four victories).

At the end of the second discipline, Schleu (GER) had an overall score of 551 and a 24-point lead over Batashova (ROC), with Kim (KOR) three points further behind.



## Riding

After a sudden rain shower and the elimination of **Marcela Cuaspud** of **Ecuador** and **Ieda Guimaraes** of **Brazil**, calm was restored by Asadauskaite (LTU) and team-mate Venckauskaite (LTU), both of whom achieved perfect scores of 300. It was a moment of huge relief for Asadauskaite (LTU) after her elimination in Riding at Rio 2016.

Several riders struggled to control their horses, and there was disappointment for host nation **Japan** as **Natsumi Takamiya** was eliminated and **Rena Shimazu** incurred 48 penalty points. World champion Prokopenko (BLR) dislodged two barriers, giving herself too much to do in the Laser Run.

The session was eventful throughout – providing a stern examination of riding ability that many accomplished riders could not pass. Those who fell out of contention included **Elena Micheli** (ITA), **Michelle Gulyas** (HUN) and 4th-placed Coyle (IRL).

Meanwhile there were solid rides from Clouvel (FRA) and her team-mate **Marie Oteiza** (FRA), **Marina Carrier** of **Australia**, Sotero (ITA), Kovacs (HUN), Kim (KOR) and Batashova (ROC) – as well as a crucial 294 for ‘ice queen’ French (GBR).

All of that might have been immaterial in the destination of the gold medal if the last ride of the competition had gone differently. But what ensued was a devastating experience for the outright leader.

Riding the same horse that had refused to jump several times for **Gulnaz Gubaydullina** (ROC), Schleu (GER) struggled to persuade her mount to start the round – and it wasn't long until the horse was refusing to jump. Despite her frantic efforts to calm the horse and the exhortations of

her trainers, Schleu (GER) finally had to accept defeat – elimination and the end of her medal quest.



## Laser Run

The plight of Schleu (GER) left Batashova (ROC) in the lead, 10sec ahead of Kim (KOR). But Kovacs (HUN) immediately moved up to 2nd and French (GBR) skipped past Sotero (ITA) into 4th.

There were two big moves on the first lap – French (GBR) and Kovacs (HUN) hit the front while Asadauskaite (LTU) and Ozyuksel (TUR) moved into the top 10.

Batashova (ROC) fought back on the second shoot but didn't have the legs to keep up with her adversaries, and there was a decisive move for gold by French (GBR) as Sotero (ITA) grabbed 2nd.

With Kim (KOR) and Clouvel (FRA) among those in the top six, Asadauskaite continued to eat up the field and by the end of the third lap, she was 5th. A terrific final shoot enabled the veteran to advance to 3rd, and there was only going to be one winner in her battle for silver with Kovacs (HUN).

The latter did superbly to hold on to bronze, in light of her recent injury woes, but the outcome was harsh on Sotero (ITA) who was left to lament a poor final shoot.

Top-six finishes at the Olympics are a thing to cherish and there was a gleeful reaction from Ozyuksel (TUR) as she crossed the line. Clouvel (FRA) got home just before her legs gave up on her as two more Laser Run specialists – Venckauskaite (LTU) and Prokopenko (BLR) – completed the top eight.





### **President's statement**

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann, who presented the medals along with IOC Member and Lithuanian Olympic Committee President Daina Gudzineviciute (LTU), said: "This is a historic moment in the Olympic Games with all five disciplines of the Modern Pentathlon taking place in one venue, and it will be this way in the future.

"My thanks go to the organising committee of Tokyo 2020 who have delivered on the promises they made during the bidding process for the Olympic Games.

"Now we are looking forward to the Men's Final tomorrow and I must say to those who do not know our sport so well, the presentation of the facility and the horses were of a high quality. Maybe there were a few moments that you would say were not so nice but I tell you – the horses are absolutely excellent.

"We tested them and they were well prepared, and there is no basis for athletes to complain. It is only because of the athletes themselves if they were not successful in some parts of the competition. Nobody from the organising committee should be blamed. Everything was genius, was super, and I'm very happy with Secretary General Shiny Fang in what we have achieved together with the organising committee.

"I would also like to say thank you to the Government of Japan and the Metropolitan Government of Tokyo, working closely with the International Olympic Committee and the World Health Organisation, that everything was made according to the wishes of the Olympic Family."



## Watch and follow

UIPM has created a Fan's Guide to Modern Pentathlon at Tokyo 2020 – [click here](#) and find out how you can enjoy the best Games experience.

## Competition schedule

All times local (JST)

Saturday, August 7

Men's Final

- 2.30pm: Swimming
- 3.45pm: Fencing Bonus Round
- 5.15pm: Riding
- 7.30pm: Laser Run

| Rank | Name               | Nation | MP Points |
|------|--------------------|--------|-----------|
| 1    | FRENCH Kate        | GBR    | 1385      |
| 2    | ASADAUSKAITE Laura | LTU    | 1370      |



|    |                             |     |      |
|----|-----------------------------|-----|------|
| 3  | KOVACS Sarolta              | HUN | 1368 |
| 4  | SOTERO Alice                | ITA | 1363 |
| 5  | OZYUKSEL Ilke               | TUR | 1350 |
| 6  | CLOUVEL Elodie              | FRA | 1347 |
| 7  | VENCKAUSKAITE Gintare       | LTU | 1343 |
| 8  | PROKOPENKO Anastasiya       | BLR | 1342 |
| 9  | BATASHOVA Uliana            | ROC | 1341 |
| 10 | OTEIZA Marie                | FRA | 1334 |
| 11 | KIM Sehee                   | KOR | 1330 |
| 12 | GULYAS Michelle             | HUN | 1325 |
| 13 | POTAPENKO Elena             | KAZ | 1322 |
| 14 | MUIR Joanna                 | GBR | 1318 |
| 15 | OLIVER Mayan                | MEX | 1310 |
| 16 | ARCEO Mariana               | MEX | 1302 |
| 17 | KIM Sunwoo                  | KOR | 1296 |
| 18 | SILKINA Volha               | BLR | 1292 |
| 19 | MORSY Haydy                 | EGY | 1289 |
| 20 | MALISZEWSKA Anna            | POL | 1283 |
| 21 | SCHULTZ Samantha            | USA | 1278 |
| 22 | ZHANG Xiaonan               | CHN | 1275 |
| 23 | SHIMAZU Rena                | JPN | 1271 |
| 24 | COYLE Natalya               | IRL | 1268 |
| 25 | ZHANG Mingyu                | CHN | 1268 |
| 26 | MOYA LÓPEZ Leydi Laura      | CUB | 1261 |
| 27 | CARRIER Marina              | AUS | 1257 |
| 28 | LANGREHR Rebecca            | GER | 1248 |
| 29 | KANDIL Amira                | EGY | 1221 |
| 30 | FAKHRUTDINOVA Alise         | UZB | 1165 |
| 31 | SCHLEU Annika               | GER | 1088 |
| 32 | GUBAYDULLINA Gulnaz         | ROC | 1053 |
| 33 | MICHELI Elena               | ITA | 1049 |
| 34 | TAKAMIYA Natsumi            | JPN | 985  |
| 35 | CUASPUD Marcela             | ECU | 860  |
| 36 | CHAVES GUIMARAES Maria Ieda | BRA | 430  |