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MY WORLD RECORD: ILKE OZYUKSEL (TUR)



In the first part of a new series, the holder of the women's Laser Run world record explains how she did it - and why the Laser Run climax has become such an integral part of the Modern Pentathlon.

Ilke Ozyuksel of Turkey is like a bolt of lightning around a Laser Run course.

There are only a handful of athletes on the women's Modern Pentathlon circuit who know they can cut through the pack from the most distant starting position.

It's no coincidence that the last two Olympic champions – Laura Asadauskaite of Lithuania and Chloe Esposito of Australia – were Laser Run specialists. Every athlete in front of them knew that if they faltered even slightly on the range, or ran a sluggish lap, they would soon have *her* breathing down their neck.

Athletes in the peloton in multiple competitions in recent years have experienced the sensation of

knowing that Ilke Ozyuksel was making a move through the field.

But when she undertook the final discipline in Bath (GBR) during the 2019 European Championships Final, the 22-year-old starlet was in a terrible position with nothing to lose and not much to gain. Out of this came something unexpected and incredibly special. She takes up the story....

Q: In 2019, you broke the women's world record for Laser Run with a time of 11:22.69 in Bath (GBR) at the European Championships. Talk us through the race.

A: I had one of the weirdest competitions ever in my life. My disciplines all day had gone badly.

After Riding, I was so upset and disappointed that I did not want to continue the competition. Then I called my mother and told her that I was unwell and didn't have any desire to go on. She said that whatever happens I should do my best until the moment I pass the finish line.

My main goal was to get the Tokyo 2020 Olympic quota place at this competition but I was so far behind that such a possibility was very distant. Actually one of our other goals, according to my results in training results, was the Laser Run world record.

Despite my troubles all day long, my trainer told me that if I could achieve the Olympic record, the quota place would come along with it. The race had started, I was behind for over a minute, well behind the 30th that I would start racing somewhere in the queues. My competitors were starting one by one.

Just at that moment, I heard my shooting trainer among the spectators at the start line shouting to me, "Just focus on your first shooting series, give us your best". I was feeling physically good since the warm-ups, so I just focused on my best and competed with no thoughts but only concentrating on myself.

I was only shooting and carrying my feet like no one else existed on the field. I competed knowing the importance of every step I took and aiming for the record. Faster and more serial.



Q: When did you discover it was a new world record, and how did that feel?

A: I shot and ran with a record motive all race long. My coach came and told me that it was a record. He was breathless. I had complex emotions. The first thing I told him was “I thought I could get the quota place if I were faster, but I couldn’t get it” – and cried on his shoulder.

We achieved something (a senior world record) we had dreamt about for years, whereas the path had grown longer for our other goal. I waited for the official results just to be sure. I was feeling pain and disappointment until dinner time. That was the first moment I realised what I had achieved. My athlete friends all over the world said that I had run faster than men mountain runners. The rest was pride and happiness.

Q: What is the key to a fast time in Laser Run? Tell us some of the key components.

A: I think the key point is being able to shoot well at high pulse. When you manage this you can decrease your running and shooting times. Many athletes can shoot well in resting conditions. Our secret is training specifically to elevate the stable shooting performance to a high-pulse shooting achievement.

Q: Do you set yourself a time goal each time you race?

A: Definitely not. I have never done it in my life. I only step into the field and do my best.



Q: Do you see Laser Run standards improving in Modern Pentathlon each year?

A: Yes. The results of scientific research reveal the important effect of Laser Run on total Pentathlon performance. Of course, all athletes are aware of the lethal effect of the Laser Run on the scoring and work well to improve their performance. And of course, we continue to push our limits to see how far we can go.

Q: Were you always a good shot and a fast runner, or did you have to train hard to develop both of these skills?

A: I can say yes to both questions. I am skilled at these disciplines. I was always good but I always work hard to be better.

The most important thing to remember is that how well you are shooting depends on your performance at the time of the competition. I have the chance to watch a lot of my opponents during the warm-ups and they mostly do well enough. But the main thing is competition performance. We work as hard as everyone else for this.

Q: Have you been able to keep up your laser shooting during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis?

A: The most important feature of elite athletes is their ability to adapt quickly to difficult conditions. This is inherent to being a competitor. You always have to fight the challenges and uncertainties that you encounter throughout the race.

I try to look at this situation we have lived in this way. If I cannot change the situation, I adapt to it and focus on getting maximum efficiency from my work.

I have a suitable distance and condition in my house, otherwise we would have created it. So there was no problem with my training. We continue our interactive work, especially, under the

supervision of my shooting coach.



Q: What else have you been doing to stay physically and mentally sharp?

A: I do things that I do not know or never had time to do because of my plans. My first step in this direction was cooking and making dessert. I started knitting. I started reading more books, watching movies and TV shows. I started practising yoga. I arranged my house and gathered it. I came up with something to do every day.

It was a difficult process for me, mentally. Not leaving the house was not something I knew at all. I keep up with this temporary process, thinking that everyone is in the same situation, that we have to stay home for public health and that my life will be as beautiful or even better.

I have been doing what I have been doing all along, I always try to experience the moment. I am living in the moment now. For example, maybe I'm spending more time in my life with my family. I enjoy it too. This is beautiful.