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ROAD TO TOKYO: MATURE MICHELI (ITA) TAKES GLOBAL PROGRESS IN HER STRIDE



Aged 21, Elena Micheli of Italy has the world at her feet.

Her rise through the ranks of Modern Pentathlon has been textbook. Born into a sporty family, she has grown up in the sport alongside her brothers Roberto (23) and Giorgio (18) and benefited from military experience.

Micheli (ITA) – tall and athletic with a mature temperament – started competing in 2013 and became European Youth B champion in 2015 in Caldas da Rainha (POR).

A sign of her maturity was a 17th-placed finish in her UIPM Pentathlon World Cup debut on home soil in Rome (ITA) in 2016, and a year later she won silver in the UIPM Tetrathlon Under 19 World Championships in Prague (CZE).

In 2018 she had a truly exceptional year, winning gold in both the UIPM Junior World Championships in Kladno (CZE) and the 1st Modern Pentathlon University World Championships

in Budapest (HUN).

In 2019, with Olympic qualification on the radar for the first time, Micheli (ITA) proved her readiness to compete at the highest level when she finished 7th in the UIPM Pentathlon World Cup Final and Olympic Test Event in Tokyo (JPN). Three months later in Budapest (HUN) the acceleration of a fairytale career continued: the 20-year-old won silver at the UIPM Pentathlon World Championships and secured a quota place for Italy at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

In the latest 'Road to Tokyo' pentathlete interview, Micheli (ITA) takes up the story herself...



Q: How did it feel in 2019 when you won the world silver medal and secured a qualification place for the Tokyo Olympics?

A: I will surely remember the UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Championships for the rest of my life. I've always been looking to emulate the best pentathletes in the world, I learned from them and now I've been on top of the world with them! I was wondering how it would feel to qualify for the Olympics: it feels like I've reached a dream!

Q: Can you remember watching the last Olympic Games in Rio in 2016? What were you thinking?

A: I can remember the last Olympics, I was watching it with my brothers who are pentathletes too. I was trying to imagine what Alice [Sotero] and Claudia [Cesarini] were feeling and I was cheering

for them. In my opinion the Olympics looks like the destination of a hard, tough but entertaining and amazing route. Actually it's the best opportunity for each athlete to show his or her abilities and the beauty of our sport.

Q: What do you think about the Olympics being postponed until 2021?

A: I totally agree with the postponement. Every one of us has a duty to protect more vulnerable people together – we have to take care of ourselves. Health comes before everything. One good thing about Tokyo 2020 in 2021 is that I'll have one more year to get to work on the best performance I can do. Right now I think that we all need to beat this and move forward together.



Q: How have you been keeping up your physical and mental health during the Coronavirus crisis?

A: During the lockdown I've obviously been missing my usual workout routine. That's why I tried (like all athletes around the world) to stay positive and keep on training while respecting the rules related to the containment of the virus. I've been running when and where I could with social distancing.

Q: What has been the most challenging part?

A: The most challenging part of that period has been the attempt to keep pushing every day, just in different ways: ride a bike at home or fence with my brothers in the terrace of our house. Sometimes we have to do our best just with the tools we have.

Q: And what positive things have you seen?

A: The positive things I've seen are the beauty of staying with my family, and talking with my real friends even if we couldn't meet. Above all I had all good feelings knowing that it could be – in a very little part – helpful to solve the virus problems by respecting the rules and staying at home.

Q: When, and why, did you take up the Modern Pentathlon?

A: I started practising this wonderful sport at the age of six with my elder brother. It has been love at first sight: I loved doing more than only one sport. The five disciplines of Pentathlon are all wonderful and doing all of them gives me the trust that we can do whatever we want if we just really wish it.



Q: What motivates you in training?

A: Pentathlon requires tenacity and patience. To handle the mental side is quite difficult – training takes a lot of time and effort – but reaching my goals has led me against all odds to a huge satisfaction. This is what motivates me the most. Actually I'm very thankful to all my coaches and my *Carabinieri* society for being by my side and for helping me with everything.

Q: Describe yourself as an athlete in three words.

A: Tenacious, energetic and stubborn.

Q: Who are your role models in sport, and in life?

A: One athlete I admire a lot is the Italian swimmer Federica Pellegrini. She had the ability to rise after she'd fallen. Otherwise, in life, my role models are my parents: they are the most honest, unselfish, loving and loyal people I've ever met and one day I hope to be like them.

Q: What is your ultimate ambition in Modern Pentathlon?

A: I've never thought about "an ultimate ambition", actually I'd like to do my best every time to show who I really am, doing it with passion to show how beautiful our sport is. I obviously would like to be on top of the world, but what I really want is to always enjoy my job and to do the best I can.

