

05 SEP 2020

# FINALISTS GEAR UP FOR #LASERALLSTARS ON PIERRE DE COUBERTIN PENTATHLON DAY



- Thirty-two athletes from five continents earn right to return in September
- Positive feedback for world's first virtual laser shooting competition
- Large group of enthusiasts in Philippines cheer Princess Arbilon to success

The world's first virtual laser shooting competition has ended with 32 athletes earning the right to compete in the UIPM #LaserAllStars Finals.

Athletes from five of UIPM's continental confederations – Africa, Asia, Europe, NORCECA and South America – will represent their countries in the Finals in September after reaching the last four in their respective qualification rounds on August 7/8.

The finalists are now preparing to make history on September 9, coinciding with the 3rd Pierre de Coubertin Pentathlon Day. The finals will be broadcast live on UIPMTV.org from 3pm (Central European Summer Time).

Prize money - distributed on the condition that it is used to support participation in the UIPM 2021 Laser Run World Championships in Minsk (BLR) - will be distributed to all finalists depending on their finishing rank.

A live stream of the knockout action was watched all around the world, including in the Philippines where a large group gathered to watch their junior athletes on a big screen as they competed, with sound and video technicians working in an adjacent studio.

## **Participants and results**

Many of the 256 athletes from 35 countries who took part in qualification did so after participating in #LaserHomeRun – UIPM's first virtual event – in May 2020.

Among the competitors was one Olympic champion – Anatoly Starostin of Russia, the Moscow 1980 gold medallist – as well as a UIPM Pentathlon World Cup Final winner, Tamara Alekszejev of Hungary, and the 2019 Pan American Games champion, Charles Fernandez of Guatemala.

Alongside established nations such as Belarus, Egypt, Great Britain and Mexico, the list of qualifiers for the Finals includes athletes from Afghanistan, Ecuador, Moldova, Philippines and Venezuela – demonstrating the inclusive worldwide appeal of laser shooting.

Argentina, Italy, Latvia, Switzerland and Russia will also be represented in the Finals, scheduled for September 9 to coincide with the 3rd Pierre de Coubertin #PentathlonDay.

Results are available at the UIPM website and below is a round-up of the results by classification.

### **Under 15 Girls**

Many athletes who competed in #LaserHomeRun in May returned to test their shooting prowess against international rivals.

With a strong representation from Great Britain, team-mates Zoe Spokes (GBR), Imogen Edwards (GBR) qualified for the semi-finals along with Maria Sol Naranjo (ECU) and Julia Micheal (EGY).

### **U15 Boys**

The Finals for male teenage athletes will also feature an all-British semi-final after Travis Moore (GBR) and Toby Aberdeen (GBR) emerged in the bottom half of the draw. In the top half, the well-known Biathle/Triathle and Laser Run athlete Akim Gnedtchik (BLR) performed strongly to reach the Finals along with Valery Schukin (RUS).

### **U22 Women**

To the delight of the club group watching in the Philippines, Princess Arbilon (PHI) reached the last four after defeating Nouran Beheiry (EGY), a World Championships medallist in both Laser Run and Biathle/Triathle. The 18-year-old will be joined in the Finals by Darcy Dryden (GBR), Silvia

Ventura (MEX) and Maryia Gnedtchik (BLR).

## **U22 Men**

Perhaps the real surprise package of the entire competition was the qualification of two newcomers from Afghanistan (newcomers). Ajmal Safi (AFG) and Nawid Karimi (AFG) overcame a poor internet connection to earn their places in the Finals alongside Ibrahim Al Desoky (EGY) and Marco Lopez (MEX).

## **U40 Women**

An electric performance by Guatemala saw a double success for Sofia Cabrera (GUA) – who defeated Alekszejew (HUN) in the Round of 16 – and the team-mate she will now meet in the last four, Gabriela Fernandez (GUA). With other well-known pentathletes in the draw such as Ayelen Zapata (ARG) and Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games qualifier Marcela Cuaspud (ECU), the two remaining berths in the Finals were won by Salma Abdelmaksoud (EGY) – a Mixed Relay gold medallist at the UIPM 2019 Pentathlon World Championships – and Clementine Cooper (GBR).

## **U40 Men**

In the Round of 16, a needle battle saw the elimination of 2019 Pan American Games champion Fernandez (GUA), who was defeated 3-4 by Valentin Samsonov (MDA). He will be joined in the last four by Abdelrahman Mahmoud (EGY), Ricardo Vera (MEX) and #LaserHomeRun champion Alexandre Dallenbach (SUI). Again, there was strong participation from international newcomers Afghanistan.

## **Masters 40+ Women**

Egypt proved the value of having established online shooting competitions with a number of athletes reaching the Finals, including Eman Moussa (EGY) and Amal Abdulfatah Farouk (EGY) in the Masters category. The other survivors were Andra Novicka (LAT), UIPM 2018 Masters world champion, and UIPM 2018 Laser Run World Championships medallist Clair Carman (GBR). The family element of #LaserAllStars was underlined by the number of 'Pentathlon Moms' who participated in the Masters category.

## **Masters 40+ Men**

The 10m shooting distance proved challenging for many within a Masters group aged from 40 to 70. Apart from Moscow 1980 Olympic champion Starostin (RUS), another well-known face was the President of the Egypt Modern Pentathlon Federation, Sharif Elerian (EGY). The successful qualifiers were UIPM 2019 Laser Run world champion Emanuele Gambini (ITA), Spencer Hassell (GBR), Sherif Said (EGY) and Mosaad Elshabasy (EGY).

## Reaction

Organisers received positive feedback from numerous participants as the first run of the experimental knockout competition came to a close.

*“Thanks a lot for coordinating and organizing this event amid this pandemic. Also, giving us more opportunity to compete in times like this” – Kiat Xuan Kok (SIN)*

*“Thank you a lot. I was not on my best today. Good luck to everyone. The big respect to the organizers!” – Elena Dotsenko (RUS)*

***“Thank you very much for all your hard work in putting together the UIPM Laser All Stars. Although in this area of competition I am a competitor, in other sports in GBR I am an official and an organiser, and I am only too well aware how much time and effort goes into managing these competitions, and at times it can feel it is all for little reward. The efforts of you both and all at UIPM are much appreciated” – Charlie Lane (GBR)***

## More information

Like #LaserHomeRun, UIPM created #LaserAllStars as a means of bringing the global UIPM Sports community together online during the non-competition period caused by the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic.

It also came in the wake of numerous UIPM member federations launching their own virtual laser competitions, leading the global governing body to establish an umbrella identity for the concept and set up a qualification system that adds relevance to each national and regional competition.

Read the coverage of the launch and find more information about #LaserAllStars at the UIPM website.