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ROAD TO TOKYO: KATE FRENCH (GBR) KEEPS A LEVEL HEAD DURING TURBULENT YEAR



A calm temperament is a prerequisite for pentathletes and Kate French is one of those athletes who seems to compete – and often win – with the minimum of fuss.

The 29-year-old from Great Britain describes herself as “determined, stubborn and calm” and that seems to match the outward persona that we see on the field of play.

French (GBR) is the latest in a long line of world-class women from her country – in the five Olympic Games since the women’s Modern Pentathlon was introduced, five British athletes have won medals. The only time the podium has eluded them was Rio 2016, when the rapidly-improving French (GBR) finished 5th.

A steady progression during the Rio cycle included her first UIPM Pentathlon World Cup medal – bronze in Sarasota (USA) in 2015 – and the Games in Brazil seemed to strengthen her self-belief. The following season, 2017, French (GBR) burst out of the blocks with a silver and a gold followed by a 6th in her three Pentathlon World Cups, and then a 6th in the Pentathlon World

Championships in Cairo (EGY).

Ever since, she has been a formidable competitor on the circuit, winning two more World Cup golds and then European Championships silver and World Championships bronze in 2019.

In the latest #RoadToTokyo interview, she reveals her motivations.



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

A: It was one of my most memorable experiences competing! Having it in Bath, where we train every day, was so special. Also having all my friends and family there was incredible and something I will never forget.

Q: You finished an excellent 5th at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. How do you reflect on that now?

A: I was really happy with 5th, but the experience of competing at an Olympic Games and coming so close to a medal has made me want to podium in Tokyo even more.

Q: If selected to compete for Great Britain at Tokyo 2020 in 2021, will you prepare any differently?

A: Tokyo will be a different challenge to Rio due to the additional heat and humidity. Hopefully we'll be able to use ways to adapt to the conditions out there.

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

A: It was difficult as it's something I have been focused on for so long, but it was also a relief as I hadn't been able to train in a full capacity since March. In the end I feel it was the right decision, the severity of the situation around the world is much bigger.



Q: How have you been keeping up your training during the Coronavirus crisis?

A: I really enjoyed cycling during lockdown, it was a great way to keep fit and the roads have been almost traffic-free for once. All the sport centres were closed during lockdown, but luckily I was able to do some open-water swimming and running. We are back training as a team now and I'm absolutely loving it.

Q: What has been the most challenging part?

A: Having to adapt to the ever-changing environment in the UK, plus not being able to see family and friends as much, has been really difficult.

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

A: I did my first pentathlon at the age of 13 and instantly loved the variety of sports. I came from a riding background and was intrigued at the aspect of riding an unknown horse.



Q: What motivates you in training?

A: The feeling of knowing I've worked really hard and given my best in training. This allows me to go into competition feeling well prepared and positive.

Q: Describe yourself as an athlete in three words.

A: Determined, stubborn, calm.

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

A: There are too many inspirational athletes that I admire to name just one, but I particularly admire all the female athletes showing dominance in the sporting world.

Q: What is your ultimate ambition in Modern Pentathlon?

A: To medal in Tokyo.

