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LASER RUN SPOTLIGHT: URBAN SPORTS PHENOMENON ACTS AS GLOBAL CATALYST FOR RETURN OF SPORT



The unexpected disruptions of 2020 may have brought sport to a standstill for much of the year, but Laser Run has been a spectacular catalyst for the global growth of the UIPM Sports movement. So it was inevitable that when COVID-19 Coronavirus restrictions began to ease in some countries, the popular mass-participation sport was the first to resume.

From Colombo to Caracas to Cape Town, sporting communities right across the planet have energetically embraced the simple plug-and-play format that enables Laser Run to support development.

A wide range of activities signalled the post-COVID revival of Laser Run in numerous countries and continents from August to December, restoring momentum to the growth of the sport after the cancellation of so many instalments of UIPM's Global Laser Run City Tour and Biathle-Triathle



On August 1, Germany became one of the first countries to organise a Laser Run competition, a two-day national championships in Nuremberg – the first of many events arranged by the German Modern Pentathlon Federation (DVMF).

On August 27, Uzbekistan arranged a competition in the capital city of Tashkent followed by a second event in Andizhan on October 3.

Respecting the limitations imposed by the pandemic, the number of participants was relatively low with 30 people in the first and 45 in the second.

Modern Pentathlon Federation of Uzbekistan President Bakhromjon Gaziev and Secretary General Kseniya Gulyamova showed leadership by taking part in the competition in Tashkent (UZB).



September was the month when the Laser Run scene really kicked back into gear. On the first weekend of the month, Lithuania held a national run/shoot competition in Vingis Park, Vilnius – venue of the UIPM 2017 Pentathlon World Cup Final.

It was predominantly a youth competition and London 2012 Olympic champion Laura Asadasukaite's daughter won gold medal in her age group.

Ukraine held a two-day 'Dinamo Laser Run' competition in the capital, Kiev. Two hundred athletes from Kiev, Zhitomir and Lviv from youth sport schools and seniors amateurs participated at the Dinamo equestrian complex.

In the background, an Olympic lesson was delivered to young athletes by Rio 2016 Olympic silver medallist Pavlo Tymoshchenko and European and World Championship medallist Dmytro Kirpulianskyy.

Some countries took a regional approach due to travel restrictions – and one of them was Russia. On September 20, more than 120 athletes across nine age groups, including top local pentathletes, took part in the regional championships of Novosibirsk at the Sibselmash Stadium.



On the final weekend of the month, Belarus held an Open National Laser Run in Vitebsk, with 160 athletes from the Vitebsk region and other corners of Belarus participating in Laser Run at the Summer Amphitheatre cultural and sport complex.

Hungary arranged a national event in Szekesfehervar and Turkey organised a special celebration of Laser Run during the European Week of Sport in Istanbul (TUR).

In October, France continued to arrange Laser Run events across the country as part of a schedule lasting from September to November. Later in the month it was Egypt's turn as athletes gathered in Alexandria, which will be the venue for the UIPM Junior and Youth World Championships in early 2021.

At different times in the year there were time trials and races for various age groups in both Australia and New Zealand, where local organisers even arranged Para Laser Run activities.



And in the USA, Laser Run competitions continued right into December thanks to the Wolfpack Pentathlon Club, which continues to hold a virtual Laser Run event in lieu of their annual attended event. Athletes compete one by one with no physical contact, reducing risk of COVID-19 infection. Fifteen participants have submitted results with many new meet records being established.

This innovation is in common with many organisers around the world who showed versatility and initiative throughout 2020 to keep the Laser Run community connected and motivated.