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LASER RUN SPOTLIGHT: MOVING UP A GEAR WORLDWIDE



The global phenomenon of Laser Run is well and truly back!

Since the easing of restrictions around the COVID-19 pandemic, the return of UIPM's most popular development sport has been picking up pace and there was a major acceleration in March and April 2022.

A record number of City Tours – 90 – has been awarded with new host countries such as Iraq, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Sudan, Bangladesh, Estonia, Lithuania, North Macedonia and Croatia planning to join on the circuit.

Not all countries were able to stage events – Ukraine, for example, had been one of the most active GLRCT nations until the start of the recent invasion – but competitions were staged in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America during this period, demonstrating the worldwide reach and magnetism of Laser Run.

Many Laser Runners participate simply for the joy of taking part, even doing so alongside members of their own families, but others race with competitive goals – and the UIPM Laser Run

World Championships taking place in Lisbon (POR) from September 22-25 is an obvious incentive.



Dazzling debut in Tallinn (EST)

International Laser Run has arrived in Tallinn!

On March 6, athletes from Latvia and Finland joined their hosts in Estonia, with 76 participants including high-level pentathletes.

Top 50-ranked Laura Salminen (FIN) was among those on the start line, along with world junior Triathlon champion and Laser Run silver medallist Johanna Maria Jogisu (EST), who won the GLRCT senior women's race.

The Masters 40+ winner was Andra Novicka (LAT), a multiple champion in both UIPM Masters and Biathlon-Triathlon World Championships.

A spokesperson for the local organising committee said: "This was the first international Laser Run competition held in Estonia and we were delighted with the high standard of racing and the fun had by everybody. And it doesn't end there – we are looking forward to hosting another Global Laser Run City Tour in Tallinn on May 22.



New generation emerges in Tbilisi (GEO)

On the same day (March 6) a Global Laser Run City Tour was held in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, which has been a host city since 2017 when it hosted the first-ever GLRCT.

Davit Magrakvelidze, former international pentathlete and now coach, said on behalf of the LOC: “GLRCT in Georgia has become much more popular every year, I was participating in the past and now I am happy and proud to be involved in the organisation of the event as well as preparing athletes to compete.

“This year many young athletes appeared and became part of our family. We hope this will continue permanently.”



Opportunity for all ages in Banha (EGY)

The first GLRCT in Egypt in 2022 was arranged at Banha City Club Stadium on March 12.

Competitions started at 9am and finished at 6pm, with athletes from more than 27 clubs gathering in Banha City Club.

More than 500 male and female athletes aged nine to 60+ showed their Laser Run prowess.

A spokesperson for the local organising committee said: “City Club is a smart sports, social and entertainment club across 15 cities in Egypt. It seeks to develop the talents of the children of the club in Modern Pentathlon sport with a goal to have their athletes among Egyptian professional athletes and achieving championships medals.”



Fun on the farm in Kimberley (RSA)

The plug-and-play nature of Laser Run is perfect for urban environments but it also lends itself well to rural settings – and South Africa has held numerous events outside the metropolis.

Seventy participants gathered at the Mein Heim Estate Guest Farm, 20km outside Kimberley in the Northern Cape region on March 12. It was the first Global Laser Run City Tour to take place in the Northern Cape and the most popular age group was Under 9.

One first-time Laser Runner said: “It is more than a sport... I love it! It is fun, I will recommend it to all my friends.”

A spokesperson for the local organising committee said: “We as the Northern Cape MPA committee believe it was a very successful day. A huge thank you to all parties involved in assisting and supporting our committee in this event.”

Another GLRCT in South Africa is coming soon, in Stellenbosch on May 8.



A tonic for body and mind in Gujranwala (PAK)

Around 500 athletes of all ages took part in a City Tour held under the auspices of the Pakistan Modern Pentathlon Federation (PMPF) in Gujranwala on March 30.

High numbers of youths took part from a variety of schools.

A spokesperson for the local organising committee said: “Laser Run being a smart endurance sport improves athletes’ physical fitness. It also brings self-confidence and a healthy state of mind to perform well in their studies.

“Through the PMPF, the GLRCT platform enables the athletes to showcase their talent and hidden abilities. They can be shortlisted for national and international competitions.”

Gujranwala city, known as the City of Wrestlers, is famous for its food and is now Pakistan’s third-largest industrial centre.

Commissioner of Gujranwala, Ehsan Bhutta, was a VIP guest of the final competitions. He told athletes: “The participation of such a large number of children in Laser Run is a welcome sign.

“We will conduct Laser Run events in line with the vision of UIPM, and I thank all officials who played a key role in the successful organisation of this event.”



Students lead by example in Chirchiq (UZB)

On March 30 a first Global Laser Run City Tour was successfully held in the Uzbek city of Chirchiq.

The event was held in the grounds of one of Uzbekistan's finest sporting institutions, the Uzbek State University of Physical Culture and Sports, with 272 athletes aged nine to 63 taking part.

Students from the hosting university were joined by pentathletes from Tashkent city and the regions of Andijan, Tashkent, Kashkadarya and the Republic of Karakalpakstan in competing on the Laser Run course.

A spokesperson for the local organising committee said: "All participants in the competition received certificates of participation and shared incredible emotions."

There will be two more City Tours in Uzbekistan in autumn 2022, in Samarqand and Nukus.



History repeats itself in Gori (GEO)

Like Tbilisi, the Kvemo-Kartli region of Georgia was involved at the genesis of GLRCT in 2017 and the city of Gori hosted a reunion event on April 2.

Racing was organised at the main stadium of historic Gori, with local participants joined by others from the cities of Tbilisi, Rustavi, Sachkhere and Chiatura.

The local government was involved in the awards ceremony, and LOC spokesperson Marika Kakhiashvili said: "It is a new opportunity for our region. We are happy to have the possibility to organise such a good event in our city for the best of the new sporting generation."

Two more City Tours will follow in Georgia later this year, in Chiatura and Sachkhere.



We're live on Facebook in Alexandria (EGY)

The resort city of Alexandria has become a major hot spot of UIPM Sports in recent years and it hosted a two-day GLRCT at the historic Alexandria Stadium on April 15-16.

Evening racing started at 8pm in the evening due to Ramadan, and 385 athletes from 25 clubs (247 boys and 138 girls) participated.

In a mark of the increasing visibility of UIPM Sports, the Egyptian Modern Pentathlon Federation live-streamed the action on its Facebook page.

Another three GLRCTs are planned for Egypt in 2022, in Hurghada, Cairo and Ismailia.



Dedicated team achieve success in Caracas (VEN)

On the other side of the Atlantic, another two-day Global Laser Run City Tour was organised in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas on April 20-21.

With the onus on youth categories, there was a healthy participation of 218 boys and girls of various ages.

Venezuela National Federation President Cesar Rondon said: “GLRCT is a really very valuable project which helps us to guarantee sporting opportunities and motivate new talents to practise Modern Pentathlon.

“From Venezuela we are super happy with this project, directed by UIPM at an international level with the aim of visualising our sport. Venezuela has a team to organise high-level Laser Run events – despite the great economic limitations we have a strong team willing to develop Modern Pentathlon and Laser Run to the highest level.”

Two more City Tours are planned in Venezuela this year in Maracay and Cumana.



Busy year of Laser Run kicks off San Martin (ARG)

Also in South America, a City Tour was arranged at the Military College of San Martin, Argentina, on April 22.

Around 400 students participated in competitions and a coaching clinic was provided by Olympic pentathletes Emanuel Zapata (ARG) and Iryna Khokhlova of Ukraine.

Guillermo Filipi, head coach of the Argentina Modern Pentathlon team and Member of the UIPM Coaches Committee, said: "Our experience has been spectacular, as we have been able to bring together many participants and encourage them to join our sport.

"The diffusion of this event is essential and its organisation is not very difficult comparing to other UIPM events. That's what has enabled us to host several events this year."

Indeed, another four GLRCT events are scheduled to take place in Argentina in 2022.



Plenty of potential on show in Lahore (PAK)

The PMPF, in collaboration with Sports Board Punjab (SBP), organised Pakistan's second GLRCT of the year at Punjab Stadium on April 26.

Around 400 male and female athletes from the Lahore Division demonstrated their prowess in running and shooting during the event.

Zahoor Ahmed, PMPF Secretary General, said: "It was fascinating to witness such a large number of boys and girls from Lahore Division taking part in Laser Run competitions.

"Pakistan has plenty of potential in the disciplines of running and shooting and the PMPF is providing a suitable platform to promising male and female players to demonstrate their talent in a highly competitive environment.

"We are quite upbeat to find several talented players through Laser Run competitions. These budding athletes will be prepared for future national and international pentathlon competitions."

Director General of Sports Punjab, Javed Chohan, graced the opening ceremony as chief guest.

Two more GLRCT events are scheduled to take place in Pakistan in autumn, in Rahim Yar Khan and Islamabad.