

27 AUG 2023

# UIPM 2023 PENTATHLON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS: MICHELI (ITA) AND CHOONG (GBR) ON TOP OF THE WORLD AGAIN



- Both 2022 champions retain world titles after day of incredible racing
- Bryson (GBR) and Hernandez (MEX) achieve Paris 2024 Olympic quota places
- Individual medals and team golds for Sotero (ITA) and Shaban (EGY)

**Elena Micheli** of **Italy** and **Joseph Choong** of **Great Britain** proved that the first time was no fluke by winning back-to-back gold medals at the UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Championships.

On a day of incredible racing and imperious performances, Women's Individual bronze medallist **Kerenza Bryson** (GBR) and Men's Individual silver medallist **Emiliano Hernandez** of **Mexico** earned their countries direct qualification quota places for the Olympic Games.



Micheli (ITA) broke from the pack after a tight start to the Women's Final Laser Run to win gold by an impressive 9sec and retain the world title she claimed for the first time 12 months ago in Alexandria (EGY). In doing so, she became the first woman to successfully defend this title since Amelie Caze of France in 2008.

Aged 24, and having also won the UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Cup Final to secure a place at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, Micheli (ITA) appears to have the world at her feet. And it is possible that her main rival for Olympic gold could come from inside her own country.

**Alice Sotero** (ITA), a 4th-place finisher at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games who since gave birth to her first child, is in the form of her life and followed up her gold medal at the 3rd European Games in Krakow (POL) by winning world silver behind her team-mate.

Having climbed from a starting place of 9th, Sotero (ITA) had to fight all the way against Bryson (GBR), who had started 6th. Bryson (GBR) became the second athlete from her team after European Games bronze medallist **Olivia Green** (GBR) to secure a direct qualification quota place at Paris 2024.

This brought to an end a captivating women's competition, with such a high standard that two-time Olympic medallist **Laura Asadauskaite** of **Lithuania** had to accept another 4th place – her fourth of the season. **Rebecca Langrehr** of **Germany** and **Mariana Arceo** (MEX) completed the top six.



The Men's Final was perhaps even more dramatic, mainly because Hernandez (MEX) ran Choong (GBR) so close after starting with a 10sec deficit. He outpaced the Olympic champion on each running lap but found his rival to be in exceptional form on the range, which ultimately proved decisive.

Choong's feat of back-to-back Men's Individual world titles is even rarer than Micheli's - the last male athlete to pull it off was Sebastien Deleigne (FRA) in 1998.

Behind them, there was an intriguing tussle between the Egyptians and Koreans, finally settled by the African contingent as UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Cup Final winner Shaban (EGY) fought off the challenge of brothers **Ahmed** and **Mohamed Elgendy** (EGY), with **Woongtae Jun** of **Korea** fighting back hard to claim the last spot in the top six.

The Women's Team gold medal was won by Italy ahead of Great Britain and Hungary, while Egypt won the Men's Team title with silver and bronze going to Great Britain and Korea respectively.

#### Medallists' reaction

Women's champion Micheli (ITA) said: "I am twice world champion, we are twice world champion, me and my staff, so I am really happy with it.

"My head coach told me, 'never, never look back while you are running', but when I saw Alice coming back to me I said 'oh, it's impossible for me not to look back'. It was really amazing – this could be a dream that we stand on the podium together.

"I'm really excited and don't have the words to explain because, in a way, I wasn't ready for this. It has been a surprise for me because it's not so simple to confirm yourself in another World

Championships. One way or another, last year it happened and it happened again right now.

"I am so excited, so happy, and I would just like to thank the coaches who have been near to me and helped me. During the Riding course and the Shooting range, they were always by my side."

Silver medallist Sotero (ITA) said: "I feel so good. I came here as European champion but I started 9th in the Laser Run and I didn't believe that I could be second. It's so beautiful.

"In the final lap when I went out with Kerenza Bryson, and my team-mates said 'go, go, faster, faster', I saw Elena ahead of me and I said 'OK, I want us to be first and second'.

"My Swimming was so fast today, I wanted to be first and I knew I could do it and it was a beautiful time. Today is a very, very beautiful day.

"I want to say thanks to my family who are helping with my daughter, I love them so much and I want to go home to celebrate with them."

Bronze medallist Bryson (GBR) said: "I just can't believe it. It's amazing to compete at a home World Championships and I've never had so many friends and family at this stage to support me. It's something really special that I didn't think I'd get to experience in my sporting career.

"I'm really proud about that performance. After Swimming I felt the lactic acid and I could still feel it in my arm in the Shooting, so that first Shooting series was quite shaky and I panicked as I came out of the range, thinking 'if I do that four times there's no way I'm going to climb'. But I managed to compose myself.

"I saw Laura [Asadauskaite] coming behind me and just thought I had to push and give it absolutely everything I've got. I didn't realise until I looked back with about 70m to go and saw that I had some ground. I think it sunk in then.

"It helped massively to have the crowd shouting when I came on piste and every time I ran past them. It just puts a smile on your face. I want to say a massive thank you to my friends and family, my partner and my parents and sister who have just been with me since day one. Also to UK Sport and National Lottery for funding us, and allowing me to do a year as a full-time athlete, which I wouldn't be able to do otherwise.

"I've got my Army family standing behind me allowing to do this as well, and I'm so grateful to Pentathlon GB for hosting this amazing event and allowing me to train here."

Men's champion Choong (GBR) said: "I definitely didn't have it under control from the start. To be honest, about three weeks ago I wasn't sure if I would be competing. I tore my calf five weeks ago and had a rocky build-up. So I'm absolutely speechless that I ended up winning this competition.

"The crowd has been absolutely amazing and thank you so much everyone for coming. One of my favourite competitions I've ever done.

"First, I'll have a couple of beers tonight. Then we've got a couple of weeks and then it's head down and work on a couple of things I've got to improve on for next year. In the Tokyo cycle, I was in a similar position as world No.1 and then COVID hit – so I am keen quite not to get too far ahead of myself. But things are looking really good for next season.

"I am generally a calm and laid-back person but the disrupted build-up really took the pressure off myself. In the Semi-final I was thinking of trying to make the Final, maybe get a Team medal at least. Then I drew an absolutely beautiful horse, and that put me in a great position and I managed



to haul it together in the technical events where my Running might have been a bit weaker than usual.”

Silver medallist Hernandez (MEX) said: “First of all, congrats to Choong and thanks to everyone in Bath for having us in this fantastic competition. It was really interesting to have so many people shouting and supporting Choong, I was really happy about that.

“When we were in the Shooting series, he was five out of five and I had four green lights and I heard everyone shouting and thought ‘oh, come on, I really want to go’. It was a really good competition for me, and for everybody really.

“We started with a good Riding event, and in the end I kept the composure and endurance to have a big fight. I’m really happy we earned the place for Paris 2024, and it’s all about teamwork so thanks to my family, my team-mates, my coaches – it’s really a lot of work.”

Bronze medallist Shaban (EGY) said: “The Laser Run was so hard today, because we had Woongtae and the Elgendys and they are so strong. Today my competition was not very good in Riding, not even Fencing was very good, so I am so happy to have the bronze today.

“Before the race, I thought I couldn’t beat them but my coach Yasser Hefny believed in me, and he told me ‘you can’. Until the end of the race I couldn’t imagine who would win, but in the last Shooting I think Ahmed Elgendy went with me and it was a strong finish. We are a strong team.”



### Women’s Final – Riding

Organisers in Bath (GBR) provided a stern examination of Riding competence – which most of the 18 athletes in the Women’s Final passed.

Nobody managed a perfect round, but five athletes – Green (GBR), **Ilke Ozyuksel** of **Türkiye**, Arceo (MEX), **Emma Whitaker** (GBR) and Asadauskaite (LTU) – completed the course with only one knockdown. Micheli (ITA) stayed in touch with a 287.

Only one athlete, **Michelle Gulyas** of **Hungary**, failed to complete the course and there were only two refusals during the round.

### Fencing

With many rightly expecting another Italian-dominated Women’s Final, it was **Alessandra Frezza**

(ITA) who surprisingly topped the standings in the Fencing Ranking Round. With 24 victories she was two clear of Langrehr (GER) and three wins above Bryson (GBR), Arceo (MEX) and Micheli (ITA) on the ladder.

The enduring star of the Bonus Round was Bryson (GBR), who won the last three bouts to boost her podium chances by six overall points, but only after **Mingyu Zhang** of **China** and **Laura Heredia** of **Spain** had achieved five victories apiece.

### Swimming

Sotero (ITA) moved firmly back into contention with a fantastic swim of 2min 08.63sec – only 2sec off world record pace. Micheli (ITA) and Gulyas (HUN) were next fastest on the 2:12 mark, while some of the overall leaders dropped points to set up a very intriguing Laser Run start line.



### Laser Run

The consistent Micheli (ITA) spent the first two laps edging away from her closest rival, Arceo (MEX), who may have had the edge on the champion had she not stalled on the last two visits to the shooting range.

Green (GBR) and Zhang (CHN) quickly faded from contention and the main threats presented themselves in the shape of Langrehr (GER) and Asadauskaite (LTU), who then found themselves reined in by Sotero (ITA) and Bryson (GBR).

At the third shoot, Micheli (ITA) made a decisive move for the win and when Arceo (MEX) lost her rhythm, the battle for bronze became a battle for silver. Asadauskaite (LTU) could not get her shots away quickly enough to keep pressure on Sotero (ITA) and Bryson (GBR), who were overjoyed to cross the finish line as first-time World Championships medallists, the latter roared home by an appreciative home crowd and the former in the day's best time of 11:00.10.

### Men's Final – Riding

The Men's Riding closely mirrored the Women's, with four athletes top-scoring with 293. One of them was reigning champion Choong (GBR), looking purposeful and calm, but Hernandez (MEX), **Marvin Dogue** (GER) and **Jihun Lee** (KOR) achieved the same score.

There was only one elimination but **Bence Demeter** (HUN) had a very tough time, leaving hardly any of the jumps intact as he plummeted down the leaderboard with a 236.



### Fencing

Demeter (HUN) enjoyed the most success in the Fencing Ranking Round, notching 23 victories – and adding the maximum four points on offer in the Bonus Round.

But Choong (GBR) was only one victory behind the top fencer in both rounds, scoring 22V/13D alongside **Linbin Zhang** (CHN) and team-mates Mohamed Elgendy and Shaban (EGY).

### Swimming

Feeling comfortable at the top of the leaderboard, Choong (GBR) did not overstretch himself in the pool, recording the 8th-fastest time. It was his team-mate **Myles Pillage** (GBR) who made the biggest waves with a very quick 1:57.23. Ahmed Elgendy (EGY) made up some ground on the leaders with an excellent 1:58.87, while European champion **Giorgio Malan** (ITA) also broke the 2min mark.

### Laser Run

Knowing that a 10sec deficit to the Olympic champion represented a mountain to climb, Hernandez (MEX) only knew one way to approach the challenge and that was to attack. Which is exactly what he did on all of the five laps, passing Choong (GBR) on the track and trying to keep pressure on the favourite.

The problem for Hernandez (MEX) was not so much that he shot badly; it was more that Choong (GBR) shot superbly, missing only a couple of shots in the entire race and showing the control of nerve that only great pentathlon champions can achieve.

It was cat and mouse throughout, but finally the consistency of Choong (GBR) broke his rival down, and for the first time at the final shoot Choong (GBR) managed to get a 5sec cushion that he used all his experience to protect, crossing the line to the euphoria of the crowd.

Hernandez (MEX) was elated with his silver, as was Shaban (EGY) with his bronze because he held off some of the greatest runners in the sport to secure it. Initially it was Jun (KOR) who looked



like the favourite for bronze, but finally his difficulties in Riding became a telling factor and he and his team-mates Lee (KOR) and **Jinhwa Jung** (KOR) faded under the Egyptian onslaught.

The best Laser Run time of the day was recorded by **Csaba Bohm** (HUN) – 9:48.20.



### President's reaction

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: “

“The competition was well prepared with excellent horses, a great facility and atmosphere with everything done the correct way for athletes – and the field of play was perfect. We had the visit of our Honorary President, HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, and also Francesco Ricci Bitti, the President of ASOIF, which underlined how our international people are looking to us and how we are preparing the athletes for Paris 2024.

“We saw this morning a great Women's Final with some dramatic changes, and the same with the Men's Final – in both races we might have seen a Mexican champion if they had been able to shoot a little better until the end.

“The hero of the home country, the Olympic champion, really acted in a tactical way and he had enormous reserves in his legs, and a fantastic dynamic in shooting. I looked in his face and he was really happy and proud to be the winner in his home country.

“Italian Modern Pentathlon has developed enormously on the women's side, and don't forget the British ladies who also had a great result. And then we have the Egyptians who are very strong on the men's side. But we also saw other teams who performed strongly.

“I underline again that in this World Championships, before the Olympic Games Paris 2024 after which will change from Riding to Obstacle, we need good performances in Riding and here we saw much better performances compared to the last competitions. The athletes and trainers all understand that they need to invest enormously in this discipline.

“What we learned again in this World Championships is that the trainers and coaches are working very hard to prepare the athletes at the highest level. Congratulations to the athletes but also to the coaches.

“We have the strongest athletes on the podium, on the Individual and Team side.”



## **Watch and follow**

The UIPM 2023 Pentathlon and Laser Run World Championships can be watched live on UIPM TV <sup>1</sup>, where annual subscriptions cost €14.99. All results are available on the UIPM website and via the UIPM Central app.

Follow World Pentathlon on Facebook, Instagram , TikTok or X (Twitter) for additional content.

The UIPM 2023 Pentathlon World Championships concludes on August 28 with the Mixed Relay, with UIPM TV live coverage times beginning at 2.25pm (Central European Summer Time).

The UIPM 2023 Laser Run World Championships took place from August 19-21. [Click here to read reports.](#)

Rank	Name	Nation	Points
1	MICHELI Elena	ITA	1429
2	SOTERO Alice	ITA	1420
3	BRYSON Kerenza	GBR	1419
4	ASADAUSKAITE Laura	LTU	1409
5	LANGREHR Rebecca	GER	1408
6	ARCEO Mariana	MEX	1402
7	OZYUKSEL Ilke	TUR	1400
8	GREEN Olivia	GBR	1394
9	VARLEY Jessica	GBR	1394
10	WHITAKER Emma	GBR	1388
11	HEREDIA Laura	ESP	1381
12	KIM Sunwoo	KOR	1379
13	FREZZA Alessandra	ITA	1372
14	ZHANG Mingyu	CHN	1362
15	MALISZEWSKA Anna	POL	1354
16	BAUER Blanka	HUN	1350
17	ABDELMAKSOUD Salma	EGY	1350
18	GULYAS Michelle	HUN	1097

Rank	Name	Nation	Points
1	CHOONG Joseph	GBR	1523
2	HERNANDEZ Emiliano	MEX	1518
3	SHABAN Mohanad	EGY	1514
4	ELGENDY Ahmed	EGY	1510
5	ELGENDY Mohamed	EGY	1506
6	JUN Woongtae	KOR	1505
7	BOHM Csaba	HUN	1502
8	BELAUD Valentin	FRA	1502
9	DOGUE Marvin Faly	GER	1500
10	MALAN Giorgio	ITA	1497
11	ZHANG Linbin	CHN	1485
12	JUNG Jinhwa	KOR	1485
13	PILLAGE Myles	GBR	1477
14	VLACH Martin	CZE	1473
15	LEE Jihun	KOR	1460
16	DEMETER Bence	HUN	1452
17	BROWN Charles	GBR	1450
18	POPOV Roman	UKR	1089