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UIPM 2025 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP BUDAPEST: TAKE FIVE



We're back! An unorthodox seven-week break in Pentathlon World Cup action has only served to whet the appetite for the return of the sport's elite and now in the Hungarian capital we are primed to be rewarded for our patience.

The second instalment of the season in Budapest will be followed closely with UIPM 2025 Pentathlon World Cup Pazardzhik kicking off in Bulgaria on May 7. Fittingly, the group of athletes gathering in Hungary this week confirms that things have moved up a gear with a star-studded field assembled.

The opening leg of the World Cup season in Cairo (EGY) in late February saw a mega-prospect deliver on her potential at the first time of asking when 14-year-old Egypt sensation Farida Khalil delighted the home fans with women's gold. Top honours in the men's competition went to Matteo Cicinelli of Italy.

Given the class of a truly global field with 31 nations represented, the ultimate destination of the prizes this week looks wide open with tension and excitement guaranteed. Here are five great reasons to tune in and watch the action (free on UIPM TV):

1) Stern challenge for the homecoming queen

In the centre of Europe, it's fair to say that they haven't got tired of celebrating the glorious gold medal moment delivered by Michelle Gulyas of Hungary last August in Paris. The brilliant 24-year-old was recently named the country's Woman of the Year by Glamour magazine.

Gulyas (HUN) was quickly back in the thick of Pentathlon action in Cairo in February and proved she had gotten to grips with the Obstacle discipline, thriving in the new quick-fire format which will debut at the Olympics in 2028. However, the season-opener also served an instant warning that there's a new generation hot on her heels when Khalil (EGY) took gold.

Now Gulyas (HUN) will be back under the spotlight on home soil with even more challengers. Seungmin Seong of Korea, who took Olympic bronze in Paris and is also the reigning world champion, returns and so do her fellow medallists from Zhengzhou 2024, Blanka Guzi (HUN) and Rita Erdos (HUN), adding to a daunting list of challengers in the women's event including the recent Budapest Indoors champion Emma Whitaker of Great Britain. Gulyas has her work cut out for her.



2) The Azzurri show strength in depth

Giorgio Malan of Italy ended nearly four decades of national longing when he surged to Olympic bronze last year. So the least he deserved was an extra break. But while Malan (ITA) was away for the first instalment of the World Cup season, the Italian national anthem still got an airing as Matteo Cicinelli (ITA) chased down the Laser Run lead of Mohanad Shaban of Egypt to claim gold.

It says a lot about the burgeoning strength in depth of the Italian team that in Budapest, Malan tags in for Cicinelli and their medal hopes don't take a hit. Teenage talent and Swimming world record-holder Matteo Bovenzi (ITA) joins the six-person Azzurri team. At the sharp end, five of the top 10 in the men's world rankings will be on show with the eyes of the home fans drawn to two of those — No.1 and reigning world champion Csaba Bohm (HUN), and No.4 Balazs Szep (HUN). These are two of the most dynamic athletes in the sport but with global contenders aplenty — think Shaban (EGY), Moutaz Mohamed (EGY) or Changwan Seo (KOR) — and a new era bringing fresh talents, this race looks wide open.



3) Dad-to-be Belaud the father of French legion

There is a very good reason why the reigning Olympic silver medallist will not be joining her fellow podium stars in Budapest — Elodie Clouvel is pregnant. The French icon revealed the wonderful news with a spectacular photo shoot in recent days but while Clouvel may be putting her feet up, her partner and the imminent dad-to-be Valentin Belaud of France is doing nothing of the sort. The always engaging 32-year-old shook off his own disappointment at missing out on Paris by being a shining example to other veterans as he clearly relished the challenge of Pentathlon's new discipline. Belaud (FRA) excelled over the Obstacle course in Cairo in February, finishing 5th overall.

He might even get a little parenting practice as the father figure of a 13-strong France team, eight of whom are 25 or under. Look out for Jean-Baptiste Mourcia (FRA), who blocked Belaud (FRA) from enjoying a home Olympics last summer.



4) Lots of talent in the Jurt locker

Anna Jurt of Switzerland enjoyed an Olympic Games debut to remember last summer when she powered to an 11th-place finish under glorious sunshine at the Palace of Versailles, notching an Olympic record in Laser Run. As she makes her return to elite competition, she has brought back-up.

Her younger twin sisters, Florina Jurt and Katharina Jurt, have been two of Anna's most vocal cheerleaders over recent seasons but they are increasingly effective inside the arena too.

Both have enjoyed prolific results as individuals and especially as a relay team, winning UIPM Pentathlon U19 World Championship gold two years ago. This week the 19-year-old duo will make their Senior debuts, alongside their idol and older sister. Three of a total of nine siblings in a remarkable family, the Jurts' sporting genes come from mom Barbara, a marathon runner. As two of the most impressive early adopters of the Obstacle discipline, Florina and Katharina may well have a head start on Anna, the current world No.12. Let's see if they have been letting their older sister in on some trade secrets.



5) Asia rising, with a quarter of the field

With many nations easing themselves back into a new Olympic cycle at the start of the year, Hungary's enchanting capital will see the international flavour kick up more than a few notches.

Up and down the participation list there are notable entries, but taking a step back and surveying the whole can be insightful too. With Asia having been a confederation of great growth and development in recent years for UIPM, this week shows the fruits of some of that work.

A chunky 47 of the 175 athletes gathering by the Danube, well over 25 per cent, represent Asian nations with Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Singapore and Uzbekistan joining the continental powerhouse nations of Korea, Japan and China.

