

17 AUG 2016

MODERN PENTATHLON AT RIO 2016: HOW THE COMPETITION WILL WORK



Modern Pentathlon is about to join the party in Rio, where the sport will continue its evolution with a new feature making its Olympic Games debut.

Bonus Round Fencing is the innovation that changed the face of Modern Pentathlon during the 2012-2016 Olympic cycle, following the adoption of the Combined Event in London.

Ahead of the start of the Rio 2016 competition on Thursday, August 18 (10am local time), UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "Four years ago, in London, Modern Pentathlon celebrated its centenary as a core sport of the Modern Olympic Games and we demonstrated once again that change is a force for good in the evolution of our sport.

Find out where you can watch the Rio 2016 Modern Pentathlon on TV

"UIPM introduced the Combined Event as a new and vibrant climax to the Olympic competition. It was a dramatic spectacle and at the same time a very difficult test of nerve and stamina, and the capacity crowd in London was thrilled.

"This time, in Rio, we present the same successful format but with one extra feature: the Fencing Bonus Round. I am sure that our audiences both in Rio and around the world will be thrilled by this new feature.

"We are sure that people will see that it brings more drama and creates a better platform for the presentation of Fencing within our sport and for our pentathletes."

The Bonus Round will take place on August 19 and August 20 on a raised piste inside Deodoro Stadium, preceding the Riding and the Combined Event which take place in the same venue. Swimming is the only one of the five disciplines not contained within the stadium, but this will change at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo where the pool will be built into the arena, creating a full Pentathlon Stadium.

With 72 of the world's greatest athletes (36 women, 36 men) poised for their bid for glory, here is a full breakdown of how the competition will work over the next three days:

Competition format

Modern pentathletes accumulate points in Swimming, Fencing and Riding before competing in the Combined Event, where starting positions are determined by their aggregate scores.

The Fencing Ranking Round takes place on the first day of competition at the Youth Arena at Deodoro Olympic Park. On the following two days the other events - Swimming, Bonus Round Fencing, Riding and Combined Event - take place at Deodoro Aquatics Center and Deodoro Stadium. The women's medals will be decided on August 19 and the men's on August 20.

Athletes achieve cumulative points in each event according to their performance. In the Combined Event, which consists of running and laser shooting, the athletes will start with a handicap time based on the conversion of the total Modern Pentathlon points from Swimming, Fencing and Riding (1 MP point = 1 second).

The first athlete to cross the finish line wins the gold medal.

Fencing Ranking Round

A single pool event with electric épée. All athletes are allocated into pairs either from a single NOC or mixed NOCs. The ranking round takes place on nine pistes. The assignment of the pistes is made by a draw.

Each athlete will fence against all other athletes for one hit within a time limit of one minute. If a hit is not scored within the time, both competitors register a defeat. The target area is the whole body.

The 36 athletes take part in 35 bouts. A total score of 70 per cent victories (25 bouts) equals 250 Modern Pentathlon (MP) points. Each victory or defeat is worth +/- 6 MP points, the equivalent to 6 seconds in the final combined event.

Swimming

A 200m freestyle race. Athletes may swim any stroke or style. Athletes will be seeded into one of the heats according to their Pentathlon World Ranking swimming time. A time of 2:30 earns 250 MP points. Every 1/3 of a second above or below this time is equal to plus or minus one MP point (which equates to one second in the Combined Event).

Fencing Bonus Round

It all happens on a single outdoor piste. Each bout is for one hit in 45 seconds. The points achieved by the athletes in the ranking round are carried over to the bonus round.

The athletes will be placed according to their position from the ranking round. The competition will be carried out in reverse order, with the last-placed athlete going first against the next-placed athlete. The winner of each bout will be matched against the next best-ranked athlete. In this way, an athlete may continue to advance as long as he or she continues to win bouts. Athletes do not lose points if they are defeated.

The bout winners receive one MP bonus point for each bout they win, equating to one extra second in the Combined Event. If the winner of the ranking round wins his/her only bout in the bonus round, double bonus points are awarded. In the case of a double defeat, the winner of the bout is the athlete placed higher on the start list.

Riding

The athletes ride unfamiliar horses over 12 show-jumping obstacles (15 jumps). Jumps are up 120cm in height and 130cm in spread, and include one double and one triple. The course is 400m in length.

The leading athlete after the Swimming and Fencing draws a horse at random and the remaining horses are distributed automatically to the other athletes based on this draw. All the athletes have 20 minutes and five practice jumps to familiarise themselves with their drawn horse.

The start order is the reverse of the ranking after the previous events. The competition consists of two rounds. The top 18 athletes after swimming and fencing will ride in the second round with the leader riding last.

Athletes are given a time limit in which to complete the course and will be penalised by a deduction of 1 point for each second exceeding the time allowed.

A clear round in the time allowed earns the athlete 300 MP points. All penalty points are deducted from this amount. Penalties include course or obstacle penalties such as knock-down, refusal or a fall and earn 7 or 10 MP points (7 or 10 seconds) depending on the fault. Athletes can be eliminated for more serious faults such as 4 refusals, a second fall or jumping an obstacle in the wrong direction. Elimination earns the athlete zero points.

Combined Event (Running and Shooting)

The climax to the competition begins with handicapped start times calculated on the basis of athletes' results in previous events. It is a dual-discipline event: athletes shoot with laser pistols from 10m in a range equipped with Laser Precision targets, and each of the four series is followed by an 800m lap for an overall distance of 3200m.

Shots are unlimited and only after having hit the centre of the target five times, or after 50 seconds have elapsed, can the competitor leave the range to start their next lap.

Athletes are placed in the order in which they cross the finish line, ensuring that the first athlete home is the champion.