

15 SEP 2019

# WORLD URBAN GAMES 2019: LASER RUN SHOWCASE THRILLS CROWDS IN BUDAPEST (HUN)



Laser Run has enjoyed a spectacular introduction at the 1st World Urban Games, a multi-sport festival created by the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF).

UIPM's most popular development sport was one of just eight sports on the programme at Budapest's Great Market Hall (Nagyvasartelep) from September 13-15.

Many of the world's leading pentathletes, including world champions **Anastasiya Prokopenko** of **Belarus** and **Valentin Belaud** of **France**, gathered to take on Laser Run specialists in a Sprint Laser Run (4 x 400m) format.

Alongside the elite showcase on all three days there was a youth engagement programme with 840 pupils from 20 local schools (aged eight to 14) included in try-out sessions and invited on to the field of play to get a taste for UIPM's urban sporting phenomenon.

Prokopenko (BLR), **Jessica Varley** of **Great Britain**, **Ilke Ozyuksel** of **Turkey** and the **Hungary**

duo of **Kamilla Reti** and **Blanka Guzi** emerged as the best performers on the women's side.

**Ahmed Elgendy** of **Egypt** dominated the men's individual competition, with **Yaraslau Radziuk** (BLR), **Gergely Regos** (HUN) and **Tom O'Brien** of **Ireland** also emerging with credit.

Competing one week after becoming Pentathlon world champion for the second time, Belaud (FRA) said: "It was my first experience of an Urban Games and I was really happy with the atmosphere. I think it's really nice to be able to have Laser Run and BMX, breaking and other sports together. It allows us to have a new, younger audience. It can be something great!

"The new Sprint Laser Run format changes a lot for us, because we don't train the same way because the heart is pounding much faster than for longer distances where we can use stamina; so shooting becomes much more crucial as well.

"As a pentathlete and double world champion, it is really important to promote our sport, especially amongst younger athletes. It's true that the fact that some athletes who travel to this sort of competition, and to meet the younger ones is something great.

"To be able to speak to us, share advice with them ... I think we are doing the right thing. When I was a kid, to meet the star athletes was the reason that gave me motivation to train harder to reach a high level. So I'm happy we can help."

Varley (GBR) commented: "I absolutely love the sprint format. My speed is definitely my strength so I really enjoy it, and the shooting is so much more important in this format than when it's full distance. It's great practice and I've really enjoyed it."

Elgendy (EGY) added: "I was very happy and very proud to represent Egypt at the first edition of the World Urban Games here in Hungary.

"It was a nice competition and very well organised and I was so happy to win certificates after competing with the fastest Laser Runners in the world.

"I prefer the longer distance [800m] because it gives me an advantage. We don't usually train to run at this speed, but it was amazing!"

Seoul 1988 Olympic gold medallist Attila Miszer (HUN) hailed the emergence of Laser Run as a "great foundation of our sport" during the competition.

Miszer was central to the organisation of the 2019 World Urban Games in his capacity as Sports Director. He is a huge advocate of Laser Run, which is rapidly increasing participation rates in UIPM Sports and helping to increase the number of athletes who take part in Modern Pentathlon.

He said: "I think Laser Run is a great foundation for the future of our sport. As spectators here in Budapest could see, it can be organised wherever you want to – even in an office building with the shorter format.

"The targets and the pistols are absolutely secure and you can use it wherever you want to go. You can give it to people in parks, in urban environments and even buildings.

"That makes a Laser Run a very strong tool to reach out to people over the coming decades.

"Laser Run enables us to showcase and promote our stars. In our era, we could not have been stars except in Hungary, which is a Pentathlon-loving nation. That's why I think the Laser Run is an important marketing and promotional tool for us. Long live Laser Run ... and Modern

Pentathlon!"

Laser Run was derived from the combined event that has become the climax of all Pentathlon and Tetrathlon competitions in recent years.

The first UIPM Laser Run World Championships took place in Perpignan (FRA) in 2015 and the UIPM Global Laser Run City Tour was introduced in 2017 to make the sport more accessible to urban communities worldwide.

UIPM President Dr Klaus Schormann said: "What we have witnessed at this 1st World Urban Games is really a great combination of different sports, and we could see how much the athletes and spectators loved our Laser Run format.

"Officials from GAISF also enjoyed it very much. We always say that you can't appreciate how exciting Laser Run is until you have seen it.

"We had international athletes and Hungarian athletes and they really enjoyed the competition, in the individual races and the Mixed Relay where there were international combinations.

"The IOC Sport Director Kit McConnell, the GAISF President Raffaele Chiulli and the World Urban Games Sport Director, our Seoul 1988 Olympic Modern Pentathlon champion Attila Mizser, could see what we are doing in urban sport – and Laser Run truly belongs to urban sports.

"I must say thank you to the Hungarian Modern Pentathlon Association helping us again after the UIPM 2019 Pentathlon and Laser Run World Championships last week, and thanks to the athletes for everything they did in these days.

"This is a great presentation to the international sporting world, joining other urban sports, and we are so happy to be involved. The representatives from GAISF can see that they have made a great decision. We will work hard to be included as a competition sport in the next World Urban Games in two years' time."

The other showcase sport on the World Urban Games programme was indoor rowing, while the six competition sports were BMX freestyle, roller freestyle, parkour, breaking, 3x3 basketball and flying disc freestyle. Visit the official website for more.