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ROAD TO TOKYO: MARIE OTEIZA (FRA) CHASES OLYMPIC GOLD WITH ‘BEST TEAM IN THE WORLD’

Many believe that the true mark of a champion in sport is the ability to succeed even on days that seem to be going badly.

So it was for Marie Oteiza of France when she chased her target of Tokyo 2020 Olympic qualification at the 2019 European Championships in Bath (GBR).

Halfway through the competition she was way off the pace, but she summoned the determination to finally cross the line in 10th position and snatch one of those coveted quota places for her country.

Oteiza (FRA), 26, has become a mature competitor at senior level in the four years since her team-mate Elodie Clouvel (FRA) won silver at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

She won a remarkable gold at the 2018 European Championships in Szekesfehervar (HUN) and quickly followed up with bronze at the UIPM 2018 Pentathlon World Championships in Mexico City

(MEX). A UIPM Pentathlon World Cup gold medal followed in Sofia (BUL) in 2019.

In the latest Road to Tokyo interview she tells us how she became involved in Modern Pentathlon and the one that would make her happiest if she were able to win the ultimate accolade of Olympic gold.

Q: How did it feel in 2019 when you secured a qualification place for the Tokyo Olympics at the European Championships?

A: I was so happy, because it was a very difficult day for me. I started with a bad Swimming and a bad Fencing, which are supposed to be my strongest events. So to start the day this way and finish it with my qualification place for Tokyo was incredible.

Q: Can you remember watching the last Olympic Games in Rio in 2016? What were you thinking?

A: I was envious! For the last Olympics I was really close to achieving qualification but I missed it, so it wasn’t an option this time for me. I trained very hard for four years to have it, and I want more!

Q: What do you think about the Olympics being postponed until 2021?

A: For me it's an opportunity. I'm still a young pentathlete, so it means one more year to gain more experience.

Q: How have you been continuing to train during the Coronavirus crisis?

A: It was very difficult. I first tried to continue training but in Paris all the swimming pools and fencing halls were closed, so we trained at home.

Q: What has been the most challenging part of the pandemic?

A: The most challenging part of the pandemic was to not see all my training partners and friends. And now that we are all reunited we are all in a hurry to have a competition very soon.

Q: And what positive things have you seen?

A: This pandemic crisis made me realise one thing – we all need to change the way we live. We need to be more careful and respectful about our environment.

Q: When, and why, did you take up the Modern Pentathlon?

A: I started Pentathlon in 2008. I was a swimmer and I always wanted to ride, but it wasn't possible in the town where I lived. So Modern Pentathlon was the opportunity for me to ride, and to keep swimming.

And then I discovered fencing, and I loved it so much that I knew that Modern Pentathlon was a sport for me.

Q: What motivates you in training?

A: Winning, of course. Olympics. And my team. I love them so much, I would be so proud to win an Olympic gold medal just to show to the world that my team is the best!

Q: Describe yourself as an athlete in three words.

A: Fighter, determined, stubborn.

Q: What is your ultimate ambition in Modern Pentathlon?

A: To win a gold medal at the Olympic Games.

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