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2026 HUNGARIAN INDOOR OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS: FLYING START FOR GULYAS (HUN) AND LI (CHN)



After pre-season training spent in the January heat of Los Angeles and the February sunshine of Spain's Canary Islands, reigning Olympic champion Michelle Gulyas came all the way home to kick off her 2026 campaign in style with triumph in the 2026 Hungarian Indoor Open Championships.



Gulyas took the gold medal in front of an adoring home crowd in Budapest on Saturday, March 14 after five days of action in the Hungarian capital city. On the men's side the host nation had to settle for silver as Liuchang Li of China continued to add to his burgeoning reputation with an impressive gold medal.

While the competition is not run in exact accordance with UIPM rules, with 24 athletes in the final instead of the regulation 18, the early season gathering in Budapest still typically attracted plenty of talent and attention after a long off-season.

So many of the eyes were fixed on Gulyas who was making her return to elite action for the first time in almost 11 months after injury disrupted her first post-Olympics season. In what was a most pleasing sign for the home fans but a daunting signal to her rivals, Gulyas looked to be edging very closely back to her best as she vanquished a solid field in the Women's Final, including fellow Paris Olympians Blanka Guzi (HUN), Anna Jurt of Switzerland, Ilke Ozyuksel of Turkey and Mingyu Zhang (CHN).

Gulyas showed plenty of the all-round consistency that made her such a force in the sport, among the leaders in Fencing before putting in the fourth-fastest time in Obstacle and fifth-fastest swim. In the Laser Run she had to somewhat hold off a blistering finish from Alisa Melikhova (AIN), who took silver with bronze going to fellow crowd favourite Guzi (HUN).

"After 10 months [out] I was full of curiosity but on the first days of the competition I was mostly afraid," Gulyas posted afterwards. "[Afraid] in case I'm not ready or cannot perform as expected. But I knew very well that I had done my best in preparation and that I had improved a lot. I can call myself incredibly lucky because I can work with coaches who not only enable me to achieve results like this but push me through all the difficult moments in competitions and weekdays too."

In the Men's competition there was a healthy mix of experienced campaigners and some of those names who broke through in 2025. While Paris Olympians Csaba Bohm and Balazs Szep may be more known to the Hungarian and global fans over the previous cycle, their compatriot Mihaly

Koleszar (HUN) emerged from their shadow last year with two podiums in the UIPM World Cup campaign and a silver medal at the 2025 European Championships.

Koleszar (HUN) produced more of the same on home soil but had to settle for silver as he trailed in six seconds behind the champion. The 21-year-old Li emerged in 2025 with a stellar showing at November's 2025 Asian Senior Championships in Japan where he took individual and Mixed Relay gold. He picked up where he left off with victory in Budapest. However there was a moral victory for the more seasoned pros when Germany's veteran Marvin Faly Dogue claimed bronze.

The curtain will soon come up on the 2026 UIPM season when the world's elite gather in Egypt for 2026 UIPM World Cup Cairo from April 8-12.