

16 APR 2026

ATHLETE CATCH-UP: VALENTIN BELAUD (FRA)



Valentin Belaud was pushed into the unorthodox role of being a bystander as the first medals of the UIPM Pentathlon World Cup season were decided last Sunday in Cairo (EGY). It gave him a great vantage point to confirm what he has consistently thought over the past year — the future of Modern Pentathlon is in great shape and he is adamant he can still compete.

The French veteran, a two-time world champion, has spent the majority of his glittering career in the running for the biggest prizes – but this time his season-opening challenge in the Egyptian capital fell short at the Semi-final stage.

The 33-year-old has already shown that he can bridge the generational divide between the sport as it was during the Paris Olympics and the evolved version we see now in 2026. Belaud excelled during the first season in which Obstacle replaced Riding. Another year of training with fresh changes to the flow of competition has only reinforced his belief in how things are trending.

“Yes, it’s different, but I think with Obstacle, it’s really good for the sport because all the time I am progressing in Obstacle, I also progress in Swimming too. Horse Riding was a different obsession, but now Pentathlon has the same strengths [across the sports],” said Belaud during a live

interview on UIPM's TV service.

"The change in Swimming from 200m to 100m is better for me, I'm a more explosive athlete. For many athletes it's the same. I think all of the evolution in Pentathlon is really good for the duels, for TV, for the public.

"I like it and it makes me want to stay with it because all the time, Pentathlon is evolving for the better. This competition was 120 guys, all the time we have more guys. It's good for development."

Belaud is one half of France's first family in Pentathlon, his partner Elodie Clouvel having cemented her legendary status at home when she won the second silver medal of her Olympic career at Paris 2024. Clouvel spent last season away from the sport as the couple welcomed their first child, daughter Sasha.



Belaud revealed that Clouvel, who turned 37 in January, remains focused on a potential return to the revamped sport, but very much on her terms — which means again competing at the top end.

“She has restarted [training] and we have started building our new life. We have three now in my team!” said Belaud. “But it’s really good. Elodie wants to take her time [returning to Pentathlon] so

that she can be restarting to compete well, not just to play. All of the [female athletes] have levelled up. Elodie will have a lot of work to get to that level.”

The generational melting pot is one of the most fascinating current aspects of Pentathlon. Back in the homeland, Belaud has seen the effect of Obstacle and other changes bringing in new faces. He’s also seen how different generations attack those specific challenges.

“The new generation, we see in France at all the clubs, we have a lot of young people are saying ‘yes, I want to do obstacle or combined or swimming’. For me, it’s a good entrance for playing Pentathlon globally. It catches the attention,” he added.

“The younger [generation] have an interesting [attitude]. They just go fast. With experience, it’s a different scene — ‘am I moving, yes?’ I like to play and compete. I think if it was still Horse Riding I may have finished with Pentathlon, but we have a new game and that means a new energy.”