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# TAKE FIVE: UIPM 2026 PENTATHLON WORLD CUP BUDAPEST



It's the third and final event of the regular season and the world's top pentathletes are vying for the right to return to Budapest (HUN) again in late June for the UIPM 2026 Pentathlon World Cup Final. The host nation is bound to be strong with a major rivalry playing out on the women's side, while fascinating continental rivalries continue to emerge in the male category. Are you brave enough to pick the winners?

## 1) Budapest ready for a double dose of G-force

How much G-force can the people of Budapest handle? We're about to find out as the host nation prepares to watch a pair of remarkable leading women go toe to toe in their nation's capital.

Hungary's status as a Pentathlon powerhouse is epitomised by both the current world No.1 and the reigning Olympic champion being in its team. Now the closest of rivals get another chance to shine in front of their own people.

**Blanka Guzi** has been a contender ever since sprinting to victory on the grass of the city's National University of Public Service in 2023. She has carried considerable momentum into 2026,

collecting gold in Cairo (EGY) and silver in Pazardzhik (BUL) following a plentiful 2025 season.

It's worth casting your mind back to the Palace of Versailles two summers ago, when **Michelle Gulyas** raced into the history books and hearts of all Hungarians with Olympic gold at Paris 2024. In that same race Guzi finished just 8sec away from an Olympic medal of her own.

Seventeen months older than her compatriot, Guzi recently celebrated her 27th birthday and looks to be hitting her consistent prime. Gulyas's competitive spirit is of course legendary. She may have lost out to Guzi in that 2023 sprint but nobody was going to beat her in Budapest last year. Gulyas returned from injury with a solid 5th place in Cairo before taking a breather from the gathering in Bulgaria.

There'll be no such break in Budapest as two Hungarian heroines get down to business.

## 2) Europeans ready to buck the trend

The third instalment of this World Cup circuit marks a noteworthy anniversary: not since the same stage of last season has a European male claimed gold at a senior UIPM competition.

It was in Pazardzhik (BUL) last year that **Giorgio Malan** headed up an all-European podium alongside fellow Italian, **Matteo Cicinelli**, and French veteran **Valentin Belaud**.

Since then the brilliant **Moutaz Mohamed** has proved almost unstoppable — but when the world champion suffered an injury in the Fencing discipline during the Men's Semi-final last time out, he opened the door. It was **Changwan Seo** who rushed through to fill the golden void.



**Mathis Rochat** settled for bronze, adding it to the silver he claimed in the season-opener in Cairo (EGY). The other medals this season have been won by **Matej Lukes**, who took silver with a barnstorming Laser Run in Bulgaria and **Mihaly Koleszar's** bronze in Cairo.

All of the above will be vying to break the cycle and you can expect Koleszar's teammates to be particularly motivated on home soil. Hungary, unsurprisingly, boast the biggest contingent in Budapest with 21 athletes, 11 of them male.

### 3) China knocking on the door

When **Yuang Ma** bounced and blazed his way through the entire field with a memorable Fencing performance in Pazardzhik, TV cameras panned to his compatriots in the stands getting one hell of a kick out of it. The Chinese team has started its 2026 campaign in hugely impressive fashion: Ma finished in a very creditable 4th in Bulgaria, while **Xiyao Wu** notched a women's top 10 earlier on Super Sunday.

This comes on the back of a statement of intent in the season curtain-raiser in Cairo. There **Liuchang Li** also made it to the extended podium in the Men's Final, finishing 5th with 2024 Laser Run world champion and Paris Olympian **Shuai Luo** inside the top 10.

China has brought 16 athletes to Budapest, one of the biggest travelling parties as the talent pool continues to strengthen there. It should be remembered that Li, gold medalist at the 2025 Asian Senior Championships, kicked off 2026 with a storming performance in Budapest at the Hungarian Indoor Open. The Chinese rise could be primed to continue.

### 4) Bryson glad to be back in 'best job in the world'

There were many who were able to walk away from Pazardzhik proud of their efforts. The five days of competition there were packed with some brilliant performances. **Kerenza Bryson** could be counted among that cohort.



A doyenne of the Paris Olympic cycle, the British battler took a break in 2025 but her long-awaited return went about as well as she could have imagined, a 4th place in the Women's final just 2sec off an instant return to the podium. Two-time world champion **Elena Micheli** will be dreaming of such a powerful comeback as she makes her own tentative steps back into the sport.

"After taking time out from the sport to work as a junior doctor, I genuinely didn't know what this comeback would look like. Honestly, I'm surprised and really proud of this result — especially because this isn't the same sport I left in 2024," Bryson reflected on social media afterwards.

"There have been a lot of doubts, and a lot of questions about whether this was too much to ask of myself. But being back out there competing again, with this team around me, reminded me why this is still the best job in the world."

Her Obstacle performances were noteworthy: Bryson got to grips with the discipline for the first time and opened with a time of 46.82sec in Qualification, before going a whopping 6sec faster in the Semi-final. Impressive.

### **5) White out: Belarus are back in colour**

For the first time in over three years, the storied name and flag of Belarus will return to UIPM competitions in Budapest.

Having competed in plain white uniforms as Individual Neutral Athletes (AIN) following UIPM's alignment with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) recommendations in March 2023, Belarusian athletes were recently cleared to again compete in their national colours with the flag and anthem also returning.

This is a nation with serious Pentathlon pedigree, and the chances of their red and green flag being raised are far from slim, given the form of their leading women.



**Viyaleta Hureyeva**, currently ranked 22nd in the world, has already been on a podium this year after winning bronze in Cairo. **Mariya Gnedtchik** has made an impressive return from injury and has a proven track record in the Hungarian capital — she won gold at UIPM 2024 Pentathlon World Cup Budapest.