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## MODERN PENTATHLON

# Common questions about Modern Pentathlon

### What you need to know about the World Cup Final in Sarasota

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SARASOTA — Three years ago, the Sarasota-Bradenton area won a surprising bid to host three World Cup events in modern pentathlon, an international sport that dates back to the Ancient Olympics. This weekend, Sarasota-Bradenton hosts its final event stemming from that 2013 bid, the 2016 World Cup Final. It's a culmination of five World Cup events held throughout the world this year and an important predictor of Olympic contenders less than 100 days out from the Olympic Games in August.



Scenes from the World Cup No. 1 in Modern Pentathlon in February 2015. H-T ARCHIVE / 2015 / NICK ADAMS

Clueless about the sport, and what is in store for competitors and spectators this weekend? The Herald-Tribune has you covered.

### OK, so where did the pentathlon come from?

Ancient Greeks created the Pentathlon for their Olympic Games in 708 B.C. It included running the length of the stadium, jumping, throwing the spear, throwing the discus and wrestling.

### When did pentathlon become “modernized?”

In 1912, Frenchman Baron Pierre de Coubertin, considered the father of the modern Olympics, brought the pentathlon back during the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden. It was “modernized” and included a combination of fencing, swimming, riding, shooting and running. Historically, the Ancient Pentathlon produced fierce warriors, and the event was intended to showcase the skills a soldier needed in battle. So, Pierre de Coubertin's new version came with a story that emphasized the military roots of this five-pronged event, this time based on a 19th-century battlefield courier: *A soldier delivers a message on horseback behind enemy lines. When he loses his horse, the soldier defends himself with both a sword and pistol. He swims across a river and runs on foot through the woods to fulfill his mission.* The modern pentathlon has changed over time. Women didn't compete until the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. Once held over a series of several days, all five events are now held in one day, with small breaks in between. The exception is the running and shooting events, which have been combined since 2009.

### How do you win?

After competing against every other competitor in one-touch fencing bouts, participating in an additional fencing round, swimming a 200-meter freestyle for time and performing 12-obstacle equestrian show-jumping, athletes are ranked by a

points system leading up to the final running/shooting event. In the final “combined” event, competitors must shoot a target five times with a laser pistol (or wait for a maximum shooting time of 50 seconds to expire) and run 800 meters, four times. Those who have scored the most points going into the final combined event get a head start based on how many points they acquired earlier in the day. This allows the first person to cross the finish line to be named the winner.

### **How good are the Americans?**

Margaux Isaksen, arguably the top female competitor for Team USA, just missed the podium at the 2012 Olympic Games in London. The Fayetteville, Arkansas native took fourth place, finishing behind bronze medalist Yane Marques of Brazil after a comeback in the combined event. So far this year, Nathan Schrimsher is the only American pentathlete to secure a spot at the the 2016 Olympic Games. The 23-year-old from Roswell, New Mexico punched his ticket by placing third at the Pan American Games last year.

### **How can pentathletes earn a spot in the 2016 Olympic Games?**

There are 33 qualification spots in the modern pentathlon in each of the female and male events. One spot is reserved for the winner of the 2015 World Cup Final, as well as the top three in both the 2015 and 2016 World Championships. Various spots can be earned through “continental” championships; for North and South American pentathletes that means a top-five finish at the Pan American Games. The remaining spots are reserved for the top six on the Pentathlon World Ranking list as of June 1.

### **What's significant about the World Cup Final this year?**

Competitors in Sarasota will be vying for performance points — and those six remaining spots — at this year's World Cup Final. The 2015 Sarasota-Bradenton competition was the first competition where athletes racked up performance points to qualify for the Olympics. The 2016 final will be one of the final opportunities athletes have to boost their rankings.

### **What's the schedule for the weekend?**

A round-robin fencing event on Thursday determines how pentathletes are seeded in the fencing round of the pentathlon competition. On Friday, the women's final begins with the swimming event at 10 a.m. at the Selby Aquatic Center, with the remaining competition picking up from noon to 4 p.m. at Nathan Benderson Park. The men's final on Saturday and the combined relay on Sunday follow similar time schedules. A closing ceremony at Nathan Benderson Park with various local performers is planned for 5:30 p.m. The local organizing committee for the sport will host art, food and interactive sport booths at the “Pentathlon Village” at Nathan Benderson Park throughout the weekend during the competition.

### **How much does it cost to watch?**

Advance admission is \$10 per adult, \$5 per child, student, senior or veteran per day. Children under 5 are free. Parking is \$5 per vehicle in the park. Tickets can only be used once. Day of event tickets may also be purchased at the gate for \$15 per adult and \$10 per child, student, senior or veteran. Visit sbpentathlon.com.

### **FUN FACTS**

--For the past three years, branding for the Modern Pentathlon World Cups held here in 2014, 2015 and 2016 has been designed by Ringling College of Art and Design students.

--Several of the American male pentathletes, including Dennis Bowsher, Nathan

Schrimsher and Logan Storie, are part of the United States Army World Class Athlete Program.

--The American team boasts two sets of siblings: Fayetteville, Arkansas natives Margaux and Isabella Isaksen and Roswell, New Mexico natives Nathan and Lucas Schrimsher.

--When it comes to the equestrian portion of the Modern Pentathlon final, pentathletes must ride a horse they are not familiar with. They have 20 minutes to get to know their animal before beginning their equestrian event.

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