



# *Modern Pentathlon*



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## About the Tutorial

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Modern Pentathlon is an Olympic sport that includes five different sports, which are fencing, 200m freestyle swimming, show jumping, pistol shooting and 3200m cross-country run. The duration of the competition is one day where the competitors compete against each other in different sports trailed by one another.

Since 1912, it has been included in the Olympic Games. This tutorial will let you know about various aspects of the sport like rules, equipment, method of playing the sport and many other aspects.

## Audience

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This tutorial is meant for all those readers who are passionate about learning the basics of Modern Pentathlon.

## Prerequisites

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Before proceeding with this tutorial, you are required to have a passion for pentathlon and an eagerness to acquire knowledge on the same.

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# 1. Modern Pentathlon – Overview

Modern Pentathlon is a combination of five different sports which include fencing, 200m freestyle swimming, show jumping, pistol shooting, and 3200m cross-country run. All the five sports are contested in a single day. It has been included to the core 25 sports list for 2020 Olympics Games.

Here the players compete with each other in one event after another. The sport usually starts with the fencing event and other sports following it. After the completion of first three sports, the scores of the players are calculated and based on which they are provided the start time for the last two sports. The player who reaches finish-line first is declared as winner.



## A Brief History of Pentathlon

Modern pentathlon was originated in Greece around the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Information about the foundation of the sport is found to be disputed as on one side Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who is also the founder of modern Olympic Games, claimed to have invented it, on the other side Viktor Balck, who was President of the Organizing Committee for the 1912 Olympic Games, claimed to have conceptualize the sport.

But from both claims, it was evident that the sport was primarily invented to be a part of the ancient Olympic Games. Initially the modern pentathlon used to run for 5 days and used to consist of 5 events such as: stadion foot race, wrestling, long jump, javelin, and discus. Later Coubertin changed the events in to the modern day events.

Till 1952 Olympic Games, only ordinary cavalry soldiers were considered as professional athletes as they were quite familiar with all the five events of the sport. Women were allowed to play the sport in 1977 on a trial basis in the world championships and officially in 1981.

### **Participating Countries**

Even though being added long back in 1912 and still been a part of Olympic Games, modern pentathlon has its own share of ups and downs. Throughout the whole phase, many changes have been made to the sport and at the same time countries started paying interest in this sport. Presently around 28 countries are part of this sport.

Some of the countries which have shown more interest and have achieved numerous medals in the particular sport are Sweden, USA, Czech Republic, Russia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Germany, Great Britain.



## 2. Modern Pentathlon – Equipment

The modern pentathlon consists of five events which are fencing, 200m freestyle swimming, show jumping, pistol shooting and 3200m cross-country run. Different equipment are used for different sports played in pentathlon which we are going to discuss in this chapter.

### Equipment for Fencing

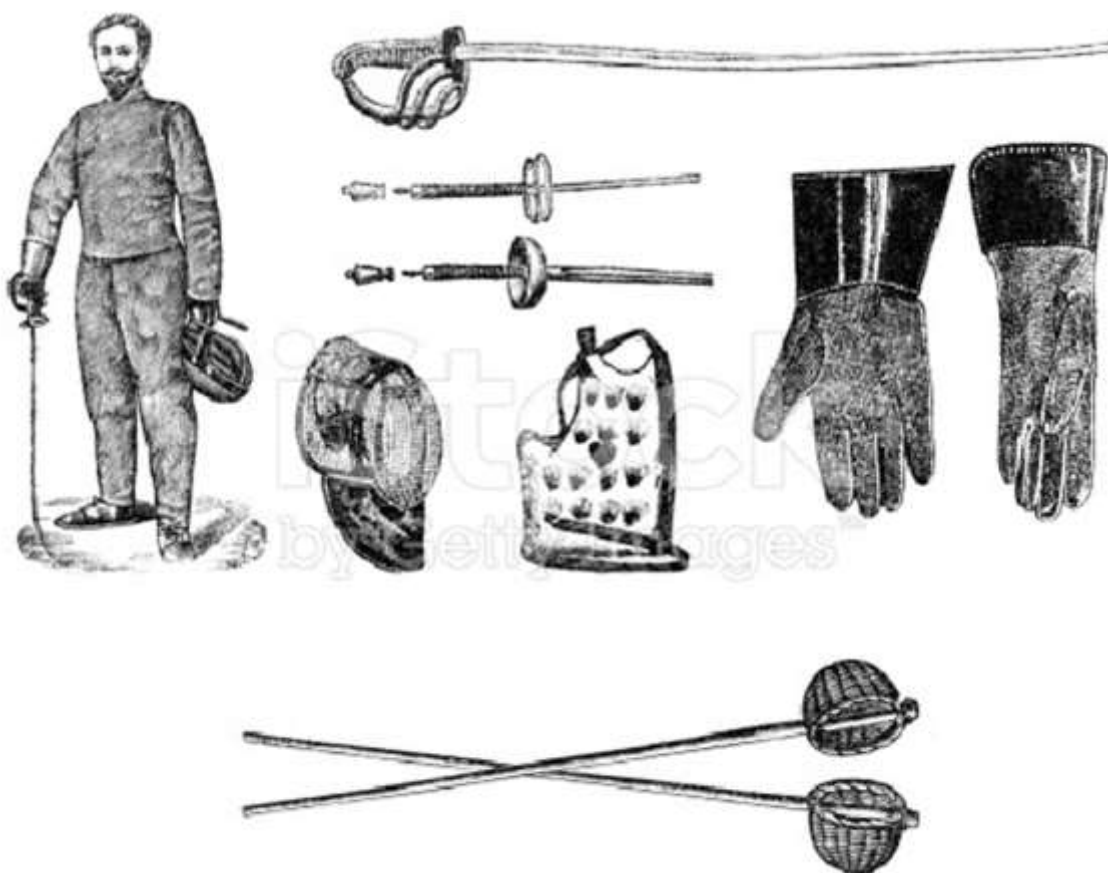
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The equipment used in fencing are divided in two categories namely protective clothing and weapon.

#### Protective Clothing

The protective clothing that are used in fencing are Jacket, Gloves, Sous-Plastron, Mask, Breeches/Knickers, chest protector, and sleeve. Most protective equipment in fencing is made up of tough cotton or nylon. Kevlar is also used for making jacket, breeches, underarm protector, lame and the bib of the mask.

However, Kevlar is tough to clean because it breaks down to chlorine when comes in contact with UV light thus making cleaning process tougher. Other ballistic fibres like dyneema is also used for such protective equipment.



## **Jacket**

Jacket is the outer protective equipment which protects the hand and other body parts. It comes with a strap which passes between legs. A small gorget folded fabric is sewn around the collar of the jacket to protect the neck from injuries.

Sous-Plastron is worn underneath the jacket which provides double protection from the sword arm and upper arm. There is no protection for underarm area because there is no seam which would line up with the seam of the jacket hence provides a weak spot.

## **Knickers or Breechers**

The Knickers or Breechers are short trouser which end up just below the knee. The breechers should have 10cm overlapping with the jacket and it comes with a suspended brace. Fencing shocks are long enough to cover the knee and some covers most of the thigh.

## **Fencing Shoes**

Fencing shoes have flat soles and reinforced for the back foot and front heel to protect foot from lunging. Gloves are used to protect hand and provides better grip. The gloves consist of gauntlet which prevents the blades to go into the sleeve and cause injury.

## **Mask**

The mask is an important equipment as it protects the neck and face of a fencer. The mask weighs around 12kg and consists of bib which protects the neck and front porting consists of metal mesh which prevents blades to cause injury.

## **Chest Protectors**

Chest protectors are made up of hard plastic and mostly worn by female fencers and sometimes by male fencers.

## **Sword**

The sword that is used in modern pentathlon fencing event is Epee. Epee is also a thrusting weapon which is heavier than Foil and weighs 775 grams. It has larger round guard which protects the hand from direct attack of an opponent.

## **Equipment for Swimming**

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The 200m freestyle swimming equipment includes a goggle, a swimming cap and a swimming trunk. The Swimming goggle is used to protect eyes and for clear visibility inside water and help the swimmer to swim comfortably underwater. Swimming cap is used to avoid hair coming on face while swimming which can be very annoying while swimming.



Swimming drags are important because it helps in reducing the drag in water which is 780 times more than drag in air. Thus this drag will create many problems while swimming. Hence to reduce this drag swimming suit or drags are worn.

## Equipment for Show Jumping

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Show jumping is done with the help of horse in which a rider sits on the horse and performs the show jumping. It is one of the most exciting events to watch out for. In this sport, many jumps are performed hence it requires many types of equipment for the rider to control the horse and for the protection of both horse as well as rider.

### Horse Tack

The equipment used in the show jumping is called horse tack and it includes saddles, stirrups, bridles, halters, reins, bits, harnesses, martingales, and breastplates. Saddle is a seat for the rider which is mounted on the back of horse and goes around the horse with strap at a point about 4 inches behind the forelegs.

It is important that the saddle should be mounted properly because improperly fitted saddle can create pressure points on horseback muscle which will create pain for horse and can cause injury to both rider and horse.

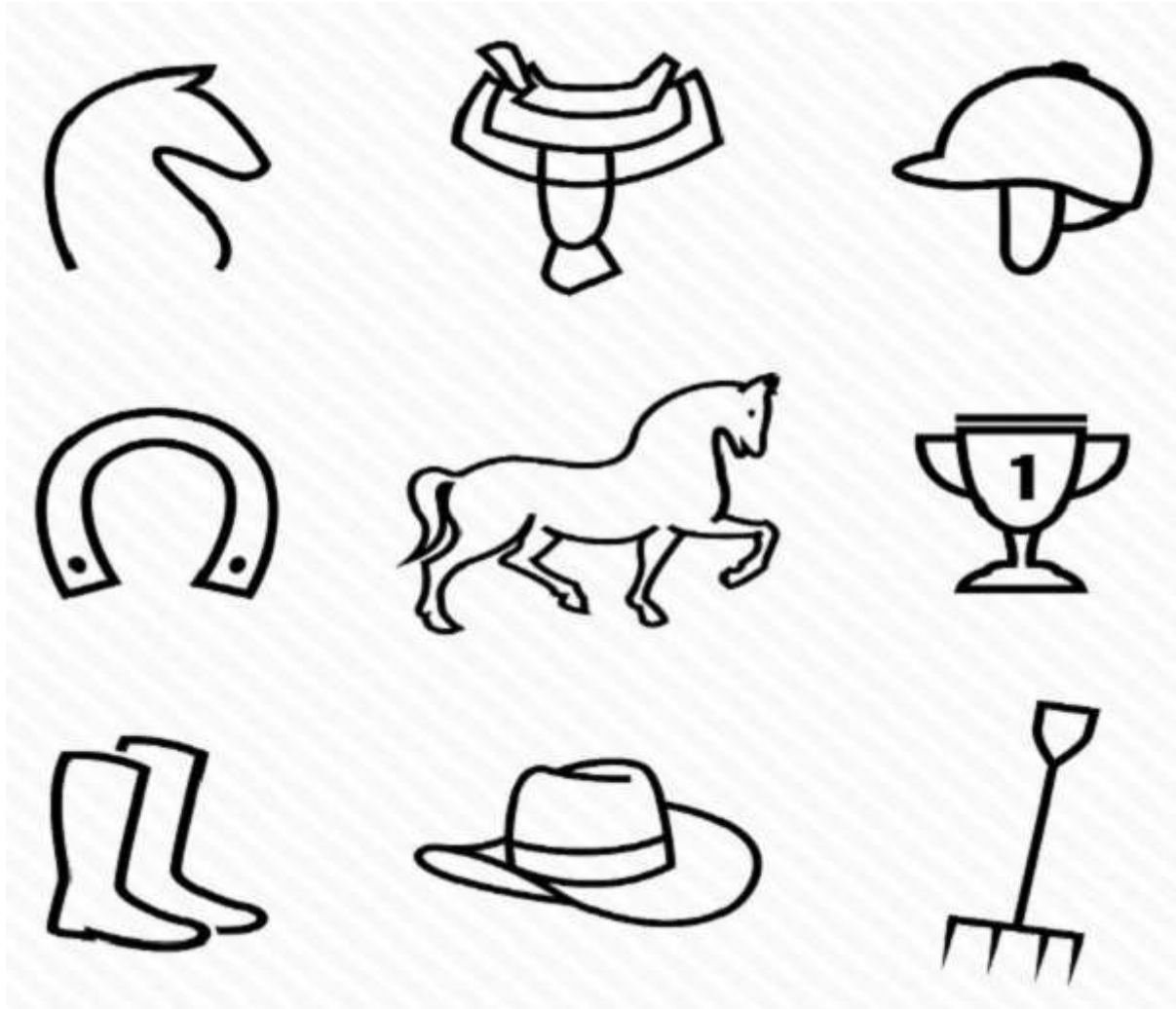
### Stirrups

Stirrups are used to provide support to the rider feet hung around both sides of horse. It provides greater stability for rider but has safety concern as there is a possibility that the feet may get stuck in stirrups and when rider loses control and falls down from horse, their feet may get trapped and get dragged by the running horse.



## Halters

Halters consist of noseband and headstall that buckles around the head of horse so that they can be tied and led properly without any deviation from the path. Bridles are attached to the reins to gain proper control for riding as well as to control the horse. Reins are the two leather strips or rope connected to the outer end of the bit and extended to the hand of the riders.



## Reins

It's the reins through which the rider communicates with the horse and gives directional command to horse head. The rider pulls the reins to steer or stop the horse. The side of horse mouth is sensitive hence by pulling the reins pulls the bit and the horse head moves to the direction the bit has moved. In this way the rider can move the horse head side by side and change the direction.

## Bit

A bit is a device placed in a horse's mouth and kept on horse's head by means of headstall. The bit does not fit on the teeth but rests on the gums of the horse. It is necessary that the bits should be of proper size and fitted appropriately into horse's mouth because improper fitting can cause pain to horse mouth. A harness is a set of devices that is attached to a cart or other load.

## Breastplates

Breastplates are attached to the front of the saddles. It usually consists of straps that runs between the horse's front leg and attaches to the girth. It is used to keep the saddle intact so that it doesn't move backward or sideways which will cause the rider to fall down from the back of the horse while riding.

## Martingale

Martingale is a device that prevents the horse from raising his head too high. It is used to prevent the horse from avoiding riders command and raising his head out of position. It is used as safety equipment for rider to prevent the horse head from tossing high enough to smack rider's face.

## Equipment for Pistol Shooting

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Earlier, players were asked to choose a pistol of their choice for the shooting sport. Those pistols were single shot pistols, multi barrelled pistols, revolvers, semi-automatic pistols and machine pistols. Presently, in case of combined event, laser pistol has replaced the traditional pistols. These pistols have made the shooting event faster than before.



## Equipment for Cross Country Run

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Cross Country Running has very little specialized equipment. Most races are performed in shorts, vests and shoes. The most common footwear is cross-country spikes. These are light-weight shoes with rubber soles and five spikes screwed at the foot end of the sole for better grip.



### 3. Modern Pentathlon – Environment

Modern pentathlon is a sport in which five sports are played in a sequential manner. All the sports have different playing environment which have been discussed in this chapter.

#### Environment for Fencing

For the epee fencing, the event takes place in a piste or fencing court. Based on pentathlon rules, the piste is 14 metres in length and 1.5 - 2 metres in width. The last 2 metres from each side is hash marked in order to warn the players against backing off the end of the strip.

Different types of pistes are there based on the materials used, which are aluminum piste, rubber piste, metallic piste etc. These pistes are grounded to the scoring box in order to make sure that no score is provided when the player touches the ground using his/her epee.



#### Environment for Swimming

Unlike triathlon, where the swimming event takes place in open water, in modern pentathlon, a swimming pool of 200m length is used for the swimming competition. Here the players have to swim in a pool consisting of markers. These pools have starting blocks at each side which are equipped with **Automatic Officiating Equipment**.





Each lane of the pool is around 2.5 metres. At each side, touching pad sensors are there to calculate the exact duration as well as to ensure that the players are swimming in their own relay. The pools must have a minimum depth of 2metres.

### Environment for Show Jumping

For the show jumping, a course is used, which is filled with show obstacles including verticals, spreads, and double and triple combinations with many turns and directions along the path. During the course, the player has to overcome around 15 jumps with 12 obstacles including at least one double jump and one triple jump.



## Environment for Shooting and Cross Country Running

The race track used for the combined event is around 3200metres long with four shooting spots at each 800 metres. Each of those shooting spots consists of the targets for each player, which is 10 m apart from the shooting line. The players have to run 800 metres and then shoot the target to finish one of the four cycles of the combined event.





## 4. Modern Pentathlon – How to Play?

In modern pentathlon, players have to contest against each other in five different sports. The competition starts with fencing, followed by a swimming, then show- jumping, shooting and the cross country running.

In the present scenario, the organizers have mixed the events of shooting and cross country run. The strategy of combining these events started in 2009, which has become very popular among the audiences.

### Fencing

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The first event that is conducted in pentathlon is fencing where the players compete against each other only in the epee format. In case of modern pentathlon, the players face all other players individually in a round-robin manner.



In epee fencing the epee is the thrusting weapon which weights 775 grams and the whole body is a valid target. The hand guard is a large circular guard which points towards pommel and protects hand from direct stab which is a valid target. The points are counted for hitting the target by the tip of the Epee. Any hit by the blades are not valid hence no points are awarded.

Each matches lasts for 1 minute where the players try to hit each other while following the normal fencing rules. The players have to hit each other once only. The first one to hit the opponent is declared winner instantly. During the match, double hits are not counted.



In case the players fail to hit each other once during the 1 minute duration lose the match. The players can gain the point by hitting any part of the opponent's body from head to toe. Once the ranking round of fencing is over, the players go for the bonus round where based on their rankings in the previous round, the player having last rank compete against the player whose rank is immediate one above the last rank player.

The winner between them again competes against the player having immediate rank one above. In this way the sport goes on till all players have finished their bout. Each bonus round victory earns one point to the player. An electronic device is used to mark a hit once connected to player's body or cloth. During the fencing matches, making 70% hits earns a player 1000 points whereas each hit above 70% of the total number of hits earns +24 or -24 points.

## Swimming

Once the fencing event is over, players move to the swimming event. The swimming event organized in modern pentathlon is a 200meter freestyle swimming where there is no restriction on players regarding their swimming style but once the event has started, they cannot alter the style during the event.



Players are then seeded in heats based on their fastest time to complete the distance. Here in case of men, finishing the race in 2 mins 30 secs earns the player 250 points and 0.33 seconds before/after that time earns him/her +4 or -4 points. In case of women, the finishing time to earn 250 points is 2 mins 40 secs.

## Show Jumping

The third and next event is the show jumping where the players ride horses on a track that is filled with obstacles. The athletes are provided with horses by the organizers and horses are chosen randomly through draw 20 min before the start of the event. The athletes are allowed to ride and jump for 5 times with their new horses as the athletes are pretty unknown to the horses meant for their riding.





The scores are given based on the manners and way of riding the horse as well as overcoming the obstacles. Within a specific time the rider along with the horse has to clear all the hurdles. Based on the number of hurdles cleared and finishing the course within allotted time, the riders earn scores. The course usually includes 15 jumps with 12 obstacles including at least one double jump and one triple jump.

## Shooting and Cross Country Race

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Shooting is conducted in indoor shooting range with the help of 4.5 mm air pistol. A player has to shoot fixed targets which are located 10 meter apart. The shooters are given 20 rounds to shoot. The maximum time given between each shot is 40 sec and best 10 shots are considered for point calculation.



The cross country race is organized on coarse ground or public road for about 3 km. The athletes with highest point in first four sports start the race and other athletes will start the race in different time intervals depending on the points they scored in the four sports. Men should finish the race in 10 minutes and zero seconds and women requires to finish the race in 11 minutes and 20 seconds to gain 1000 points which is added to the points they have earned in the previous four sports.

## 5. Modern Pentathlon – Rules

Modern pentathlon includes five sports which are played sequentially. Different rules of these sports have been discussed in this chapter.

### Rules for Fencing

In case of fencing, the players can't possess an epee having a curve more than 1 cm. Any touch after the command "Allez" ("Play") or before "Halte" ("Halt") of the sport is valid whereas the player can't stop in the middle of the sport to ask about the remaining time which may result in penalty. In case if a player doesn't start the bonus round, the opponent player move on to fight with the next pentathlete.

### Rules for Swimming

In case of swimming, the end walls at both sides of the swimming pool have to be touched in order to make a valid turn. Some parts of the swimmer must be above water at any time during the race except the first 15 metres. The players neither enter nor leave the swimming pool without the referee's prior permission. A player is prohibited from obstructing or pushing any other player.



### Rules for Show Jumping

In case of show jumping, the players must follow the proper dress code. The players can't jump an obstacle before the round starts or ring bells. The player will be eliminated if the horse moves in either wrong direction or out of the competition court. In case of ill treatment towards the horse, the player gets disqualified.

## Rules for Shooting and Cross Country Running

In case of the combined events, the player must finish the race in order to stay in the sport. The player mustn't modify his starting number as this will result in disqualification from the event. The players can't provide unauthorized assistance to any other player neither he can shoot the wrong target, which will result in elimination from the event.



The player can't start running again before the minimum shooting time is over. The player can't obstruct other players during the run which may result in disqualification from the sport. The players can't exchange their pistols during the game, disobeying which may result in elimination.



## 6. Modern Pentathlon – Champions

The Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne (International Modern Pentathlon Union) works as the international governing body for modern pentathlon worldwide. Introduced in 1912, presently it organizes modern pentathlon events in more than 90 countries worldwide. Its headquarter is in Monte-Carlo, Monaco.

Different modern pentathlon championship events organized by UIPM worldwide are:

- UIPM Senior World Championships
- UIPM Senior World Cup
- UIPM European championship

Let us now discuss briefly about some of the champions who have made a mark in Modern Pentathlon.

### **András Balczó**

András Balczó is considered as the most successful athlete in modern pentathlon. He belongs to Kondoros, Hungary and is a retired modern pentathlete.

Throughout his professional career, he has competed thrice in Olympic Games in the year 1960, 1968 and 1972 both in team as well as individual events and won three golds and two silver medals.

He has also won 10 golds, 7 silvers and 2 bronzes in the World Modern Pentathlon Championships. He has also won Hungarian Sportsman of the Year in 1966, 1969 and 1972.



### **Attila Mizers**

Attila Mizers is from Budapest, Hungary and is a modern pentathlete. He has won a team gold medal in 1988 Olympic Games and an individual silver medal in 1992 Olympic Games in modern pentathlon.

He has also won five golds, five silvers and one bronze in the World Modern Pentathlon Championships.

He has won numerous awards including the Hungarian Sportsman of the Year in 1985, and Hungarian Modern Pentathlete of the Year in 1985, 1990 and 1992.



### **Lars Göran Ivar Hall**

Lars Göran Ivar Hall or popularly known as Lars Hall was from Karlskrona, Sweden and was a professional modern pentathlete.

He competed at the 1952 and 1956 Summer Olympics in modern pentathlon and won gold in individual category in both attempts and a silver in the 1952 Olympics in team category.

He has also won six golds in the World Modern Pentathlon Championships. Because of his achievements, he was awarded the Svenska Dagbladet Gold Medal in 1956.



### **Pavel Serafimovich Lednyov**

Pavel Serafimovich Lednyov belongs to Nizhny Novgorod, Russia and was a modern pentathlete. He won a total of 7 Olympic medals in modern pentathlon which is the highest number in the sport till date. Among these medals, there were two golds, two silvers and three bronzes.

He won four medals in individual category and three in team. He has also won six golds, one silver and two bronzes in the World Modern Pentathlon Championships.

He was listed among the Soviet Union top ten athletes of the year by the Federation of Sports Journalists of the USSR in 1973 and 1975.



### **Sheila Christine Taormina**

Sheila Christine Taormina is from Livonia, Michigan, USA and is a modern pentathlete. She competed at Olympics in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 and was the first woman to qualify for the Olympics in three different sports.

She won the women's senior division of the 2005 Pan American Championships and had also qualified for the modern pentathlon for the 2008 Olympic Games. Her name was included in 2015 Hall of Fame.



### Kate Allenby

Kate Allenby is from Devon, United Kingdom and is a modern pentathlete. She has competed twice in the Olympic Games in 2000 and 2004 and won a bronze medal in 2000 Olympics in individual category.

She has also won four golds, one silver and two bronzes in the World Modern Pentathlon Championships among which three were in team category and three were in individual category.

She has also won one gold and one bronze at the European Championship in 1998 and 2004 in individual category. She was the Director of the Fencing discipline for the Modern Pentathlon event at London Olympics 2012.



### Heather Fell

Heather Fell is from Plymouth, England and is a modern pentathlete. She has competed once in the Olympic Games in 2008 and won an individual silver medal. She has also won two golds and one silver medal in the 2003 World Junior Championships.

She has also won one gold and four silvers in the World Modern Pentathlon Championships among which four were in team category and one was in relay category.

She has also won one gold, three silvers and two bronzes at the European Championship along with one gold and two bronzes at the World Cup.



### Samantha Murray

Samantha Murray is from Lancashire, England and is a modern pentathlete. She has competed in the Olympic Games in 2012 and won a silver medal in individual category.

She has also won three golds, three silvers and one bronze in the World Modern Pentathlon Championships among which four were in team category, two in individual category and one in relay category.

She has also won two golds in European Championships, one in team relay and one in team category.



## **Victoria Anatoliïvna Tereshchuk**

Victoria Anatoliïvna Tereshchuk is from Ukraine and is a modern pentathlete. She has competed in the Olympic Games, 2008 and won a bronze medal in individual category.

She has also won three golds, two silvers and two bronzes in the World Modern Pentathlon Championships among which two were in individual category, two in mixed relay, two in relay and one was in team category.

She has also won one gold, two silvers and two bronzes in European Championships among which two were in mixed relay, one in team category and one in individual category.

