

Olympics: Moiseev Targets Golden Treble in Modern Pentathlon

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — The modern pentathlon has been the source of some of the Olympics' greatest tales and the sport will provide the platform for Andrey Moiseev to soar into a pantheon of sporting greats should he win a third successive gold medal in London.

After triumphs in Athens and Beijing, the 33-year-old Russian comes into the games among the favorites to complete an unprecedented treble.

To do so he will have to overcome his teammate Aleksander Lesun, who beat him to the world title in May, and Italian Riccardo De Luca, who finished ahead of them both to win the European Championships this month.

The sport, which is celebrating its Olympic centenary, challenges competitors in five disciplines.

Its new format begins with a round-robin fencing competition followed by a 200-meter swim. Then comes show jumping and a combined run/shoot where athletes take five shots at a target before running 1,000 meters, repeating the procedure twice.

It was the brainchild of Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, and was borne out of a military fantasy involving a soldier fighting his way through enemy lines.

First he would charge on horseback before dismounting to engage in a sword fight, then shoot his way out of trouble, swim across a river and finish with a cross-country run.

World War I's bloody battles quickly made De Coubertin's idea of "modern" soldiery seem outdated, but the sport flourished, giving rise to some of the games' best stories.

Military honor was called into question in 1968 when West German Hans-Juergen Todt viciously attacked his horse for repeatedly refusing a jump.

The concept was thrown out altogether eight years later thanks to a Soviet called Boris Onishenko, who was disqualified after his epee was discovered to contain a circuit breaker that allowed him to register a hit at the touch of a button.

Russia is perennially the team to beat and has won the last three men's titles, with Dmitri Svatkovskiy taking gold in Sydney before Moiseev's successes.

"I heard our men's team is being compared with the Barcelona football team, so it's hard to compete with us," Moiseev said after the world championships in Rome.

In the women's competition, which is held on Aug. 12, a day after the men's, Britain's world champion Mhairi Spence is leading the hosts' bid and is ranked second behind Laura Asadauskaite.

The Lithuanian won the European title but modestly dismissed her chances of winning gold in London.

"There were a lot of strong athletes missing here. ... I'm not going to London expecting to win," she said.

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