



Chinese women's synchronized swimming team makes the history by grabbing silver at the London Games on Friday.

PHOTOS BY CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Russia retains dominance

China clinches first Olympic medal in synchronized swimming

By NICK REEVES in London
Agence France-Presse

Hot favorites Russia won synchronized swimming team gold on Friday, as China made history by winning the silver.

Russians maintained their total domination of the sport stretching back to the Sydney Games in 2000.

The Russians, with a total score of 197.030, were completing their fourth consecutive Games clean sweep after lifting the duet title on Tuesday.

China, third in the duet, took second, with Spain the bronze medal.

Russia's triumphant team comprised Anastasia Davydova, Daria Korobova, Alexandra Patskevich, Svetlana Romashina and Anzhelika Timanina.

They were in pole for this latest title after going into the freestyle program leading after Thursday's technical routine, and made sure of gold, scoring 98.930 to add to Thursday's 98.100.

Despite another polished performance, the Chinese, lying second overnight, were not able to dislodge their Russian rivals from the top of the podium, coming in with a score of 194.010.

Spain, silver medalists in Beijing four years ago, ended with a score of 193.120.

The last time Russia failed to win the gold at a major championship was at the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games when it finished fourth to the United States, not represented in this final.

Friday's free routine placed the emphasis on artistic impres-

sion, with Davydova and company seducing the capacity crowd at the Aquatics Centre and more importantly the 14 judges sitting poolside.

The Russians celebrated by giving their civvie-clothed coaches an impromptu ducking.

For Ishchenko and Romashina this was the second time they had had a gold medal hung around their necks after claiming the duets title 72 hours earlier.

Davydova, Gromova and Khasyanova meanwhile were celebrating becoming the first synchronized swimmers to win three team golds.

Canada took fourth with

fifth-placed Japan failing to achieve a medal in synchronized swimming for the first time since the sport was introduced in 1984.

Japan's coach, Mayumi Uchida, reflected: "We have trained with an aim at 95 points. We are still far from there, but we have improved since the World Championships and the qualifier."

Britain came in sixth of the eight finalists on their first appearance in the team event.

"On the whole, I think it has gone incredibly well. We have definitely put synchro out there, and on the map," said British team member Jennifer Knobs.



Russian women's synchronized swimming team in a formation at the London Olympics on Friday. Russia got the gold.



Russian synchronized swimmers stun the audience.



Members of the Chinese women's synchronized swimming team celebrate after winning silver on Friday.

So far, so good: sports chief happy with performance

By CECILY LIU and ZHANG CHUNYAN in London

China's performance at London Olympics has met expectations so far, Liu Peng, president of the Chinese Olympic Committee, said on Thursday.

Liu was speaking at a celebratory dinner at China House, the main hospitality and business center of the COC throughout the London 2012 Olympic Games.

When Liu made the speech, China was leading the gold medal league table, with 36 gold, 23 silver and 19 bronze medals. However, the US has now taken the lead.

"Our athletes fought hard at this year's Olympics. Their performances have won great acclaim from the entire Chinese population, and we have received congratulatory messages from people in different walks of life," Liu said.

"These good results are won due to China's rapid economic and social development caused by our country's opening up in the past 30 years."

Many Chinese athletes said they were thrilled about their performances at the Olympics.

"I'm very happy about my result," said women's singles table tennis gold medalist Li Xiaoxia, 24, who failed to qualify for Beijing 2008.

When she won on Aug 1, she said she had dreamed of the achievement since she was a little girl, and raced to the stands to get a Chinese flag to wave around.

"My biggest achievement at the London Olympics was that I mastered myself to achieve my results. It was a better result than I expected," she said.

Like Li, men's singles table tennis gold medalist Zhang Jike, 24, was competing in his first Olympics.

"I think luck played a part in my performance, but I also had to practice very hard," he said.

Zhang said the amount of support he received from Britain's Chinese community exceeded his expectations.

"Before I departed for the Olympics, my coach and older teammates warned me about the potential challenges of competing abroad," he said. "But they did not tell me that we would receive such a warm welcome and broad support."

"From our pre-Olympic training in Leeds to actually competing in the Games in London, we have received tremendous support. Everywhere I go, I see friendly Chinese faces and, when I was competing, many Chinese cheered for me."

Zhang said that he felt particularly proud to see China's flag rise when he won gold. "When



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LIU PENG
PRESIDENT OF THE CHINESE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE.

I saw the Chinese flag ... I felt an incredible strength," he said.

Attending the Olympics for a second time were mixed doubles badminton players Zhao Yunlei, 25, and Zhang Nan, 21. The pair won gold.

"It was quite lucky, but we also had a lot of support from our teammates. We cooperated very well, but I think some things can be done better," said Zhang, who is also Zhao's boyfriend.

Zhang said in an earlier interview that the fact China did not win the mixed doubles badminton gold in 2008 put some pressure on him for the 2012 Games, but he is glad to have won.

During the London Olympics, the Chinese embassy in Britain took special care to look after members of the COC and Chinese athletes, said Liu Xiaoming, China's ambassador to the United Kingdom.

The embassy helped China House recruit volunteers and organize various events. China House first appeared during the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics, and this year made a debut appearance at the Summer Olympics.

The embassy also helped the COC deal with emergency issues.

"For example, when badminton player Wang Xin injured her knee, the embassy quickly helped her obtain a visa to travel to Germany for treatment," Liu said.

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Now it is time for the world to say: Goodbye, London! Hello, Rio!

By CECILY LIU in London
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Even before the London Olympics' curtain was raised, Rio de Janeiro was in full-throttle, behind-the-scenes preparations for a different show in 2016, Rio's governor Sergio Cabral said in London on Wednesday.

"I believe Rio is going through a very unique moment in its history," he said. "Mobility, sanitation, water, houses, the environment, education and sports — we have enjoyed a busy schedule to give our population a wonderful legacy, a permanent legacy."

One factor that assisted Rio's 2009 bid was that no South American country has hosted the Olympics. It is hoped Rio's Olympics will set a good precedent for the continent.

Cabral said he is now in London to learn from this year's Olympics organizers, with a particular focus on efficient planning and urban regeneration.

"London gave the city a wonderful opportunity in the East End. We have many East Ends," he said.

Cabral said Rio is also learning from China's successful experience.

"The impact for Beijing was in tourism and new invest-

ments for China," he said.

"The world saw China in another way."

He complimented Beijing's sports equipment and infrastructure, and hailed the opening ceremony as "the best event in my life."

His first visit to China was in 2008, and he returned to Beijing in 2009 with a trade delegation. Cabral said he will visit again next year.

"We have a good connection with China nowadays," he said.

He cited China's railway equipment company China CNR Corp Ltd's 1.2 billion yuan (\$176 million) deal to upgrade Brazil's railway in 2009.



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SERGIO CABRAL
GOVERNOR OF RIO DE JANEIRO

Rio's transport infrastructure is undergoing a facelift to accommodate 2016's tourist influx. One focus is the construction of a rapid bus transit (RBT) system, which speeds up bus journeys by dedicating

road lanes to busses.

Another is the light rail transit system that integrates metro stations, train stations, ferries, RBTs, conventional bus networks and the Santos Dumont Airport in eastern Rio.

To improve security, Cabral and Rio's Mayor Eduardo Paes worked since 2008 to implement the Pacifying Police Unit system. This allocates police forces to Rio's shantytowns, commonly known as favelas, to protect against armed drug traffickers.

"Security has always been an issue," Cabral said.

"We've been facing this head on, with wonderful results. Problems have come down

dramatically. They're the best results that we've had in the past 30 years."

The PPU system has helped Rio achieve the lowest violence indexes in the past two decades. A recent poll by the University of Sao Paulo, Rio found a 56 percent reduction in homicides in the last 10 years, according to Suite101, an online Canadian news source.

"People benefit from it," Cabral said.

"The people in the surrounding areas, their lives have changed completely."

The world will flock to Rio in 2016 to witness its spectacular sporting events, beautiful scenery, rich culture and wel-

coming atmosphere.

But Cabral hopes the Olympics will also help Rio attract foreign investment.

"Since 2008, Rio is leading international investment for the country," he said.

"We have opportunities in infrastructure, business and technology. Opportunities are abundant."

Meanwhile, Casa Brasil, a three-month exhibition documenting Brazil's culture and connection with the Olympics, is running in central London's Summer House museum until September.

It showcases the story of Rio's win of the Olympic bid, transformations, history and vision of the Olympic legacy.