



PHILIPPE LOPEZ / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Liu Xiang on his way to finishing third in the 110m hurdles at the Shanghai IAAF Diamond league athletics meet on May 23.

China looks for golden streak

STAR 110M HURDLER LEADS STRONG HOST CAST AT THE TRACK IN GUANGZHOU

By LEI LEI
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — Since 1982, China has dominated track and field at the Asian Games, and the simple aim this time around is to maintain that high standard in Guangzhou.

“The basic goal for the whole team is to maintain the leading position in the gold medal tally of the sport,” said Feng Shuyong, head coach of China’s national track and field team.

“The situation will be complex during the competitions, but our main rival is still the Japanese team,” Feng said.

At the Doha Asian Games four years ago, China claimed 14 gold medals in track and field, followed

by Bahrain with six and Japan with five.

“Before 1982, the Japanese dominated the sport in Asia. But no matter — at the Asian Games or other major events — our own performances are what we are interested in. We hope the athletes can focus on their training and not feel too much pressure to perform on home soil.”

Although China’s star hurdler, Liu Xiang, has been shadowed by injury since the Beijing Games in 2008, the former Olympic and world champion is still the man to watch in Guangzhou; just as he was two years ago at the Beijing Olympic Games.

The Shanghai hurdler is confident of winning his third successive Asian Games title.

“I want to win at my third Asian Games and add another gold medal for China,” Liu said before heading for the games. “I have been in good form recently and I want to get the right feeling back. My biggest opponent in each race is myself, and I think my confidence is based on real power.”

The 110m hurdles is considered one of China’s strongest events in athletics. China’s No 2 hurdler, Shi Dongpeng, who defeated Liu at the Shanghai Diamond League meet in May, is likely to make it a 1-2 finish for the host nation.

Other potential gold medalists include World Championship men’s 20km walk runner-up Wang Hao, women’s marathon world

champion, Bai Xue, veteran marathoner Zhou Chunxiu, women’s hammer thrower Zhang Wenxiu and women’s discus World Cup champion Li Yanfeng.

Due to a foot injury, Bai won’t run in the marathon at the Guangzhou Games, but will instead compete in the women’s 10,000m. That makes veteran Zhou, the 2007 London Marathon champion, the favorite to win the marathon.

Race walker Wang is recovering from a leg injury and will face a stiff challenge from the Japanese.

“All the season’s best results have been from Japanese athletes. We have to raise our own levels if we are to achieve victory in Guangzhou,” said Feng.

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bronze