

Iron-fisted and female, boxing breaks through

'MAGNIFICENT MARY' THROWS HER WEIGHT BEHIND SPORT AND HELPING YOUNGSTERS

GUANGZHOU — M.C. Mary Kom is a five-time world champion, a mother of two with a single burning ambition — to become one of the first Asian Games champions in women's boxing.



BOXING

After being added to the program for the 2012 London Olympics, women's boxing makes its Games debut in Guangzhou with three titles up for grabs, in flyweight (48-51kg), lightweight (56-60kg) and middleweight (69-75kg).

"This is a very big opportunity for me. A gold medal here will keep my motivation level high for the London Olympics in 2012," said the 27-year-old fighter.

It's been a tough road to the top for Kom, known as "Magnificent Mary" in India.

The daughter of poor farmers, she grew up in the northeast of India, next to the border with Myanmar where her parents still endure back-breaking work in the fields.

A fan of Hong Kong actor Jackie Chan, Kom gravitated towards boxing and used her natural strength to good effect, a legacy of her chores of chopping wood or making charcoal to help her family make ends meet in the troubled region.

"She never told us she'd taken up boxing," her father, Tonpa, told the BBC from the family home in Kangathe, a village in Manipur state.

"We only found out when we read in the papers of her success in a local competition," Tony said.

"In fact, I didn't really want to encourage her to become a sportsperson because I thought it would cost a lot of money, more than we could afford."

Kom's fierce determination to succeed quickly killed off any suggestions she should retire after giving birth to twins.

"I can't imagine life without boxing. I always knew I would come back and I am planning to continue as long as my body permits me," she said.

Kom has also been trying to



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Indian boxer M.C. Mary Kom is carried by her coach after winning a gold in the 46kg weight category at the Fourth World Women Boxing Championship in New Delhi, on Nov 23, 2006.



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M.C. MARY KOM

divert youngsters to the sport in her home region by setting up a boxing academy.

"I want to be able to provide things for the children, provide them with equipment," said Kom.

"At the academy I try and provide a family background. I want to help out."

Chinese women picked up

Zhu on fire as China dominates

GUANGZHOU — Zhu Qinan made amends for his bitter defeat at the Beijing Olympics with a golden double as China dominated the start of the Asian Games shooting on Saturday.



SHOOTING

Zhu, the Athens Olympic champion who was reduced to tears after losing to India's Abhinav Bindra on home soil two years ago, hit back with a vengeance at the Aoti shooting range.

He won the team and individual titles in the men's 10m air rifle competition as China picked up five of the six shooting gold medals on offer on the opening day.

Yi Siling also clinched a double in the women's 10m air rifle, while Pu Qifeng won the men's 50m pistol event.

The ROK prevented a clean sweep by the host by taking the team title in the men's 50m pistol.

While Zhu prospered, Bindra failed to make the final after India's lone Olympic gold medalist lost out in a five-man tie-breaker at the qualifying stage.

But Zhu had the satisfaction of beating another Indian, Gagan Narang, in a tense final that went down to the final shot.

Narang, winner of four golds at last month's Commonwealth Games in New Delhi, was just 0.6 points behind the Chinese going into the final round.

But the Indian, who carried his country's flag at Friday's opening ceremony, managed just 9.7 with his final shot against Zhu's 10.4 and had to settle for silver.

"It is nice to please my home fans again," said the 26-year-old Zhu. "Revenge was not on my mind, I was just trying to concentrate on my own shooting."

Narang conceded it was difficult to make up the one-point difference after the qualifying stage, even though he took the lead over Zhu after the sixth shot of the 10-round final.

"I am not disappointed at all," said Narang. "We have won two silver medals today and that is very credible against such a tough field."

In the team event, the Chinese trio of Zhu, Yu Jikang and Cao Yifei fired 1,784 points to beat the Indian team of Bindra, Narang and Sanjeev Rajput by one point.

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