

Father's words worked wonders for Virdhawal Khade at Asian Games

Vikram Khade is a hard taskmaster. When his heartbroken son Virdhawal called him from Guangzhou on Monday after missing the bronze medal by a whisker, Khade senior offered no words of comfort but ordered: Udhya gold pahije (win gold tomorrow).

Certainly, Virdhawal is no crybaby either. On Tuesday, he ensured that his father would walk around his hometown of Kolhapur a proud man.

Though Virdhawal didn't clinch gold, he became the first Indian in 24 years to win a swimming medal at the Asian Games by wrapping the bronze in 50m butterfly with a time of 24.31 seconds. India's last swimming medal at the games was a silver, won by Khazan Singh way back in 1986. The 19-year-old Khade's personal best of 24.25 seconds was recorded at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Pune in 2008.

On Monday, Khade missed out on a medal in the 50m freestyle by just 0.03 seconds. Instead of sulking, the Maharashtra boy took the setback on his chin and focused all his energies on avenging his defeat.

Khade is touted to be the best thing to have happened to Indian swimming and he has set his sights higher.

"Winning at the Olympics is the epitome of a swimmer's career and if not 2012, I am confident of winning a medal in 2016," he said.

Khade revealed he started swimming at the age of four and a half when he joined a vacation camp in Kolhapur.

He's thrilled about his achievement but the lack of recognition and support for the swimmers back home in India can be demoralizing, he admitted.

"It's a breakthrough in Indian swimming but it will depend on what sort of support I will get," Khade said.

"Swimming doesn't have the support like cricket. Financial security is important and if I make big money in swimming then I will continue because I need my family also," he said. All the serious talk can wait. As for now, it's time to celebrate the feat. Surely, a grand welcome awaits Khade in his hometown.

- DAILY NEWS & ANALYSIS (INDIA)

"It was especially tiring after matches like the one against Japan (on Sunday) and to win that was a great relief. At this level, it is really good to come away with a silver medal," she said.

It has been an exhausting year physically and mentally for the 24-year-old, who played a starring role when the women won a team silver at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Feng played a pivotal role when the team stunned the Chinese to win the World Championship in May. But her hectic schedule — Feng and the rest of the team travel regularly for overseas competitions and training stints — seems to have taken its toll.

In recent weeks, Feng has been in poor form, even going down 3-0 to Japan's world No 24 Kasumi Ishikawa at the World Team Classic in September. Earlier this month, she suffered another blow when her 83-year-old grandmother fell ill and was hospitalized.

"They (China) prepared really thoroughly against us, so maybe in this aspect we were lacking," she said. "Hopefully, in two years in London (at the Olympics) we'll do better."

- THE TODAY (SINGAPORE)

Bottom-bugger Bangladesh unhappy

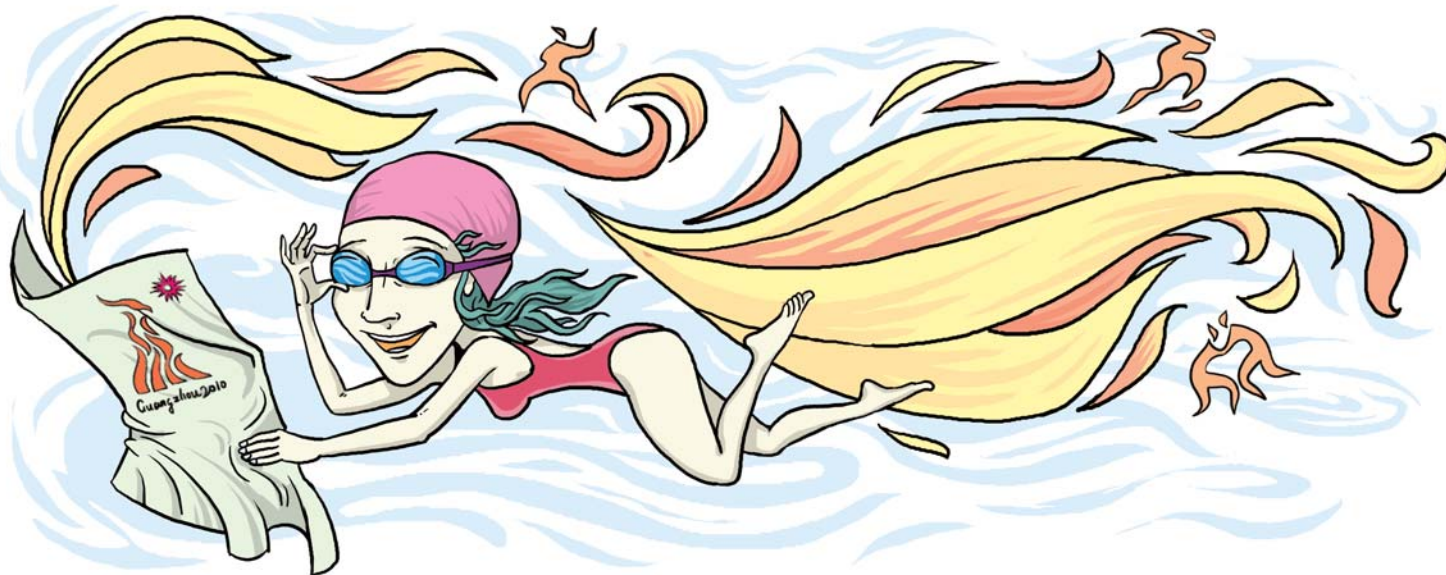
Bangladesh's U23 soccer team were the first to leave the country to take part in the 16th Asian Games. Ironically, they became the first side to return home on Sunday night after an early elimination from the group stages with a disappointing performance that saw them finish bottom of the 24 teams.

Of the 25-member squad, 12 players and assistant coach Saiful Bari Titu returned on Sunday while the remaining players and the coach Robert Rubcic are scheduled to return today.

Bangladesh were drawn alongside Uzbekistan, United Arab Emirates, and Hong Kong in Group E from where all the three other teams qualified for the 16-team second round. Neighboring India also secured a second-round berth while the other two South Asian nations Maldives (17th) and Pakistan (22nd) finished above Bangladesh.

Bangladesh officials had expressed hope of upsetting either of their powerful group opponents who are ranked much higher in FIFA rankings, but on the field they hardly offered any resistance against Uzbekistan and UAE, going down by 3-0 margins before being eliminated with a 4-1 defeat against Hong Kong.

- THE DAILY STAR (BANGLADESH)



ZHANG CHENGLIANG / CHINA DAILY

India may face gold drought in Incheon

There is a fear that the Incheon Asian Games will be a gold medal drought for India. As the country's gold medal hopes rest on a very limited number of sports, and three of these which fetch a sure-shot gold may not be included in the 2014 games in the Republic of Korea.

The sports in danger of losing out are cue sports, in which India won two gold medals at Doha in 2006 and one in Guangzhou, and chess, which yielded two gold medals for India at the previous games.

There is a sword hanging over India's pet event, kabaddi as well. Since kabaddi was introduced to the Asian Games in 1990, India has won the gold each time. These sports came under threat because the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has decided to reduce the number of sports from 42 sports to 35 at the next Asiad, which means there is space for only seven non-Olympic sports.

Highly-placed sources in the OCA said that the Incheon Asian Games Organizing Committee backed kabaddi but the insistence of OCA President Sheikh Ahmed Al Fayad Al Sabah to keep cricket

and karate has forced them to drop two sports from their preferred list of seven — softball, baseball, wushu, squash, kabaddi, sepak-takraw and ten pin bowling. The fate of these sports will be decided on the OCA meeting next month. Compared to 28 sports at the Olympics, the Guangzhou Asian Games has 42.

Incheon was dead against including cricket. But thanks to the support of OCA president, the board endorsed the decision to have cricket and karate in their meeting on Monday.

- DAILY NEWS & ANALYSIS (INDIA)

Busy schedule takes its toll on Feng

Her nickname is "Le Le", which means "Happy" in Chinese.

It has been anything but for Singapore table tennis star Feng Tianwei in recent weeks.

She was powerless to stem the tide on Tuesday as the Chinese swept to a 3-0 victory in the women's team final at the Asian Games.

Feng, the world No 3, showed little of her usual fight when she lost the second singles 3-0 to world No 1 Guo Yan and admitted later she was just tired.