

Qingdao sets sail in fresh breeze of expansion

Olympics efforts bring benefits to racers — and the city itself

By Zhao Ruixue

QINGDAO: "We are ready — capable and confident that we will hold the best Olympic sailing competition," Xia Geng, mayor of Qingdao, told China Daily.

Xia also serves as chairman of the Sailing Committee (Qingdao) of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad.

"It is a rare time for Qingdao," Xia said. "We have been exerting all-out effort since 2003 to prepare for the gala. We have built a world-class sailing center, forged a strong service team, held two test events and received overall praise on venue construction, city operation, event organization, safety and volunteer services."

Qingdao invested 3.2 billion yuan in the 45-hectare sailing center, completing construction of all its facilities in January. The sailing center reflects the 2008 Olympics core values — green, hi-tech and people oriented — setting the pace in environmental protection, science and technology for future events.

Five years of preparation and two test events have reaped greater results than even planners expected, laying a solid foundation for a successful Olympics sailing competition.

"Olympics preparation work has promoted the city's development and in return its progress enhances preparation work for the Games. Qingdao has entered a new stage," Xia noted.

Qingdao embraced the chance to organize and host the sailing portion of the world's most important sporting event in part to attract more people from around the globe so they can have a better understanding of the city, he added.



Yacht berths at the sailing center on the coast of Qingdao, Shandong province, are now quiet, awaiting their time. Ju Chuanjiang

The Olympics has given great impetus to Qingdao's economic development — the aggregate capital invested since 2003 exceeds \$17 billion, while the total value of imports and exports surpassed \$100 billion and 56 Fortune 500 firms have arrived in the city.

Gross income from tourism

broke through the 40 billion yuan mark last year, generated by the spending of 30 million tourists.

Shipping container throughput at the city's port in 2007 was 9.46 million 20-foot container equivalent units, while passenger numbers at its airport reached 7.87 million.

Olympics preparation has also benefited the livelihoods of Qingdao residents. Construction of related projects created 100,000 jobs and 46,000 homes

for low-wage workers.

At the same time the city's heated floor space surpassed 30 million sq m.

Qingdao also implemented plans for greatly reducing air, noise and water pollution. Environmentally responsible technology was used in building the sailing center.

As well, food and medicine safety has been strengthened.

Overall civic progress has been a benefit of the Olympian surge, raising residents' awareness of the Games. Smiling faces of volunteers are now a trademark of the sailing city.

"There are less than 200 days to go for the Games. Everything is going smoothly," Xia said. "We are looking forward to the Olympics gala and I hope Qingdao can draw more and more attention from the world."

We have built a world-class sailing center.

XIA GENG
Mayor of Qingdao

Kellet: New sailing center 'best venue' in Olympics history

By Du Shu

QINGDAO: The Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center located on Fushan Bay has been widely applauded as the embodiment of a green, hi-tech and people's Olympics — in fact, David Kellet, vice-chairman of the International Sailing Federation (ISAF), calls it the best sailing venue in Olympics history.

Its world-class sailing capacities are now proven through successful 2006 and 2007 international regattas.

Just 10 days ago, the Clipper around the world fleet stopped over in Qingdao, when Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, chairman and founder of Clipper Ventures Plc, gave a thumbs up to the center.

"The facilities here are magnificent. It is hard to say that anything more needs to be adopted. The committee is very efficient and friendly. All the sailors here are enjoying it," he said.

"If it is willing, Qingdao will be a perpetual stopover for the Clipper race because of its top-ranking venue and friendly people," he said.

Among the center's achievements are design and construction of its main and subsidiary breakwaters.

"The breakwater dam fills a blank in the history of Olympic sailing," said Qingdao Deputy Mayor and Qingdao Olympic Sailing Committee Vice-President Zang Aimin.

"Sydney and Athens planned to build a spectator dam, but they were forced to give up due to expense, security and construction concerns. The breakwater at the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center for the first time enables spectators to

enjoy high-level sailing competitions at close range."

A row of stylish windmills on the main breakwater are now a magnet for tourists and photographers, with rotating blades not only producing power for lighting, but also showing if the wind is strong enough for sailing. The 41 windmills are expected to reduce electricity consumption by 300,000 kW every year.

The sailing center is also proud of its pontoon system, the most advanced without the stakes in the world. No matter the tidal ebb or flow, the pontoons maintain the same horizontal position and remain at the same half-meter boarding height. The center also holds the record for the widest launching ramp in the world — it stretched fully 150 m.

Other hi-tech systems include the use of seawater to regulate ambient temperature in the 8,138-sq-m media center. The system uses a heat exchange pump placed 10 m below sea level that helps cool air used in the center. Without the need for a coolant like freon, the system not only eliminates greenhouse gas, but also saves more than 100,000 yuan in electricity costs annually. It is the first time the technology has been used in large public building in China.

As well, roofs of the logistics center carry dozens of large solar panels.

"We optimize the use of solar energy. It solves the problem of air conditioning and hot water," said Zheng Anping, researcher for solar engineering and technological applications at the Qingdao Olympic Center. In 2006 the system won an award for best renewable energy from the magazine Asia Power.



Windmills at the sailing center produce power — and a subject for many photographers. Ju Chuanjiang

Making a world-class center: Qingdao timeline

By Wei Zhihui

The following is a timeline of the preparation for the Olympic sailing races in Qingdao, Shandong province:

- ▶ **1999:** Qingdao launches its bid for the 2008 Olympic Sailing competition.
- ▶ **July 13, 2001:** Beijing is awarded the 2008 Olympic Games. Qingdao beat out other coastal cities, including Dalian, to seal the races.
- ▶ **June 11, 2003:** Approved by the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, the Qingdao Sailing Committee is formed.
- ▶ **May 25, 2004:** The Qingdao International Sailing Center breaks ground.
- ▶ **December 28, 2005:** Ahead of schedule, Qingdao completes its executive and management centers for the sailing center.
- ▶ **Jan 23, 2006:** Sailor Guo Chuan, a native of Qingdao, becomes the first Chinese to participate in an around the world race yacht race, crewing on the leg from Singapore to Qingdao.
- ▶ **April 3-8, 2006:** Qingdao has a successful debut in the sailing world as a stopover on the around the world race.
- ▶ **August 18-31, 2006:** The 2006 International Sailing Regatta is held at the Olympics Sailing Center of Qingdao.
- ▶ **August 9-24, 2007:** The 2007 Qingdao International Sailing Regatta, a second Olympics test event, is successfully hosted in Qingdao.
- ▶ **January, 2008:** The Olympics Village — the final big project in Qingdao's preparations — is completed.

Ride on global tide to continue

By Xue Xiaoying

QINGDAO: The government of Qingdao has signed an agreement with Clipper Ventures Plc from the United Kingdom to continue to be a stop on Clipper's around the world yacht races, two of which will call on the port city from 2009-2012.

After successfully participating in the 2007-2008 Clipper race, Qingdao will continue to be the only Chinese stopover for the competition over the next four years. According to the agreement, Qingdao will also establish a Clipper training center and for each stop at least two Chinese crew members will participate in the race.

Boats in the race represent cities or regions. The 10 yachts in last year's race represented Durban, Glasgow, Hull and Humber, Jamaica, Liverpool, New York, Nova Scotia, Qingdao, Singapore and Western Australia.

"We have signed a letter of intent to have further cooperation with Qingdao for at least the next two races," said Clipper Ventures CEO William Ward at a news conference at the Olympic Sailing Center on February 25.

"To have this ongoing association with the city is a great honor for Clipper Ventures. And we also expect more Chinese crews and skippers will participate."

"It's good news that we can sign a four-year agreement with Clipper," said Zang Aimin, Qingdao vice-mayor and executive chairperson of the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Committee.

"We look forward to further



Zang Aimin, vice-mayor of Qingdao, and William Ward, Clipper Ventures CEO, at a signing ceremony in February in Qingdao that ensures future races. Ju Chuanjiang



Qingdao salutes boats and readies for more races. Ju Chuanjiang

cooperation with Clipper Ventures, not only by competing in the race, but also through strengthening economic and cultural exchanges with other cities.

"Once participants could only be trained in Britain, but now Qingdao will also become a training site, so more crews will be recruited from across the country."

She added that it is her hope that more enterprises will sponsor and assist participants to compete in the race.

Zang said the agreement takes the cooperation to a new level, with additional events providing locals more opportunities to take part in the race. Popularizing the charm of the city and enhancing cooperation with other ports will be a continuing goal for Qingdao in the future.

More international sailing regattas are now planned following the Olympic Games. Qingdao will also serve as the only Chinese stopover of the 2008-09 Volvo Ocean Race.

Spectators, sailors able to interact

By Zhang Ying

QINGDAO: While building the venue to host the 2008 Olympics sailing competition, Qingdao created many firsts with innovative approaches that solved long-standing difficulties faced by the sport.

Sailing, a traditional competition in the Olympic Games, has always faced a challenge — it is difficult for spectators to see the races far out on the water — so organizers formulated a new approach that will be used for the first time in the history of the Games.

The Qingdao Olympic Sailing Committee (QOSC) conceived and built a breakwater or "spectator dam" to provide the public a closer vantage point to watch races.

Organizers say the 534-me-

ter-long dam, with a capacity of 8,000 to 10,000 spectators, will help further popularize yachting and inspire athletes through closer contact with their fans.

"Both IOC and ISAF showed their appreciation to Qingdao for providing favorable conditions for spectators," said Zang Aimin, Qingdao vice-mayor and vice chairperson of the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Committee.

Following Qingdao's efforts, the ISAF revised its rules for the Beijing Games, bringing yachts closer to land and allowing spectators on the dam to see the finals held 100m to 200 m offshore.

The coming events during the Summer Olympics this year are expected to draw the most spectators in the history of sailing competition as people could also watch the contestants from

the May 4 Square and Music Square nearby. In 2006 and 2007, more than 700,000 people watched two test events held in Qingdao.

The QOSC also decided to move the awards ceremony from land to sea on two platforms built near the dam.

"Medal winners can sail their yachts to the back of the platform and climb on to receive their medals. That is a fabulous creation," said Sun Lijie, vice-chairperson and general secretary of the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Committee.

"This kind of award ceremony well serves spectators, who face the sea to see competitions and then can turn around and witness the awarding of medals. The idea has won the backing of the ISAF."

Calm weather with weak winds could be another chal-

lenge facing Qingdao. But two test events held in 2006 and 2007 showed that 92.6 and 77.8 percent of races had sufficient wind, much higher than the 70-percent standard set by ISAF.

In addition, the QOSC has also made preparations for days without wind during the competition.

To build a world-class sailing center, the Qingdao municipal government sent several delegations to countries and regions with rich experiences in hosting Olympics events.

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