



## TEAM CHINA BOUND FOR LONDON

# China expands medal horizons

Nation's athletes are hoping to challenge the world's best in the pool and in track and field, **China Daily** reports.

**W**ith some big stars coming back even as a new generation rises, China is hoping for major breakthroughs in track and swimming, and may be some surprises in sports like judo, taekwondo, cycling and fencing. Compared with the niche sports it dominates — table tennis, badminton and diving — China is lagging behind opponents like the United States in athletics and swimming. It was limited to four gold medals in those sports at the past two Games.

China sees London as a perfect opportunity to extend its supremacy to mainstream sports. A group of athletes

led by Olympic champion hurdler Liu Xiang and swimmers like Sun Yang are all in position to win gold.

China is backing up its ambitions with cash. It has hired foreign coaches, fitness trainers and performance ana-

lysts and sent athletes overseas to hone their skills.

The efforts have paid off. Liu recovered from a career-threatening injury, clocking top results at recent meets, and the swimming team bagged four titles at the World Championships last year.

Liu Peng, China's sports minister and Olympic delegation chief, thinks it might be time to make the leap.

"In some high-profile events (track and field and swimming), which are dominated by western countries,

we have to try to make some breakthroughs and stun the world," Liu said at the delegation announcement ceremony on July 10 in Beijing.

Sebastian Coe, chairman of London's organizing committee, agreed.

"Look at the way the Chinese have ranged far wider than some of their staple sports like gymnastics," Coe said earlier this year.

"They have strength in many fields like in the pool, and athletics. It's going to be a truly global Games."

Still, other events will determine

China's fate in the medal count.

The martial arts of boxing, judo, taekwondo and wrestling should be another gold mine for China, as fighters in the four events claimed six titles in Beijing.

Cyclists and fencers will be expected to provide a title from each side after they combined for one gold and one silver in Beijing, while the modern pentathlon squad will look to upgrade its World Championships silver to a gold medal in London.

★ denotes medal chance

## SWIMMING

### Sun expected to rise in Olympic pool

In the pool, Chinese swimmers should make a big splash after the confidence they gained at last year's FINA Shanghai World Championships, and Sun Yang has emerged as the team's new leader.

The 20-year-old broke Australian Grant Hackett's 10-year-old world record in the 1,500m in Shanghai, and will try to scoop another gold in his duel in the 200 and 400 against Korean world champion Park Tae-hwan.

Veteran butterfly specialist Wu Peng will provide another medal hope in the 200, where the 25-year-old beat US 14-time Olympic champion Michael Phelps at the Charlotte Grand Prix in May.

Meanwhile, Beijing Olympic champion Liu Zige and world champion Jiao Liuyang are tipped to battle for a gold in the women's 200 butterfly while teenager Ye Shiwen hopes to grab the 200 individual medley title.

Zhao Jing, the 100 backstroke, should also be in the hunt for a medal, along with the women's 4x200 freestyle and 4x100 medley relay teams.

Boasting at least four gold hopes, the contingent is in position to surpass its haul at the Beijing Games in London, said Shang Xiutang, vice-president of the Chinese Swimming Administrative Center.

China claimed one gold, three silver and two bronze medals in Beijing four years ago, with favorite Zhang Lin becoming the nation's first male Olympic swimming medalist. However, Zhang was edged out of the London squad due to a slump that led to his failure in national qualification events.

#### RESULTS AT PREVIOUS OLYMPICS

**2004 Athens Games:** 1 gold medal (women's 100m breaststroke), 1 silver medal (women's 4x200m freestyle relay)

**2008 Beijing Games:** 1 gold medal (women's 200m butterfly), 3 silver medals (men's 400m freestyle, women's 200m butterfly, women's 4x200m freestyle relay), 2 bronze medals (women's 200m freestyle, women's 4x100m medley relay)

**China Daily's gold-medal projection for London:** 4 gold medals

#### ROSTER

**Men:** Chen Cheng, Chen Weiwu, Chen Yin, Chen Zuo, Cheng Feiyi, Dai Jun, Hao Yun, He Jianbin, Huang Yunkun, Jiang Haiqi, Li Xiaoyan, Li Yunqi, Lu Zhiwu, Shi Yang, Shi Tengfei, ★Sun Yang, Wang Shun, Wang Chengxiang, ★Wu Peng, Xu Jiayu, Yang Zhixian, Zhang Enjian, Zhang Fenglin, Zhou Jiawei

**Women:** Bai Anqi, Chen Qian, Fang Yanqiao, Fu Yuanhui, ★Gao Chang, Ji Liping, ★Jiao Liuyang, Li Jiaying, Li Xuanxu, Liu Jing, Liu Xiaoyu, ★Liu Zige, Lu Ying, Pang Jiaying, Qiu Yuhua, Shao Yiwen, Song Wenyuan, Sun Ye, Tang Yi, Wang Haibing, Wang Shijia, Xin Xin, Yao Yige, ★Ye Shiwen, Zhao Jin, ★Zhao Jing, Zhu Qianwei

#### STARS TO WATCH

**SUN YANG (below), 20**

**Birthplace:** Hangzhou, Zhejiang province



## ATHLETICS

### Leaping Liu to lead the track attack

Is China ready to go head-to-head against Team USA on the track?

Liu Xiang will be the centerpiece of the country's track and field campaign.

The 2004 Olympics champion hurdler clocked a wind-assisted 12.97 sec result at the Eugene, Oregon, meet last month, matching Dayron Robles' world record time, as he looks to atone for Beijing, where he withdrew from the race in front of a disappointed home crowd due to a heel injury.

Although American Aries Merritt recorded a season-best time of 12.93 to win the

US Trials this month (Liu's Eugene result didn't count because of the tailwind), the Shanghai native remains the favorite.

Still, head track and field coach Feng Shuyong warned of the foreign challenges, including the enigmatic Robles.

"People think Liu will have no problem winning because all of his major opponents have not performed better than him (this season)," Feng said. "But that's not true. Robles is still young and he is the man who has run under 13 seconds the most times. He is still dangerous."

Women's discus thrower Li Yanfeng will join Liu as another gold medal hope after winning the country's only title at the Worlds last year.

Medals could also be won in six other events, including the women's marathon, shot put, hammer and men's race walk, Feng said.

#### RESULTS AT PREVIOUS OLYMPICS

**2004 Athens Games:** 2 gold medals (110m hurdles, women's 10,000m)

**2008 Beijing Games:** 2 bronze medals (women's marathon, women's hammer throw)

**China Daily's gold-medal projection for London:** 2 gold medals

#### ROSTER

**Men:** Cai Zelin, Cao Shuo, Chen Ding, Cheng Wen, Cui Zhide, Dong Bin, Dong Guojian, Guo Fan, Lao Yi, Li Jianbo, Li Jinzhe, Li Zhilong, Li Zicheng, Liang Jiahong, ★Liu Xiang, Qin Qiang, Shi Dongpeng, Si Tianfeng, Su Bingtian, Wang Hao, ★Wang Zhen, Xie Wenjun, Xie Zhenye, Yang Yansheng, Zhang Guowei, Zhang Jun, Zhang Peimeng, Zhang Xiaoyi, Zhao Jianguo, Zheng Dongsheng

**Women:** Chen Rong, Gao Ni, ★Gong Lijiao, Huang Xiaoxiao, Li Ling (shot put), Li Ling (pole vault), ★Li Yanfeng, Li Yanmei, Li Zhenzhu, Li Lingwei, ★Liu Hong, Liu Xiangrong, Lu Lihui, Lu Xiuzhi, Ma Xuejun, Cheyang Sigya, Sun

Yawei, Tan Jian, Wang Jiali, Wang Xueqin, Wei Yongli, Xie Limei, Yin An'na, Zhang Li, Zhang Wenxiu, Zheng Xingjuan, Zhou Chunxiu, Zhu Xiaolin

#### STARS TO WATCH

**LI YANFENG, 33**

**Birthplace:** Qinggang, Heilongjiang province

**Highlights:** 2010 IAAF Continental Cup discus title, 2011 IAAF World Championships discus title

After winning China's first discus world title in Daegu in 2011, Li is looking forward to an Olympic crown at the London Games. Li achieved her best throw of 67.98m at the 2011 IAAF Diamond League meet in Schoenebeck, Germany, and is considered the country's best medal hope in the field.



**LIU XIANG, 28**

**Birthplace:** Shanghai

**Highlights:** 2004 Athens Olympic 110m hurdles champion, 2007 IAAF World Championships 110m hurdles title, 2008 IAAF World Indoor Championships 60m hurdles title.

Liu is one of China's most successful athletes and is a track and field icon. His 2004 Olympic gold medal was the first in a men's track and field event for China. He withdrew from the event at the last moment due to injury on his home track in 2008, but is favored to win another gold in London.