



CYCLE CIRCLE

PHOTO BY PAUL HANNA / REUTERS

Cyclists from the South Korean men's team pursuit squad train in the Olympic velodrome before the start of the Olympic Games in London on Wednesday. The men's pursuit event will take place on Aug 2 and 3.

China finds itself a home in London

By CHEN XIANGFENG
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Consider it a home a very long way from home.

The China House at the London Olympic Games was officially unveiled on Wednesday in the Waldorf Hilton, London, in a ceremony featuring a slew of dignitaries.

It marked the first time China has opened an area for people to visit and experience Chinese sports, culture and hospitality during a Summer Olympic Games.

Chinese Olympic Committee President Liu Peng, Chinese Ambassador to Britain Liu Xiaoming, International Olympic Committee Vice-President Yu Zaiqing, COC Vice-President Yang Shuan and British Ambassador to China Sebastian Wood attended the launch and gave their thumbs-up.

"Here, at the China House, we will greet all the members of the Olympic family from the IOC, AOC, OCOG and NOC in the Chinese manner," said Liu, who is also the nation's sports minister.

"The China House will also serve as the home to the Chinese sports delegation and relevant organizations and

groups during the Games. Moreover, it is a great window as well as a fantastic platform to showcase China, the COC brand and China's achievement."

Liu said he believes the house will enhance the friendship between China and Britain.

"This is a place to hold different events to entertain friends from both Britain and China," he said. "I would like to say the China House is also a home of friendship for China. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Britain, the China House will, without a doubt, become the best platform to promote Sino-UK exchanges and Olympic culture thanks to the COC's efforts."

Liu said the house will play host to a party for Chinese athletes on Aug 9.

The house will be open until Aug 12.

It will feature Olympic-themed exhibitions highlighting Chinese athletes' achievements over the years. Another exhibition, marking the 40th anniversary, will showcase scenes and pictures of friendly exchanges in sports and culture between the two countries.

Clowns roll out red carpet

Welcome committee greets Chinese delegation with whimsy

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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Games, after all, are supposed to be fun.

The Chinese contingent was officially welcomed to the London Games with a ceremony that differed wildly from past Olympics.

Following a group of performers dressed as jesters out to the ceremony on Wednesday, the Chinese athletes found themselves in the middle of a carnival, featuring dancers reciting poems and actors whistling on bicycles at the Olympic Village.

About 70 brightly dressed members of the National Youth Theatre performed on stilts and bicycle chariots before Tessa

Jowell, the village's deputy mayor, delivered a welcome speech.

Though vastly different from the traditionally solemn ceremonies of the past, the event was uniquely British.

"Yeah, it feels really different from the other welcoming ceremonies I've attended," Chinese beach volleyball player Xue Chen said.

"It's not like a serious one that follows standard procedures. It's more like a party that made us very relaxed and cheerful. Plus, we can really feel the Games are coming after that ceremony."

Xue was among 98 Chinese representatives, which included the men's and women's basketball teams and the shooting and judo squads.

They were led by delegation

chief Liu Peng.

The Chinese delegation attended the ceremony with four other nations — Samoa, Kenya, Suriname and Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Liu, China's sports minister, exchanged gifts with Jowell before the national flag-raising ceremony and greeted the actors and athletes.

National basketball forward Yi Jianlian drew the spotlight when vice sports minister Duan Shijie implied on Tuesday that he would be the flag bearer at the opening ceremony on Friday.

Yi confirmed the appointment on Wednesday, saying it was "a great personal honor."

The former NBA player said the ceremony was a mental tip-off to the Games.

"It means the Olympics have really started, and we have to get ourselves ready for the big show," he said.

"The performance ... per-



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YI JIANLIAN
CHINESE BASKETBALL PLAYER AND
OPENING-CEREMONY FLAGBEARER

fectly demonstrated the culture here."

Lu Shanzhen, coach of the women's gymnastics team, was also impressed by the local flavor.

"I've experienced a lot of welcoming shows at big events, but none like this," Lu said.

"There are no certain patterns here, everybody was surprised by the actors' costumes and

then easily got caught up in the mood.

"The typical British style really reminded us that the Games are coming, and everybody looked motivated."

The Village has already performed more than 50 welcome ceremonies since kicking things off with the British Virgin Islands on July 17.

It will deliver 100 to welcome more than 200 delegations.

The performers will prepare customized tricks to entertain athletes from different countries.

"We prepared in rehearsals for a month before the opening day, and we will add some special elements according to the different cultures of different teams," said Cyrus Barghchi, an Australian performer.

"Like today, we all learned how to say 'hello' and 'welcome' to make the Chinese players feel warm like home."



People attend the opening ceremony of the China House at the London Olympic Games on Wednesday in Waldorf Hilton. The display will run until Aug 12.

Senior citizens and table tennis: Now there's a movie

By CECILY LIU
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Eighty-four-year-old Sun Lao gracefully put down his paddle after missing the swerving ball.

"Losing is an honor. I'm glad that I came. Although I lost, I learned how Westerners play," he said, smiling into the camera.

Sun is one of eight veteran table tennis players who star in a new documentary, *Ping Pong*, which follows the over-80 category at the 2010 world table tennis championships in Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Made by British directors Hugh and Anson Hartford, the film is a part of Britain's Cultural Olympiad — a four-year program of Olympic and Paralympic-related arts events Britain spent more than 97 million pounds (\$144 million) to stage since 2008.

It will be shown at special screening sessions in eight Olympic venues this summer, at which ping-pong equipment will be provided for the public.

But *Ping Pong* is not just another sport-themed movie in an Olympic year. The close attention paid to each of the subjects challenges the popular generalization of older people, and explores the link between death and sports through humor.

"It's about age and about life, really," Anson said. "As you get old, your body gets a battering, and your mind takes a battering. Ping-pong keeps you engaged with life."

The characters' personalities stood out. Terry Donlon, 82, nearly died at the age of 14 from tuberculosis. Later, he had his prostate and kidney removed due to cancer, and now he has only 40 percent of his lung capacity. Still, he has never quit playing.

Lisa Modlich, 86, resembles the typical American girl with lipstick and permed hair, who doesn't forget to put on nail polishes even when going to the sports stadium. Ursula Bihl, a 90-year-old German, says she would much rather die at a



CECILY LIU / CHINA DAILY

Anson (left) and Hugh Hartford will show their film about elderly ping-pong players at various Olympic venues.

ping-pong table than in a nursing home.

The film took the Hartford brothers on their first China trip.

"It was amazing the old buildings in Beijing and the wild grassland in Inner Mongolia, they were beautiful," said Hugh.

Anson said China was a lucky choice of location for the film.

"There is this reverence for table tennis, which is a coun-

try-level sport," he said. "It also seems to be a cultural thing in China that the elderly are held in respect."

Dorothy De Low, a 101-year-old Australian, spent more than three hours in the stadium taking photos and signing autographs for her Chinese fans.

Anson said the biggest challenge was filming so many simultaneous rounds of the tournament with a team of four

the two brothers, a sound specialist and a translator. As they did not know who would enter the finals, they followed 16 players initially.

Filming the Western players started months ahead of the tournament, but finding a Chinese player was not so easy.

"We arrived in Inner Mongolia a week before to speak to the organizers and found out who had entered. And if they were in the right age and were already there, we went to meet them," Anson said.

They met six Chinese players and filmed them all. During the competition Sun emerged as a star.

"He didn't do so well in the competition, but he had a positive attitude, and we connected with him the most," Anson said.

After the competition, Anson and Hugh traveled with Sun to his home city, Hulunbuir, in northeastern Inner Mongolia. A former tobacco farmer, Sun is now looked after by his daughters and has "a very good life".

At his home, he shows off a bottle of gochi berry, astragali root and ginseng.

"These are secrets to make me healthy," he said.

His daughters want him to cut back on smoking and drinking. But he insists frequent socializing keeps him alive.

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