



China's Jiao Liuyang surges toward gold in the women's 200m butterfly final at the Aquatics Centre in the Olympic Park on Wednesday.

CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Jiao exorcises runner-up curse

Known in China for always finishing second, swimmer wins 200m butterfly

By AGENCIES in London

China's Jiao Liuyang stormed home on the last lap to win the women's 200m butterfly gold medal on Wednesday, in the process beating the compatriot who relegated her to silver four years ago.

Jiao was second when she turned for home, but surged clear of her rivals to win in 2 min 04.06 sec, an Olympic record, adding a gold medal to the world title she won last year.

Spain's Mireia Belmonte, who is competing in six events in London, held on to take silver and Spain's first medal of the Games after leading with one lap to go.

"I feel very content and emotional," said Belmonte. When asked if she expected to finish second, she said: "No! It was very difficult."

Natsumi Hoshi of Japan took bronze.

Jiao, tears rolling down her face as she collected her gold, had a reputation in her homeland for always

being the runner-up. In Beijing four years ago she took silver after Liu Zige, who holds the world record of 2:01:81 for the event, got gold.

Liu, who had said after the heats that she did not feel in top form, finished eighth.

Later on Wednesday, the United States won the women's 4x200m freestyle gold medal after a brilliant anchor leg from Allison Schmitt.

Missy Franklin, Dana Vollmer, Shannon Vreeland and Schmitt won in a combined time of 7 min, 42.92 sec, ahead of Australia and France.

Australia led after the second and third changeovers but Schmitt, who won the individual 200 freestyle final, took the lead and surged away to win.

Schmitt, Franklin and Vollmer all

collected their second gold medals in London after Franklin won the 100 backstroke and Vollmer the 100 butterfly.

In the men's 200m breaststroke, Daniel Gyurta of Hungary set the fourth swimming world record of the Olympics, needing every bit of speed to hold off a furious bid by home-country favorite Michael Jamieson, who was seeking Britain's first gold in the pool.

Gyurta trailed two-time defending Olympic champion Kosuke Kitajima midway through the race, but seized control on the third leg as the Japanese star began to fade. Making the final turn, Gyurta seemed to be in control.

Then, as he popped up and down

in the water, heading for home, Gyurta suddenly felt Jamieson surging up on his right shoulder. The Olympics Aquatics Centre was in a frenzy as the two approached the wall, but Gyurta stretched out first and touched in 2 min, 7.28 sec.

That shaved 0.03 off the previous mark set by Christian Sprenger of Australia at the 2009 World Championships in a now-banned bodysuit. Jamieson nearly broke the old mark, too, settling for silver in 2:07.43, while Ryo Tateishi of Japan took bronze in 2:08.29.

"I've received so many messages of support and I was desperate to get on the podium to thank everyone," Jamieson said.

REUTERS-AP

Lu continues China's dominance with world record

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE in London

Lu Xiaojun bettered his own snatch and total world records in the men's injury-hit -77kg class on the way to winning China's fourth Olympic weightlifting gold at the London Games on Wednesday.

Lu snatched 175kg, 1kg better than his previous mark, but missed an opportunity to go even better when he ran out of time at his third attempt, at 177kg.

His best clean and jerk of 204kg left him a combined total of 379kg, also beating his previous world record by 1kg.

The total left him a clear winner after closest rivals Lu Haojie of China and South Korean Sa Jaeh-youk both withdrew with arm injuries.

Lu Haojie, however, still claimed silver with a total of 360kg (170, 190), a massive 19kg adrift. Cuban Ivan Cambar Rodriguez took bronze with an even

more distant 349kg (155, 194).

2010 World and European champion Tigran Martirosyan of Armenia was also a late withdrawal as he failed the weigh in.

And the two more high-profile pull-outs just added to the excitement at a drama-filled competition at the sell-out 6,000-capacity ExCel Arena.

South Korean Sa, defending Olympic champion and current world bronze medalist, is not known for his strong snatch section and as he crumpled screaming to the floor, stewards immediately covered up the platform.

Sa suffered what seemed a nasty injury to his right elbow as his arm buckled under the falling bar in his second attempt at 162kg, and he had to be helped off by the medical team present.

And then Lu Haojie failed to reappear after suffering a wrist injury in nailing his first clean and jerk at 190kg. Pictures showed him in tears in the warm-up area as his coach flexed his wrist and shook his head.



China's Lu Xiaojun celebrates with his coach during the men's -77kg Group A weightlifting event at the ExCel Centre on Wednesday. His compatriot Lu Haojie won silver.

YURI CORTEZ / ASSOCIATED PRESS

New rule makes first bolt from blocks a no-no

By EDDIE PELLIS in London Associated Press

Warning: At these Olympics, sprinters will get no warnings.

Under the zero-tolerance false-start rule in place for the London Games, a sprinter's mistimed jump from the blocks could destroy four years of hard work in an instant. If that runner happens to be, say, Usain Bolt, it could turn one of the most anticipated moments of the entire

Olympics into one huge downer. Under the old rule, the entire field was given a warning after the first false start and the disqualifications began with the second one. Under the new rule, the first person to jump is out — no second chances.

The new rule goes on display on the sport's biggest stage on Friday when the women line up for the 100m heats. Bolt, seeking back-to-back titles in the marquee race of the Olympics, hits the track on Saturday.

"A double-edged sword", 2004 Olympic champion Justin Gatlin calls the new rule, which took effect in 2010. "Because some people can take advantage of it if it's two or three false starts and no one is getting charged. At the same time, you can have something like last year with Bolt."

Last year was track and field's worst nightmare.

In the 100m final at the World Championships in Daegu, South Korea, Bolt burst from the block early. Gone. He ripped his shirt off and skulked to the practice track. Fellow Jamaican Yohan Blake

ended up winning the race, but the win carried with it a huge asterisk because the world-record holder was absent from the field.

"I've learned not to worry about the start anymore," said Bolt, who has always had trouble with the start. "I've sat down and talked with my coach and we have come up with the conclusion that, back in the day, I was never a good starter."

But if Bolt is unworried, it hasn't played out that way on the track, where his starts through the spring and summer have ranged somewhere between cautious to lumbering to abysmal.

He clambered out of the blocks in all three of his 100m races at the Jamaican Olympic trials. Against most runners, he can make up the ground he loses with the slow

starts, but not against Blake, who beat Bolt in both the 100 and the 200 that weekend in Kingston. Bolt later conceded he was less than 100 percent for that race. Either way, his trouble in the starting blocks has contributed to paradigm shift at this year's Olympics, and the questions have persisted about any hangover Bolt — and the sport itself — might have endured from his DQ in Daegu.

"That's awful that our sport's biggest star wasn't in the final," said US sprinter Allyson Felix. "We just can't have that. We're already a struggling sport and that's killing us. For that reason alone, it shouldn't be in play."

Felix is among critics who wonder if officials from track's governing body were trying to solve a problem that never existed.

The international track federation voted to adopt this dramatic shift in an attempt to speed up races and reduce gamesmanship. When the old rule was in effect, it wasn't uncommon for a slower starter to intentionally take the first false start in an attempt to slow down the rest of the field.

"What is gamesmanship?" said Jon Drummond, the retired sprinter who now coaches Tyson Gay. "They don't throw people out of the 10,000 because somebody pushed somebody's hip. It's called adrenaline. You have adrenaline rushing because they want the gun to fire. I think it's part of the sport. I think it's part of the drama. It's a good thing to talk about. But hopefully we'll get back to" the old rule.

Chinese on board for plunge at perfection

By ASSOCIATED PRESS in London

China is perfect on the diving board and the medals podium.

The world's diving superpower completed a sweep of the synchronized events at the Olympics on Wednesday, winning the men's 3m springboard and putting China halfway toward taking all the gold medals.

The Chinese also won the men's 10m platform and women's 3m and 10m synchro golds.

"I think Chinese divers have done a great job so far," Qin Kai said through a translator. "We have four golds now and they all came with perfect performances."

Qin and partner Luo Yutong led all six rounds of the final, totaling 477.00 points. It was Qin's second straight springboard synchro title, having won the event four years ago in Beijing with a different partner. The Chinese won seven of eight gold medals at their home Olympics.

"Our team leaders told us that we were the closest country to win all the medals (in Beijing)," Luo said. "Of course, there's a lot of pressure but they told us to only worry about ourselves. Be ourselves. Don't worry about the sweep. Showcase the best of China diving to the whole world, that's what we've got to do."

Qin pumped his fist as he stepped up to the top spot on the podium. Luo was competing in his first Olympics, although he won a world championship in synchro springboard last year.

Ilya Zakharov and Evgeny Kuznetsov of Russia took the silver at 459.63. It was the country's 100th silver since it resumed competing at the Olympics as a single nation at the 1994 Lillehammer Games.

Zakharov and Kuznetsov stopped during the medalists parade to dip their medals into the diving well.

"It's a Russian tradition," Zakharov said. "We do that so we'll get more medals. If you put your medals in the water, you'll get more medals out of the water."

Kristian Ipsen and Troy Dumais of the US earned the bronze (446.70).

It was the first medal of Dumais' long career in his fourth Olympics, equaling Greg Louganis for most appearances by a male US diver. The 33-year-old Californian finished fourth in the event at the 2000 Sydney Games partnering his brother Justin. They missed out on a medal after botching their last dive.

Qin and Luo led the second-place Americans by just 7.02 points after four dives.

But the Chinese hit their toughest dive of the final in the fifth round. They scored 104.88 points for a forward 4 1/2 somersault tuck, with a 3.8 degree of difficulty. They barely made a splash entering the water and emerged from the pool to see the judges awarded them scores ranging from 8.5 to 9.5 for synchronization.

"I tried to tell my partner to relax and don't be nervous," Qin said. "In the second half of the competition I had a bellyache because I was still a little bit nervous."

Ipsen and Dumais also went for their hardest dive — worth a 3.5 degree of difficulty — but managed just 84.00 points on mostly scores of 8.0. That allowed the Chinese to increase their lead to 27.90 points going into their final dive.

Qin and Luo got outscored by the Russians in the last round — 100.32 to 89.10 — but they proved no threat to China's superiority.

Zakharov and Kuznetsov, third behind China and the US after the next-to-last round, rallied for the silver on their forward 4 1/2 somersault tuck.



China's Luo Yutong (left) and Qin Kai enter the water during the men's synchronized 3m springboard final at the Aquatics Centre on Wednesday.

DAVID GRAY / REUTERS