



China's Li Xiaoxia pumps her fist during her table tennis match against compatriot Ding Ning at the London Games at the Excel Centre on Wednesday. Li won the gold, 4-1.

CHUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

A little bit of China never hurts

Many other countries' rosters dotted with former national team players

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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They might be wearing other nations' flags, but half the 16 players in the women's singles table tennis tournament at the London Olympics are former Chinese national or provincial team members.



Most hit a wall in their progress in China and found homes on teams that gave them a clearer path the Olympics.

One problem: Are they blocking the development of young players on their new teams?

Maybe. Maybe not. Donald Parker was head coach of England's squad at three Olympics, from 1988-96.

"It's great to have fantastic players from abroad so the young guns can learn from them," he told China Daily on Monday.

"There will be the downside. If I

was replaced by some Chinese player, the negative way (to look at it) is to complain it's not fair. But the key is to treat it positively.

"They will be great practice partners. They can improve the level of the country. You have to get the best out of it, and then you can benefit."

Liu Na is the only Chinese player on Britain's team.

Having grown up in Northeast China's Liaoning province, Liu went to Northern Ireland in 2000 to play in a tournament and returned the following year to coach.

She made it her home and obtained British citizenship in 2008.

"I came back in 2001 to coach in schools and clubs. I was also learning English. I really liked it here in Britain," she said.

"It was different from my home in China. Initially, the level was low, and there weren't that many schools involved. But after 10 years we have many more people playing

"I didn't hear any opposing voices against naturalizing Chinese players. And the fans chanted for me hard, as well."

WU JIABAO
NATIVE CHINESE PLAYER
REPRESENTING GERMANY AT
THE LONDON GAMES



table tennis."

Competing in the team event, Liu said it's always been her dream to play in the Olympics.

Wu Jiabao had similar motivations.

Wu, 35, went to a German club to continue her career after graduating from the East China University of Science and Technology, dreaming of the Olympics.

"I didn't have a chance to be recruited into the national team because the competition is too tough (in China)," said Wu, who used to be a member of the Zhejiang provincial squad.

"The decision was a hard one, but I

am happy that I've attended the Olympics twice. If I stayed in China, it would have been impossible."

Wu finished 17th in the singles competition at the Beijing Games.

She began studying German based on her English. Wu said the country is more accepting than she'd anticipated, and she has made a number of local friends.

"They don't take it that way (being unhappy that I'm on the team)," Wu said.

"If you beat them decently on the court, they will respect you and try to learn from you. I didn't hear any

opposing voices against naturalizing Chinese players. And the fans chanted for me hard, as well."

A renowned European urged other players to accept the influx of Chinese.

"I don't think most of the countries welcome the Chinese, but it's really wrong that you say it's bad," said Austrian Werner Schlager.

"It's wrong because you don't use it and learn from it. Who's the No 1 country in terms of knowledge of table tennis? China. So we should learn from and use their players."

Meanwhile, the overseas troops have been giving China headaches.

With a team made up entirely of former Chinese players — including top 10 players Li Jiawei and Feng Tianwei — Singapore's women's team stunned China at the 2010 Moscow Worlds to grab the title, and will expect at least a podium finish in London.

Still, China will be tough to beat.

"I still have a strong feeling that China will sweep all the gold. But they are already beginning to help other countries, and it's vital for the sport," said Peter Hubner, a Press-Agency Germany sports reporter who has been following Chinese table tennis for 20 years.

Americans nail down rich nerd demographic

By **CHEN XIANGFENG**
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The United States table tennis team might not be winning all its matches, but it's definitely winning some big fans.

Former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates was on hand when Ariel Hsing of the US lost to China's Li Xiaoxia on Monday in the third round at the London Olympics.

With all four members of the team being of Chinese descent, the team has also become a topic of conversation among fans and the media in China.

Only Hsing made it as far as the third round.

"She's gotten herself up to top level and to do that at 16 (years old) means she's got the potential to be as good as anyone," Gates said.

"I've known her for seven years, and she was looking forward to getting into the Olympics, she was very excited about that."

"Getting through to the third round and just continuing improving — she's great."

Though they all grew up in the US, the players' heroes are Chinese stars.

Even without a medal, the young team provides some hope the US might become a contender in the not-too-distant future.

Timothy Wang is the only man on the team and, at the age of 20, is its oldest member.

He began playing at age 4 and won the US national championship in 2010.

He lost in the preliminaries, but — this time — just being at the Olympics was good enough.

"I'm really pleased to be here," he said. "It's an amazing experience for me. When I came out into the arena I had goose bumps from the cheering of the crowd. Playing here is like being on center court the whole time."

As a Chinese-American, Wang was invited to China earlier this year as part of the 40th anniversary of the Ping-Pong Diplomacy relations between the US and China.

He played an exhibition with former world and Olympic champion Wang Liqin.

"It was cool to be part of it," he said. "It's also an honor to help improve the exchange between the two countries, both in sports and culture."

His three female teammates have grown to be quite tightly knit, acting like siblings as they navigate London and the Games together.

They will start work in the women's team competition on Friday.

Hsing is the eldest of the three 16-year-olds and has become the leader after a series of strong performances in international competition.



Ariel Hsing of the United States competes at the London Olympics.

SERGEI GRITS / ASSOCIATED PRESS

The daughter of Chinese immigrants is expected to do what no American has done: win a table-tennis medal.

She was impressive in her third-round match, forcing second-seeded Li to 2-2 before losing.

"It's such a huge confidence booster when I just let go and play the way I should play," she said. "It really shows me I can compete with the world's best. This is a really big stepping-stone. That is just great."

Her parents both played table tennis in China.

They took her along to a local table tennis club in Palo Alto, Cali-

fornia, where a coach noticed she had a talent for the sport.

Hsing, who at 15 became the youngest women's national champion in US history in 2010, maintains close ties to China, where she trained periodically between the ages of 8 and 11.

Erica Wu and Lily Zhang chalked the trip up as a victory from the moment they set foot in the Athletes' Village.

"Playing the sport is fun. We feel great just being here. We do not think too much about our results. Just come out, relax and enjoy the game," said Zhang, who was eliminated in the first round.



HOTONWEB

@Lin Qingfeng
"Finally, revenge!"
Chinese weightlifter Lin Qingfeng, after winning the men's 69kg category

@Qian Hong
"The era of Ye Shiwen has come."
Former Chinese swimmer Qian Hong on Ye's second gold at the London Games

@Chen Ruolin
"Teacher He, why didn't you send congratulations to me? I have been waiting for a long time. Unfair! Unfair! @He Jiong!"
Chinese diver Chen Ruolin deriding He Jiong, a popular Chinese TV host, for not praising her victory

@Wang Hao
"Uh... Are you OK, Tianjin? Allow me to say — my house is located on the first floor."
Chinese diver Wang Hao, on the recent rainstorms in his hometown, Tianjin

@Weightlifter Zhang Jie
"My friends, thank you for your support and encouragement! So thankful! But there is still one thing I feel so sorry about — singer Zhang Jie has been disturbed by many people due to my thoughtlessness. I'm sorry!"
Chinese weightlifter Zhang Jie on his performance in London

@Gymnastics Lu Bo
"Our girls shed the tears of regret, not of failure. Adjust well. There are still competitions ahead! Once you try your best, nothing is regretful. You know many other factors also influenced your scores. Don't worry! At least you don't need to marry Guo Weiyang, right? Hold on! Come on! You are the best!"
Chinese gymnast Lu Bo on the women's team losing the team event in London

@ladygaga
"The Olympics is the best ever. But I went through a whole pack of tissues last night, watching hard working athletes achieve their dreams."
International pop icon Lady Gaga on the Olympics and the athletes



@Tian Tingting
"Ye Shiwen breaks a record again! But someone said she has taken drugs. Why does this always happen when the Chinese win a gold? Why weren't there any questions about Phelps when he won eight gold medals in 2008? Hold on, Ye Shiwen! Hold on, China!"
China's former synchronized swimmer Tian Tingting talking about Ye's second gold

@MichaelPhelps
"Number 18 and 19 for my career so far!!! Omg I'm speechless right now!"
US swimmer Michael Phelps on becoming the most decorated Olympic athlete with 19 medals

@MarioBalotelli
"Michael Phelps, the fastest swimmer in water. Ashley Young, the fastest swimmer on land."
Manchester City striker Mario Balotelli appreciating Michael Phelps' feat, but still taking a shot at Manchester United's Ashley Young

@lolojones
"Even Rappers want bling bling like @MichaelPhelps."
US 100m hurdler Lolo Jones congratulating Michael Phelps

@DeronWilliams
"Has anyone seen my shoe? I lost it in the 3rd quarter."
US basketball player Deron Williams lost one shoe in the third quarter of the US' second game, a 110-63 victory over Tunisia

@WayneRooney
"Why is every news channel I'm watching trying to find faults with everything at Olympics. Just enjoy it. I think it's been great."
British soccer player Wayne Rooney