



## FACE OF PAIN

PHOTO BY HASSAN AMMAR / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nigeria's Felix Expo competes during the men's 77kg Group B weightlifting competition at the 2012 London Olympics on Wednesday.

## offtrack ...

## FISHING FOR COMPLIMENTS



Niger's first Olympic rower trained in a fishing boat and fell into the water the first time he stepped into the real thing.

Hamadou Djibo Issaka, who only took up rowing in May, has become a fan favorite at the Olympics, despite finishing way off the pace in all three races so far.

The 35-year-old, a former national 50m freestyle swimmer, may have been unperturbed when he fell out of his boat and is somewhat out of his depth at the Eton Dorney rowing venue, west of London.

But the crowds have warmed to his Olympic spirit and gritty determination, and have taken him to their hearts, roaring him on to the finish line in the 2,000m single sculls.

His times are getting slower — he clocked 8:25.56 in Saturday's heat, 8:39.66 in the repechage on Sunday, and 9:07.99 on Tuesday.

The wildcard has one race left to go as the bottom places out of 33 are decided — not that the result will be in doubt.

"I'm very happy with the attention I'm getting. It gives me a lot of courage," he said.

## FAN EDUCATION 101

A goal in soccer needs no explaining. An ace in tennis speaks for itself. But is a 9.9 in air rifle good or bad? Shooting crowds at the Olympics are being given a crash course on the sport.

Spectators in the packed stands at London's Royal Artillery Barracks are shown videos explaining the sport, have a speaker to give them further guidance and even a commentator to help them understand what's going on.

It's the most comprehensive package ever provided to Olympic shooting crowds, who might otherwise sit there baffled as to what's going on in the technical sport.

In the shotgun events there is even a chance for some people to handle the targets so they can understand what the competitors are aiming at.

## NOT MUCH TIME TO MOURN

A bloody movie theater massacre cast a shadow over Aurora, Colorado, but the golden Olympic performance of local teenager Missy Franklin has proved a light in the darkness.

The 17-year-old high school senior with an open smile was a minor local star before she set off for her first Olympic Games in London, but she has since set the swimming world alight and lightened the mood in her US hometown.

Franklin attends high school in Aurora, the town where earlier this month a crazed gunman opened fire at a midnight showing of a new Batman film and killed 12 moviegoers, and lives in nearby Centennial, where he is on trial.

She heard about the shootings in London, where she was preparing for the event of her young life, and spoke from the heart.

"Every single race I'm going to have that Colorado incident back on my mind. It's such a terrible thing and I'm so shaken by it. They're in my thoughts this entire process," she said.



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## 'Thunder' plans to strike twice

## Lei Sheng hopes to move past his individual foil gold to team victory

By TANG ZHE

tangzhe@chinadaily.com.cn

With an individual men's foil under his belt, China's fencer Lei Sheng is looking forward to a double in London, his second Olympic Games.

The 28-year-old, whose name has the same pronunciation as the Chinese word for "thunder", broke

the European fencers' 116-year monopoly on the title since the first Olympics in 1896 by beating Egyptian fencer Alaaeldin Abouelkassem in the men's individual foil final on Wednesday.

"I believe this gold medal will be a great boost to China's men's foil team," he said.

"We still have the team match, and we'll compete as hard as we can."

Lei finished eighth in his first Olympics in Beijing four years ago. Because he was blamed for a lack of mental control in crucial matches, Lei believes his first Olympic experience has made him a cooler-headed and, ultimately, better fencer in London.

"This is a very important moment in my life," Lei said.

"I didn't expect to achieve this result, and we're also not the favorites in others' eyes. I told myself I wouldn't allow any reason for regret this time. And I told myself I could go much further.

"I think my first Olympic experience in 2008 helped me become more mature and stronger mentally. I feel my skill and mentality have reached a

higher level since the Beijing Games."

Lei's title on Wednesday is a joy for his coach Wang Haibin, a two-time men's team foil silver medalist at the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens Games.

Wang teamed up with Dong Zhaozhi and Ye Chong — China's "Three Musketeers" — and the trio made their name by winning silver at the 1999 Worlds.

But their Olympic sojourns were

tainted with bitter memories.

Their silvers in Sydney and Athens were partly due to a few disputed referee calls.

"China has always been at the world's top level in the men's foil, but we had no good results to prove ourselves," Wang said.

"Lei performed perfectly this time, and I'm very happy he won such a valuable gold."

But the 38-year-old said he is not satisfied with a single Olympic title.

"Our fencers are more confident

after their success at last year's World Championships, and we have done some intensive training in preparation for the Olympics, especially in terms of adjusting their mentalities," Wang said.

"Fencing comes from Europe, but even the strong Italians are human. We have beat them in many competitions.

"All three of our athletes are very competitive and won't let any chance slip away. Everyone wants to win the gold, and we've struggled for four years to claim it."



China's Lei Sheng celebrates his victory over Egypt's Alaaeldin Abouelkassem at the end of their men's foil gold medal bout on Tuesday at the ExCeL Centre.

ZENG YI / XINHUA

## Samaranch Jr gushes over the Chinese

By ZHANG CHUNYAN

and CECILY LIU

in London

China's athletes represent their country in a wonderful way, Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr, executive board member of the International Olympic Committee, told China Daily in an exclusive interview in London.

Samaranch Jr, the 52-year-old son of the former president of the IOC, also described the Chinese Olympic team as being "very strong", which is borne out by the fact it currently leads the gold medals tally.

"You have very good athletes in all sports, and swimming is no exception. It was going to come sooner or later, it's coming now," he said of China's success in the Olympic pool.

"Swimming has started with a lot of world records, and the (Chinese) athletes have been able to perform to the best of their ability," he said.

Sun Yang became the first Chinese male swimmer to earn Games gold

when he won the 400m freestyle in an Olympic record time.

And sensation Ye Shiwen, 16, stunned the world twice with her record-breaking performance in the 400m individual medley and the 200m individual medley.

US swimming coach John Leonard said Ye's performance was "suspicious" and brought back "a lot of awful memories."

Some Western media described Chinese athletes as "robots" that were being prepared to win medals.

But in Samaranch Jr's mind, "I think there's nothing bad I can say about Chinese athletes. They are extraordinary young people. They do represent your country with a lot of honor.

"They are extraordinary ambassadors of China and the Chinese way of life, and the Chinese culture."

He also lauded China's success in a growing number of sports.

"Your medals are coming from a wide variety of sports. That gives an idea of the depth of Chinese sports,"



Antonio Samaranch Jr

Samaranch Jr said.

Even so, Samaranch Jr also noted frankly, "You see that in most team sports, your country still has more work to do; there is a lot of room for improvement.

"However, in individual sports you are mostly up there in most of the sports right now."

When asked about his impression so far of the London Olympics, Samaranch Jr said, "I think the London Olympics has just started ... so far so good, we are happy."

About the London Olympics opening ceremony, Samaranch Jr commented: "It was a wonderful, wonderful ceremony, a big success."

There have been concerns over whether London's public transport system, the busiest in Europe, would be able to handle the rush of spectators attending the Games.

Samaranch Jr said, "I've been to so many Olympics. I've been going to the summer Olympics since 1992 ... and the first days, transportation is always very difficult. Then it improves, because everybody knows where they are going."

So London is not going to be any different, he said, adding, "the start is difficult, but it's getting better and better."

## REPORTER'S LOG | CECILY LIU

## London fans finally warming up to Games

Sitting among tens of thousands of Britons to watch the men's gymnastics team finals on Wednesday was an ecstatic experience.

Claps and cheers for three hours straight almost deafened me.

And crowds waving the Union Jack flag as they walked out of the O2 Arena made my heart jump with a feeling of festivity.

"Is this the same crowd that moaned and whined about the Olympics just a few weeks earlier?" I asked myself.

I still vividly remember the experience of talking to grumpy grandmothers, who dislike crowds, bankers going on holiday to escape the "mess" and disgruntled commuters wishing the Games were over.

Worse still, the recent news that security contractor 4GS was unable to find enough troops, that the newly opened Emirates Cable Car left tourists suspended in the air for 40 minutes and that transport workers were threatening strikes cast a shadow over the big party.

That's not to mention the unexplained bad weather this year, which some say are creating "the world's wettest Olympics."

But one week into the Games, the transport networks have few delays, lines to get into venues aren't too long and the weather has improved. So, when the music plays, Britons are suddenly waking up to the fact that the Olympics only last for three weeks — so better get on with it.

"This is our third and possibly our last in my lifetime," the man sitting next to me said.

In his eyes, I saw genuine happiness behind an appearance of calmness.

Indeed, Britons are conservative about emotions, as sophistication

and composure are virtues of ladies and gentlemen that date back a long time.

Although things have somewhat changed in today's Britain, one only needs to see the way Britons criticize Americans' constant enthusiasm as "shallow and vulgar" to understand history's influence.

Hence, while the Americans adhere to Barack Obama's slogan "Yes we can", the Britons enjoy the subtle wit of Sir Humphrey Appleby in the BBC sequel *Yes, Prime Minister*.

Added to this historic difference is that Britons generally have a habit of worrying about things going wrong, so they reduce their expectations to prevent potential embarrassment.

But when the Olympics finally arrived and exceeded their expectations, they no longer had time to worry.

Thousands of locals gathered to watch the Games on big screens inside the Olympic Park, Hyde Park, Victoria Park and other dedicated venues.

And when the Olympic road cycling took place last weekend, spectators crowded both sides of the track, from Central London to Surrey, to cheer for their stars.

Indeed, calmness does not equate to insufficiency. While Beijing's Olympics showcased China's best treasures in an extravagant way, London presents an organized and orderly Games in a human fashion.

In this sense, Boris Johnson's vision for London's Olympics to be "understood but confident" is very British.

Like Beijing 2008, I feel certain London 2012 will leave a firm mark in Olympic history.

Contact the writer at cecily.liu@chinadaily.com.cn