

Wu equals medals record with 3m triumph

By ROBERT SMITH in London
Agence France-Presse

China's Wu Minxia won the women's 3m springboard diving gold medal to draw level with Guo Jingjing as the most-decorated diver at the Olympics with six medals on Sunday.

World champion Wu totaled 414.00 points from her five dives to beat teammate He Zi (379.20) and Mexico's Laura Sanchez (362.40).

Wu's victory was China's fifth gold medal from five events as it attempts an unprecedented sweep of all eight diving medals in London.

China won seven out of eight diving events at the Beijing Games four years ago, having won all 10 diving gold medals at last year's Shanghai World Championships.

Wu reeled off an impeccable back 2.5 somersault on her last dive to clinch the gold medal with a score of 85.50.

She led after the opening round with 79.50 for a back 2.5 somersault from Italy's Tania Cragnotto and He.

He nailed 83.70 for a forward 3.5 somersault to take the lead from Wu (79.75) with Cragnotto dropping back to third.

But Wu retrieved the lead with a gem forward 3.5 somersault that netted her 85.25.

Another exquisite dive, a reverse 2.5 somersault, earned Wu 84.00 to give her a 13.50 points buffer over He going into the fifth and final round.

Wu, who won the synchronized 3m springboard with He, made sure of her first individual Olympic gold medal with her showstopper final dive to beat her teammate by 34.80 points.

China begins its bid for a sixth diving gold at the London Games with the preliminaries of the men's 3m springboard on Monday.



China's Wu Minxia (right) poses on the podium with her gold medal alongside silver medalist China's He Zi after winning the women's 3m springboard final on Sunday.

MARTIN BUREAU / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Zhou heaves a world record for gold

By BARNABY CHESTERMAN
in London
Agence France-Presse

China's Zhou Lulu won the women's Olympic over-75kg weightlifting gold with a new world record at the ExCeL Arena on Sunday.

World champion Zhou set a record of 333kg, breaking her old mark from last year's World Championships of 328kg.

She also matched South Korean Jang Mi-ran's world marker of 187kg in the clean and jerk.

And in a stunning competition, European champion Tatiana Kashirina of Russia set a snatch world record of 151kg

as she missed out on gold by just 1 kilo.

Hripsime Khurshudyan of Armenia claimed bronze with a total lift of 294kg.

The competition boiled down to a straight shoot-out between Zhou and the woman she deposed as world champion last year, Kashirina.

The Russian drew first blood as she twice improved on her own world record in the snatch, taking it from 148kg to 151kg.

She lifted 5kg more than Zhou in that section, meaning the Chinese athlete needed to pull something out of the bag in the clean and jerk in order to claim gold.

And as she weighs almost

30kg more than Kashirina, she needed to surpass the Russian's total rather than match it or she would have lost out on body-weight.

From the beginning she put the pressure on Kashirina by lifting 6kg more in her first effort.

That forced Kashirina to match her weights to avoid needing to make two lifts in a row.

Having started with 175kg, she matched Zhou's 181kg with her second lift but when the Chinese heaved 187kg over her head, Kashirina simply could not match her.

Zhou had one more lift to come but failed with her

attempt at 190kg.

Behind the top two, Beijing champion Jang found herself in a battle for bronze with Khurshudyan, in no small part due to Maryam Usman of Nigeria, who was third after the snatch, failing to register any lift in the clean and jerk, three times finding 160kg beyond her means.

Khurshudyan had lifted 3kg more than Jang in the snatch and after lifting 166kg in the clean and jerk, the Korean would have needed to hoist 170kg to take bronze.

The four-time world champion could not manage it and Armenia had its first medal of the competition.



Gold medal winner Zhou Lulu from China competes in the women's +75-kg weightlifting competition on Sunday.

HASSAN AMMAR / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Badminton coach Li's month just got a whole lot better

By CHEN XIANGFENG
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The only thing that could have saved Li Yongbo was gold medals.

His players delivered.

Li, the Chinese badminton coach, who has been attacked the past few days for his game-throwing tactics in the women's doubles group match, was more thrilled than anyone after China scored an unprec-

edented clean sweep of all five golds on offer in London.

"I'm proud of them. They came out to play the final under huge pressure," said Li. "They did it."

World No 1 pair Yu Yang and Wang Xiaoli were among eight players disqualified for trying to lose games in an attempt to secure a better draw for the knockout stage of the women's doubles.

The burden of winning gold was passed on to Zhao Yunlei and Tian Qing.

They beat the distractions — and their Japanese opponents — to win 2-0, giving China its fifth consecutive Olympic title in the event.

A tearful Zhao, who won the mixed doubles gold a day before, admitted she had been carrying a heavy load.

"The pressure was much bigger than playing in the mixed doubles," said Zhao, whose pair was not favored to win the women's doubles after losing to a Danish team in a group match. "I was

scared to lose this gold. I was totally relieved after the victory."

Li, who made a public apology after the scandal, gave credit to Zhao.

"It wasn't easy for her to play the last two days," he said. "Especially the doubles gold — it was one of our target before the Games. After the No 1 pair's disqualification, I know all the global attention was on this match. I'm so glad we were able to make it."

Another piece of good news

for Li was the women's singles title that was won by teenager Li Xuerui.

Li beat compatriot and world No 1 Wang Yihan in her Olympic debut.

She said she felt it was unfair to punish Yu and Wang, but said the gold shows China is still the best, even after losing its top players.

"It's too cruel to them," she said. "It's not easy to prepare for an Olympics. The doubles (medals) should be shared by them."

AMATEUR PLAYERS TO GET SHARE OF THE SPOTLIGHT



China's national badminton team won't get a break after the London Games. It is due to show up at the Red Bull Badminton Tournament final to cheer on some of the

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Amateur badminton players from China and Britain exchange words after a competition in London. A group of Chinese amateurs is battling it out in London with the winners taking on the locals.

best amateurs from China and Britain on Monday in Westminster, London.

The final features a team from Northern China and one from Southern China, the two best amateur teams after months of preliminary and knockout stages in the country.

They will play in men's singles, men's doubles and mixed doubles.

The winning team will then take on an English outfit on a

scale that is usually reserved for badminton's elite.

The English team will be the winner of the Premier A league.

Badminton England commercial director Fiona Young said it will use the competition as an opportunity to encourage more young people to take up the sport, ensuring its growth and development.

CHEN XIANGFENG

Women's beach volleyball duo sails into semifinals

By XINHUA in London

China's Xue Chen and Zhang Xi marched into the semifinals of the Olympics women's beach volleyball tournament after beating an Austrian pair, 21-18, 21-11, on Sunday.

The bronze medalists of the Beijing Olympics played a near flawless game to stun Austrian sisters Doris and Stefanie Schwaiger, who finished fifth in 2008, in 41 minutes as the enthusiastic crowd in a packed Horse Guard Parade venue cheered in awe.

"We played great tonight and the Schwaigers didn't play their best," said China's right-hand defender Xue, the younger of the duo.

"The game was much harder than what it looked like. We know each other well. To confine our attacks with powerful service, that's the way they play with us all the time. We know that and so we paid more attention to receiving, and it worked," said Zhang.

The first set was close with the Schwaigers scoring first and leading at 5-2 before the Chinese rallied to tie 5-5 and took the lead for good at 9-8.

The Chinese then built a four-point lead at 18-14 only to see the Austrians close in 19-18. However, the Schwaigers wasted their chance to pull back as they committed two out-of-court spikes to surrender the set 18-21.

The Chinese dominated in the second set as they soon jumped to 14-7 before pulling away for the victory.

"The Chinese team are really good and they gave us no chance in the second set. We learned a lot of experience from the games, though I'm a little bit sad," said Doris Schwaiger.

Xue and Zhang will face the defending champions American Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh, who beat the Italian team of Greta Cicolari and Marta Menegatti.

"We have played with them seven times, and we have won four times. It's shame we lost to them at the Beijing Games. So, it's very exciting to meet them here. We have walked a long way to reach the semifinals. We have nothing to fear," said Xue.

Losing the opener of the tournament, Xue and Zhang came back strongly to book a top 16 berth with a 2-1 win-loss record during the group stage.