



China's gymnast Chen Yibing celebrates after finishing his routine in the men's rings final at the London Olympic Games on Monday at the North Greenwich Arena. Brazil's Arthur Nabarrete Zanetti won gold, while Chen, the defending champion, took the silver. Italy's Matteo Morandi got bronze.

## Chen bows out silver effort

By IAN RANSOM in London  
Reuters

China's gymnastics captain Chen Yibing kissed his silver medal and beamed at the crowd but admitted to feeling short-changed by the judges when he was pipped by Brazil's Arthur Zanetti for the rings gold in his final Olympic Games on Monday.

The 27-year-old Chen, a three-time Olympic champion dubbed the "King of Rings" by adoring Chinese fans, appeared to have the title sewn up after a strong performance and a solid landing.

He was stunned, however, when the Brazilian, the last competitor to take the rings, scored 15.900 to pip him by 0.1 of a point, despite taking a step back on his landing.

"It's still good, it's a silver medal," the amiable Chen said with a laugh.

"I was a little bit surprised ... Seeing him not stand (perfectly) on the landing, I thought I would have beaten him. But when the score came out he was the winner. But I still have to congratulate him. I really did bring my best today."

Chen kissed the red frame of the apparatus after his routine and waved the "number one" finger at television cameras, but walked out of the arena as runner-up for a prolonged interrogation by a large throng of Chinese reporters. He promptly announced his retirement.

"I decided before these Olympics because my body has a few injuries and there's a lot of new talents coming through," he said.

Chen, who had already taken a men's team gold here last week, injured his knee training in Northern Ireland two weeks before the Games. State media quoted his team as saying it was a "minor" injury but Chen said he had carried the painful injury into the competition.

CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

## Hurdles: Liu Xiang faces a tough field

FROM PAGE 1

Liu has good reason to take it easy, as he already has all the major titles under his belt.

Even the Olympic record of 12.91 was set by Liu — the second fastest man in the world this year after American Aries Merritt — when he won gold at the Athens Games.

The previously injured foot could be a concern once the race begins.

Liu qualified for the final at the London Grand Prix last month, his last race before the Games, but withdrew with a muscle pain in his rib after the semifinals. After the race, Liu flew to Germany to avoid London's weather.

It's a different injury than the Achilles injury that forced him out of the Beijing Games, but it was enough to raise some concerns.

After arriving in London on Friday, Sun said the rib muscle was no longer a problem, but admitted Liu's foot gave him trouble in Germany.

"During the tune-up in Germany, we simulated the Olympics' three-round format and found he felt a bit uncomfortable in his injured foot. It's more intense at the Olympics than other events this season, where he just had to run once," Sun said. "But we used ice and other physical therapy. It went very well, and Liu is now at his best form."

Sun said Liu's return makes the event one of the most anticipated of the Olympic schedule.

"This will be a showdown to watch in the 110m hurdles," he

said. "The sport has produced a golden generation, a group of the best hurdlers competing at the same time. To make it more spectacular, this is likely to be the last Olympics for Liu and also for (Dayron) Robles and some of the best American hurdlers."

### Tough field

It is indeed a strong group. Two of the toughest will be Merritt and Robles.

This year's fastest man, Merritt, has said he can run faster in London, possibly even at a world record pace.

Having clocked 12.93 sec in June at the US Olympic Trials to qualify for the Games and rise to the top spot in the world rankings, Merritt equaled that time on July 13 on a soggy Crystal Palace track at the London Grand Prix and again at the Herculis Monaco meet on July 20.

"This meet gives me confidence going into the Games because I know that I'm able to run in any conditions: rain, cold. I can run in it and I can run fast," Merritt said at that time.

The 2012 indoor world champion in the 60m hurdles and 2005 world junior champion now wants to run even faster.

"Hopefully, I can shave off 0.05, maybe a world record, who knows? You're never going to know when you run a world record because competition and conditions play a huge factor."

"But we already know the competition is there with world champion Jason (Richardson of the US), Liu Xiang and Dayron Robles. So you never know when a record will happen. You



Liu Xiang arrives at Heathrow Airport in London on Friday.

LI GANG / XINHUA

just have to stay consistent and keep tracking."

Reigning champion Robles, who set the world record of 12.87 in June 2008, two months before he won gold at the Beijing Games, has not had an ideal preparation for the defense of his title.

He had to skip the world indoors because of a lower back injury, then missed two prestigious American outdoor meetings in Eugene, Oregon, and

New York with another injury, this time to his lead leg.

So the form of the 25-year-old, who will be bidding to become the first man since American great Roger Kingdom in 1984 and 1988 to successfully defend his title in the event, will not be seen until the first heat.

Coach Santiago Antunez is confident he will defend his title successfully, even against a resurgent Liu.

"He is the Olympic champion,

and the fastest in the world in the event," Antunez said last month. "If he loses in London in what is a really tough competition, it will be because of a problem that occurs on the day."

Robles faced Liu on the track once this year, in an indoor meeting in Birmingham in February, over the shorter distance of 60m. Liu won.

Contact the writer at chenxiang-feng@chinadaily.com.cn.

## QUOTE ME ON THAT

I'm a fan of Liu Xiang! I hope he can have an ordinary heart this time and try to win the gold medal. It's a surprise to know the 110m hurdles final is taking place on Aug 8. Maybe it'll bring good luck to him.

HE XUA, Beijing citizen

"It was an absolutely unexpected and shocking scene for me in 2008. Looking at the distinct and special number '1356' on his back at that time, personally, I interpreted it as a combination of China's 1.3 billion people and 56 different ethnic groups. You can imagine the pressure and burden he was shouldering. As for this year, I just wanted him to do his best, instead of demanding and expecting a gold medal from him."

RICHARD SUN, student at the National Junior College of Singapore

"Honestly, I think it will be quite difficult for him to win the 110m hurdles gold medal. But, whenever the 110m hurdles final takes place, every Chinese will support him and hope for him to win. He will still be a national hero and cultural icon regardless of the result. By returning from injury and becoming one of the best athletes in the Olympics again, he has already succeeded."

ZHAO BICHENG, a student at the University College London

"I always have confidence in Liu Xiang. He is much more pressure-resistant than normal people. It would be a good thing for him to regain his glory, but it's also acceptable if he can't. You'll never know what he is suffering if you are not an athlete."

MENG JIE, student at the Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing



China's paddler Wang Hao (left) and coach Liu Guoliang salute the audience after Wang's final match against compatriot Zhang Jike in the men's singles.

LI FENG / GETTY IMAGES

## Silver's OK, but gold sure would be better

By WU YING and TANG ZHE

Wang Hao has plenty of silver medals, thank you very much.

The Chinese table tennis player, who last week made it three straight Olympics with a runner-up finish, now has his eye on team gold.

Last Thursday, world No 1 Zhang Jike defeated Wang, 18-16, 11-5, 11-6, 10-12, 13-11 in the final.

Wang, tired and disappointed, remained calm as Zhang

hugged him and invited him to hold the national flag together in front of the camera after the match.

For Wang, an Olympic gold medal would be the last piece of a Grand Slam. He won the World Table Tennis Championships in 2009, and the Table Tennis World Cup in 2007, 2008 and 2010.

Wang won silver in Athens in 2004, defeated by South Korea's Ryu Seung-min. Four years later in Beijing, he was defeated by compatriot Ma Lin.

"Three Olympic Games in 12 years. It hasn't been easy for me," Wang said at the post-match press conference, admitting the ups and downs have tested his perseverance.

A smiling Wang said he remains as strong as ever, but hates disappointing his fans.

"I think my fans might be more disappointed with the result than I was," he said. "But I've really done my best. I hope they can be as strong as I am and move on with me."

Liu Guoliang, head coach of

China's men's team, said he was proud of Wang, whose dedication helped the country remain dominant.

"Wang Hao didn't win the gold medal," Liu said. "But he entered the final three times. This is also something unprecedented. His perseverance embodies the Olympic spirit."

Wang said he put the loss behind him and is focused on the team event.

"I hope my hard work can be constantly recognized by

the coaches," he said. "The loss won't influence my spirit. I will spare no effort to do better and win the team competition with my teammates."

China defeated Russia 3-1 on Saturday, despite Wang Hao's and teammate Ma Long's losses in the third round of doubles. China went on and swept Singapore 3-0 in the quarterfinals. It beat Germany 3-1 on Monday with a trip to the final at stake.

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