

Russian diver ends gold sweep dreams

Zakharov's final plunge pips China's Qin for title in men's 3m springboard

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE in London

Russia's Ilya Zakharov ended China's hopes of a clean sweep of all eight diving gold medals with a thrilling victory in the men's 3m springboard final at the Olympics on Tuesday.

Zakharov pumped his fist in the air when he scored a competition high 104.50 points on his last dive to claim the gold medal from Chinese pair Qin Kai and defending champion He Chong.

The 21-year-old from Leningrad kept his nerve to deny Qin the gold with a superlative closing forward four and a half somersault that brought a huge roar in the Aquatics Centre and left Qin in tears.

Zakharov totaled 555.90 from his six dives to take the gold ahead of Qin (541.75) and He (524.15).

Chinese divers had won all five events leading up to the men's springboard final and were looking to go one better than their seven out of eight at the Beijing Games four years ago.

But they were denied the perfecta again, this time by Zakharov's series of brilliant dives off the springboard.

Qin only led Zakharov by 1.25 points into the last dive, and his 89.10 for a reverse two and a half somersault with one and a half twists proved not enough against the resilient Russian.

Zakharov, who took silver in the 3m synchronized springboard with Evgeny Kuznetsov behind China, separated the two Chinese divers as second to He among the top qualifiers after the morning semifinals.

And he continued his blazing form in the final, handling the pressure of the closing round to give Russia the gold.



Gold medalist Ilya Zakharov from Russia celebrates after the men's 3-meter springboard diving final at the Aquatics Centre in the Olympic Park on Tuesday. China's Qin Kai won silver while his compatriot He Chong clinched bronze.

MICHAEL SOHN / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Scoring leaves fans and coach angry

By WUYING and TANG ZHE

Chinese head coach Huang Yubin called Aug 6, 2012, "a dark day in gymnastics' history", as disputed scoring deprived China's "king of the rings", Chen Yibing, the Olympic gold medal on Monday.

Controversy erupted when Chen, the defending champion, finished his routine with sound execution and a stable landing, while his 22-year-old Brazilian rival Arthur Nabarrete stumbled during the landing but edged Chen out by one-tenth of a point with a score of 15.900.

China was prevented from appealing because the two shared the same 6.8 difficulty and rules stipulate execution scores cannot be altered.

Huang later lashed out at the referees' judgment in his column on the popular portal Sina.com.

"I think most people in the world respected and cheered wholeheartedly for my gymnasts — but, today, the referees didn't," Huang wrote.

"They chose to let the Brazilian gymnast, who had an obviously flawed routine, step onto the highest podium, which I believe not only hurt the Chinese gymnastics team and Chen but also all the world's gymnastics fans.

"Referees are the judges on the sports field. They should be strict but impartial. But they made inconceivable judgments.

"Let me ask: Will you feel ashamed when you recall this final years later? Do you think Chen will have another four years? Will you feel guilty when you see my gymnasts' knees full of wounds?"

The coach said Chen delivered the most perfect routine of his life for the world but was denied the championship he deserved.

"Actually, I feel bitter inside, but I did my best — even better than when I was the champion in Beijing," said Chen, who kissed the apparatus after his routine.

"But what can I do? Fight the referees?" he said, smiling.

But many who watched Chen's flawless routine were upset and voiced their discontent.

The women's uneven bars silver medalist, He Kexin, and her teammate, Yao Jinnan, said they couldn't believe the result.

Iordan Iovtchev, Bulgarian six-time Olympian and its gymnastics federation president, said: "The Chinese didn't even twitch, and I think he was the best. The judges probably were looking for a little variety."

Italian coach Maurizio Allievi said: "He (Nabarrete) can't match Chen and Morandi (bronze medalist) at all. Chen is better than Morandi in his routine execution."

The 28-year-old had been expected to retain his crown in his best event after he led his team to defend the title earlier.

Chen will retire after the national games next year and finish graduate courses at Beijing Physical Education University.

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China's Chen Yibing kisses the apparatus after claiming silver in the men's rings on Monday.

CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Aussie Meares crashes British cycling party at velodrome

Rivalry for the ages comes to an end in women's sprint final

By ASSOCIATED PRESS in London

Anna Meares of Australia spoiled the British party at the London Velodrome on Tuesday, winning the Olympic gold medal in the women's sprint 2-0 over defending champion Victoria Pendleton and settling for good a decade-long rivalry.

It was sweet revenge for Meares, who lost to the British rider in the final four years ago in Beijing. She denied Pendleton a third gold medal, which would have made her the most successful British female athlete at the Olympics.

Pendleton has said she will retire after the London Games.

"I am just so relieved right now, I am just so overwhelmed with emotion," Pendleton said. "I would have loved to have won in my final race. At the same time, I am just so glad I am done and I can move on."

Guo Shuang of China won the bronze with a 2-0 win over Kristina Vogel of Germany on the final day of track competition.

The 31-year-old Pendleton thought she had got off to a strong start in the final after beating Meares by one thousandth of a second. But the defending champion was re-

legated a few minutes later for coming out of the sprinter lane.

She never looked in contention in the second bout after Meares track stand to force her to go in front. Meares then rounded Pendleton on the outside to claim the gold medal in track cycling's marquee event.

Meares punched the air before crossing the line, then shed her visor before joining hands with Pendleton, her greatest rival over the past decade.

"Victoria's such a hard-fought opponent and she's dominated the sport for so long," Meares said. "It's been such a difficult challenge and to be able to win the Olympic title for me, it's so special. I've tried so much and worked so hard for a long period of time and I've asked a lot of people around me to do the same so it feels like this is a just reward."

Pendleton, who had been relegated in the team sprint before she bounced back with the gold medal in the keirin, was in tears but found some consolation when the capacity crowd started to chant "Vicky, Vicky, Vicky!"

"I am glad it got to that stage because I believe she's the best rider on the field," Pendleton said. "Anna and myself in the final. We have met many a time. I wish her all the best. I am glad to say that this is the last time I have



CATHAL MCNAUGHTON / REUTERS

Australia's Anna Meares celebrates with a team official after women's sprint final at the velodrome on Tuesday. Meares won the gold medal.



I am glad to say that this is the last time I have to go through this."

VICTORIA PENDLETON
BRITISH CYCLIST

to go through this."

Meares had started the first leg on the outside of the track. She produced her effort in the final lap to move next to Pendleton in the final curve. Meares touched her rival with her left arm in the home stretch in a furious sprint to the line and officials needed a photo finish before announcing Pendleton had won the leg by one thousand

of a second, the smallest possible margin.

British cycling director of performance Dave Brailsford was then seen chatting with officials seconds before the speaker said that Pendleton was relegated.

"I was really annoyed because I was sure that she touched me and it caused me to move up," Pendleton said. "I cannot believe twice in one competition that I have been relegated, disqualified, it's unheard of. It's a bit of a surprise. It did knock my confidence a bit, I have to say."

Meares and Pendleton have multiple world titles and a bitter rivalry that escalated at the 2006 World Championships in Bordeaux, France, where the British rider accused her rival of cutting her off in a keirin race.

For Yang, life after sports is all positive

By DIAO YING in London
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When Sun Yang broke the world record and won the men's 1,500m freestyle, it was Yang Yang, an International Olympic Committee official and the winner of China's first Winter Olympics gold medal, who presented the gold to him.

"Having experienced the moment of winning myself, I felt touched and honored when presenting the medal," said the 36-year-old former world champion in speed skating. "Although when I won, I did not really pay attention to whom was presenting the medal — I was too happy."

A decade after Yang Yang's speed skating victory, it looks like she is still on top of every aspect of her life, including motherhood.

She is in London with her 3-month-old son. As an IOC official, she presents medals three times a day during the Games. During a break between medal celebrations recently, she quickly took off her stiletto heels, put on some slippers and excused herself for five minutes to breast-feed her son.

She not only works for the IOC; she has established a skating center in Shanghai and a charity to help retired athletes develop their post-sports careers.

Jobs for China's retired athletes have long been a major issue. Many athletes today face a difficult life after they retire. Under the current State system, athletes pick their sports at an early age of about six or even younger. They then devote their entire lives to the sport. School time is limited. In recent years, there have been news of athletes selling

off their medals to gain a quick buck.

"Athletes usually retire at around 28. For a normal person, that is the best time in one's life; but for athletes, it feels like reaching the peak of their lives and they do not know what to do afterwards," she said.

What also hurts athletes is the burden of winning a gold. If one can win, they will have glory and sponsorships. If they lose, they risk wasting years of training.

Yang said she always has a sense of crisis. When she was an athlete, she read of sad stories of her teammates who lost in competition and tried to avoid being caught up in the hype. Her sense of crisis, she said, possibly comes from her family, where her father passed away when she was young.

"I learned since I was very small that there is nobody to rely on. I can only depend on myself," she said. "The most important thing for a person is independence. Only with independence can one get dignity."

Yang said change for her has not been easy.

"I had a quick temper, and I do everything very fast. Now I have learned to be patient and to be reasonable," she said.

Yang said many athletes are well prepared for a normal everyday job — they just don't know their own potential. They are disciplined and hard working, and research shows that even their communication skills, which is often underestimated, are better than average.

"You have to communicate with your coach and cooperate with teammates to distinguish yourself in sports," she said.