

Deng dazzles on beam

China secures its fourth gymnastics gold medal

By REUTERS in London

China's Deng Linlin beat her compatriot Sui Lu, the world champion, to the Olympic balance beam title on the final day of artistic gymnastics at the London Games on Tuesday.

Deng, herself world champion on the apparatus in 2009, gave China its fourth gymnastics gold medal of the Games, an hour after Feng Zhe had won the parallel bars title.

Sui, competing first, pulled off a difficult routine but cried on her coach's shoulder after Deng surpassed her by 0.1 points with a score of 15.600 at the North Greenwich Arena.

Aly Raisman snatched the bronze medal from 2004 champion Catalina Ponor of Romania on a tiebreak after the judges increased the difficulty element of her score following a review requested by the United States team, upping her final mark.

While Ponor, who came out of retirement last year, left the arena stony-faced after being demoted to fourth, the American was all smiles having just missed out on all-around bronze because of the same tie-break rule on Aug 2.

Introduced at the behest of the International Olympic Committee to rule out double medals, the system takes into account execution scores to separate two gymnasts who accumulate the same total.

The rule gave the edge to Raisman by 0.3.

Deng was part of the Chinese line-up who won team gold in Beijing four years ago.

The 20-year-old gymnast produced a routine full of difficult combinations, finishing with two backflips, a double-pike dismount and a huge smile as she saluted the judges.

She said the gold medal compensated for disappointment in the team event when she fell from the beam and China finished fourth.

"After the team event I was depressed," she told reporters through an interpreter. "Motivation for this event came from my coach and other teammates



Chinese gold medalist Feng Zhe celebrates with the national flag, as bronze medalist Hamilton Sabot from France walks behind him after the results were declared during the artistic gymnastics men's apparatus finals for the parallel bars.



China's Deng Linlin performs during the women's beam final on Tuesday.

so I was able to recover and prepare for this."

American Gabby Douglas, who dazzled to win the all-around title, finished seventh after missing her footing on a half-turn and swinging underneath the 10-cm wide beam before falling off.

All-around silver medalist Victoria Komova also came off, remounted and then sat down on landing. She finished last of the eight finalists, with 13.166. Komova, daughter of 1985 world team champion Vera Kolesnikova, said: "I was not very lucky at these Olympics. I

failed them 100 percent.

"I don't know if I will continue sports," added the 17-year-old, who cried after finishing second in the all-around and team events last week.

"I will go back home, take some time off, and think through the situation. My par-

ents say everything is OK, but I don't feel that."

Larisa Iordache, who helped Romania win team bronze, came into the final as a replacement for injured compatriot Diana Bulimar but she also fell, topping off the end of the apparatus as she finished sixth.

Rocky road reaches its end

Donewald's tumultuous tenure in China ends badly with five straight losses, Sun Xiaochen reports.

It didn't have a happy ending, but it still left Bob Donewald smiling.

Donewald, who took over the Chinese national basketball team in April 2010, came to the end of his contract on Monday as the team's Olympic run ended with its fifth defeat in a row in the group stage at the London Games.

It was the team's worst result in recent history, after it cracked the top eight at both the Athens and Beijing Games.

"I am a little bit proud, a little bit happy and I left with a smile," the Michigan native said as his tenure with the team came to an end following a 90-58 loss to Britain.

Even if he would've liked to see better results, Donewald succeeded in achieving what he set out to do - reaching the Olympics.

He spent five years as a head coach and general manager in the British Basketball League (BBL) in the 1990s, leading three clubs to the finals of the national championship series. He moved back to the US and became an assistant coach with the New Orleans Hornets.

When he was 25, his father - Bob Donewald Sr, himself a well-known college basketball coach - asked him if he'd prefer to coach in college or the NBA.

The Olympics, was Donewald's answer.

Now that he's done it, he said he has no regrets about his often-tumultuous three years in China.

"It's been an honor for me to be with China in basketball the past three years," he said at the post-game news conference.

"My son has learned some Chinese and my wife (picked up the language better than I did). We had a lot of fun, and I met a lot of people here I can say are like family."

He traveled a rocky road to reach that peaceful ending, beginning with his first major tournament, the 2010 World Championship.

Fans and media immediately questioned his tactical ability after China placed 16th, its worst finish in 32 years.

He led the injury-plagued squad to the 2010 Asian Games championship but still faced critics who doubted he could lead the team to the 2011 title and Asia's only Olympic berth.

He succeeded again, guiding China past Jordan in the final, only to be met with another wave of skepticism following a 1-point victory.

Many fans disliked his signature defensive style, which frequently led to a high number of fouls. And his motion offense was slammed as nothing more than one-on-one battles set up for the team's only consistent scorer, Yi Jianlian.

Not all of this was fair, of course. Donewald was handed an aging team whose younger players were not ready to help it compete at the highest level.

Outsized and overpowered by every group opponent, China's average deficit was 25.2 points by the time it was knocked out, and it ranked last in rebounds, assists and points among the 12 teams.

On the other hand, Donewald had run out of ways to make the team more competitive.

Su Qun, the editor-in-chief of Basketball Pioneers, wrote on his micro blog: "Mentally, Donewald helped the team to be more aggressive than ever, but tactically he didn't bring any improvement."

Another well-known com-



Coach Bob Donewald (right) led guard Chen Jianghua and the Chinese national team to a somewhat surprising Olympic berth but couldn't do much once there.

mentator, Yang Yi of CCTV, echoed Su's sentiment.

"What (Donewald) brought to the team is only some psychic hallucination," Yang said after China's elimination. "He kept encouraging his players with inspirational remarks, making them believe they were competitive against the best teams in the world. But he lacks the stuff to really (help them win)."

Donewald gave himself credit for dealing with the hot potato he was handed.

"When I took this job, someone told me, 'don't take it; you won't go to the Olympics,'" he said. "It was a tough time. But no one thought we could do it three years ago. It's not the way we want to end it, but I think we at least worked in the right way."

"I don't think anybody could do a better job than we did. I

, thought we just did the best that can be done in this era."

Donewald has grown used to being the center of debate.

In addition to his role with the national team, he also coached two Chinese Basketball Association teams - the Shanghai Sharks and Xinjiang Flying Tigers. His time with both ended prematurely.

Now that it's over, Donewald said he's ready to spend some quality time with his family.

"I asked my son when I was in Beijing, 'what do you want?'" Donewald said. "He said 'I want a dog that can talk.' Last night, I talked with him on the phone, asking him again, 'son, you still want a dog that can talk?'" He said, "no, I want to see you'. So I am going home."

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offtrack ...

EIGHTH TIME A CHARM?

Italian kayaker Josefa Idem became the first woman to compete in eight Olympic Games when she set off in her heat for the 500m K-1 at Dorney Lake on Tuesday.

The 47-year-old Idem's first summer games were in Los Angeles in 1984 and she has finished fifth or higher at each Olympics. She won gold in Sydney in 2000 and missed out on another in Beijing four years ago when she was edged into silver by four-hundredths of a second. Idem, who was born in Germany but became an Italian citizen in 1992, finished third in her heat to reach the semi-finals later Tuesday.

WHAT A JUMP

Nick Skelton, who returned after breaking his neck in a competition fall, led Britain to its first Olympic show jumping gold medal in 60 years.

Skelton, 54, fractured his neck in 2000 but returned to riding two years later.

"After I broke my neck, my goal was to get back to Athens in 2004 and then to get to here," Skelton said. "When you have a horse as good as Big Star, you look forward to getting up every day and riding him."

BOLT TO MAN UNITED?

It's a prospect that will have aging Premier League defenders everywhere quaking in their boots - Usain Bolt wearing the red shirt of Manchester United.

But if the idea of the world's fastest man blazing a trail around English soccer grounds remains unlikely, United center-half Rio Ferdinand is enthusiastic about bringing the Jamaican sprint king into the fold.

"If you want that trial at Man Utd shout me, I'll speak to the boss!! Well done in 100m, waiting for you to smash the 200m now!!" Ferdinand said in a message to Bolt on Twitter on Tuesday.

Bolt joked he would welcome the opportunity: "After the Olympics we work on that...lol..thanks man."

COMPLETE COVERAGE

A reported 1,600 Chinese journalists have headed to London for the Games.

Among them, nearly 300 are accredited journalists and photographers, while more than 800 are non-accredited, according to Gao Dianmin, director of the London bureau of Xinhua News Agency and member of the International Olympic Committee's press commission.

REUTERS - CHINA DAILY - AFP

REPORTER'S LOG | CECILY LIU

London Olympics is the world's Games

Elitism's shadow has been cast over the London Olympics over the past week, as media have criticized venues' many empty seats and the "ghost town" effect on West End business.

But a recent stroll through Piccadilly Circus on Friday evening made me realize London's Olympics is still for its people.

Londoners and tourists alike gathered to watch the women's 800m freestyle on a large outdoor screen. Being surrounded by cheering and clapping crowds made it almost like watching the event live. A few minutes later, as Britain's heroine Rebecca Adlington secured her bronze, the crowds shouted with joy - and even I, a foreigner, felt deeply moved.

If a shopping district could create such a festive atmosphere, then one can surely imagine the level of participation at the pop-up gathering spots in the Olympic Park, Hyde Park, Victoria Park and many other dedicated venues.

Last Saturday alone, 60,000 spectators gathered on London's streets to watch the women's triathlon. Another 240,000 watched the Games at other central locations.

Compared with these numbers, the 7,000 unsold corporate tickets Game organizers released to pacify the angry public only make the media hype about empty seats seem a little silly.

Indeed, the most striking impression London's Olympics left on me is a message of hope for ordinary people.

Whereas Barcelona in 1992 aimed to attract tourists and Beijing 2008 showcased China's new image to the world, London's goal was unconventional.

Already the most visited city in Europe and a major financial center, London realized the most an Olympics can bring are solid improvements to people's daily lives.

Examples of the benefits abound.

Over the past four years, Britain's 97 million pound (\$144 million) Cultural Olympiad funded more than 2,700 community projects across the country, involving more than 10,000 people.

As the Union Jack was raised high in the opening ceremony, sweet voices singing the British national anthem came from 80 children of the Kaos Signing Choir for Deaf and Hearing Children, some of whom sang in wheelchairs.

The children's eyes showed hope, pride and a newfound courage to acknowledge their equality.

When the three-week event ends, London will have forever transformed East End. The once contaminated industrial site would become what Newham mayor Robin Wales calls a "decent place" to bring up children.

But such hope is also global.

In 2005, when rival bidders like Paris and Rio made promotional films showcasing the beauties of their respective cities, London touched the International Olympic Committee with a video showing sports' power to inspire children around the world.

This eagerness to give set the tone of London's Olympics from the beginning.

And I feel confident the Games will reap benefits, for both the city and the world.

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