



GIVE HUNGARY A HAND

PHOTO BY JAVIER SORIANO / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Iceland's pivot Robert Gunnarsson shoots during a men's quarterfinal handball match against Hungary at the London Games on Wednesday. Hungary went on to win, 34-33, after extra time to reach the semifinals.

A great time at the pool, even with choppy waters

China's five gold medals overshadowed the 'controversy' over Ye's dominance

By SUN XIAOCHEN
in London
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

In the end, the cheers drowned out the doubts.

China reached the end of the eight-day London Olympics swimming event with five gold medals, its best haul in 28 years, as the nation finally joined the ranks of the sport's elite.

Thanks in large part to swimming prodigies Sun Yang and Ye Shiwen, China edged out once-dominant Australia to trail only the 16 gold medals of the United States in the final medal tally.

Sun highlighted the men's rise.

The 20-year-old Sun shattered his own world record by more than three seconds to claim the men's 1,500m freestyle on the last day of the event after winning the 400m against South Korea's Park Tae-hwan to become the country's first men's swimming gold medalist.

Sun also led the men's team to a bronze in the 4x200m free, a feat that almost equaled his unexpected silver in the 200m. There are four more men on the team, led by Hao Yun in the freestyle and Chen Yin in the butterfly.

On the women's side, 16-year-old Ye set the 400m IM world record with

a sensational final sprint in the final 100m that was faster than men's gold winner Ryan Lochte. She also won the 200m IM.

She wasn't alone. Jiao Liuyang turned her Beijing Olympics silver medal into gold in the 200m butterfly. Sprinter Lu Ying added a sliver in the 100m fly, while Li Xuanxu and Tang Yi collected bronze in both the 400m IM and 100m free.

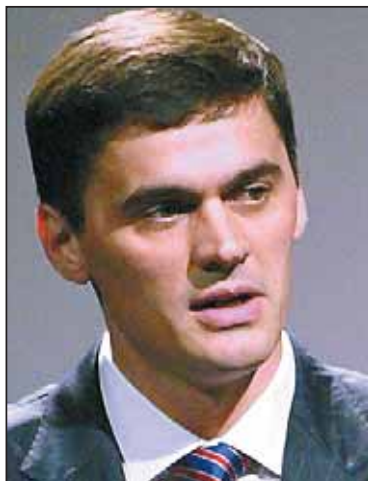
"Finally, we can blend into the world mainstream in swimming," team leader Xu Qi said.

"It's the payoff of our four years of work since 2008 and can be attributed to a combination of foreign coaching and local development."

It wasn't all calm seas, though. John Leonard, a US coach, was among those who alleged Ye's performance might have been the result of doping, taking some of the fun out of the record for Chinese fans.

Still, some swimming greats supported China, crediting its swimmers' hard work. "The questions and suspicions will always be there when you swim extremely well," Russia's four-time Olympic champion swimmer Alexander Popov told China Daily on Tuesday.

"Just simply keep your heads down, and keep training and keep producing results. And I am sure Chinese swimming is much more capable of



“And I am sure Chinese swimming is much more capable of what we saw here.”

ALEXANDER POPOV
RUSSIA'S FOUR-TIME OLYMPIC CHAMPION SWIMMER

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Popov, who won the 50m and 100m free at the 1992 Barcelona Games and defended both in 1996 at Atlanta, describes himself as a staunch advocate of anti-doping measures. He defended Ye.

"I don't see any questions behind it," Popov said. "I don't listen to the gossip. I only see the fact. We didn't hear any-

thing coming from her drug test, and the rest is just rubbish for me."

Swimming's world governing body FINA said there was "no factual basis" for speculation that Ye's Olympic medley double had been fueled by banned drugs.

Three-time Olympian Natalie Coughlin, who regained her 100m backstroke title at the 2008 Beijing Games, wasn't surprised by Ye's massive improvements.

"It's typical, especially when you are growing so much physically," said Coughlin, who grabbed a bronze with the 4x100 free team in London. "It's easier to have those big drops in time when you are 15 or 16. And just enjoy those big drops."

Coughlin, the three-time American swimmer of the year, felt bad for Ye.

"It's unfortunate. You don't want someone to have an amazing swim and people just jump to the conclusion that they were cheating," she said.

"As long as China is able to produce powerful athletes who do drug tests and pass it, I think that will go away."

Attributing the US' supremacy to an "extremely competitive" college system, the 29-year-old said she was happy the Chinese have found their own method of producing winners.

"The Chinese are doing very well," she said. "Look at the medal count — at least the swimming portion — they earned so many medals. I think it will continue to build upon how well they did last week."

SWIMMING IS GOOD; THINKING IS BETTER

Natalie Coughlin trains hard, but she also trains smart.

The 29-year-old captain of the US women's swim team won her 12th Olympic medal in London, despite quitting for 18 months after the Beijing Games.

Coughlin decided to take a break from the pool after successfully defending her 100m backstroke title in 2008 and married club coach Ethan Hall eight months later.

It wasn't long before the pool and her third Olympics started calling for her though.

"It was actually pretty easy to get back because I have stayed in such good shape and I trained the right way," she said.

Coughlin trained at most six hours a day, employing a regimen that included more than just swimming.

"It's a combination of in-pool practice, swimming, running, Pilates and weight training," she said. "As I get older, the swimming part gets less and cross training gets more."

Coughlin earned a bronze medal with the 4x100m free-style relay team.

She tied the record for most medals by a US woman, held also by Jenny Thompson and Dara Torres.

The Chinese are known for a tough regimen that focuses primarily on long, basic drills in the water.

"I think the Chinese probably are more disciplined to train for endless hours, especially young kids spending a lot of time in the pool," Coughlin said. "It takes a special personality and a strong will to be able to train that much."

"But it's helpful to have a change and to combine it in a more Western way. And I think you've been doing it and do it quite well."

Coughlin said she was impressed by Sun Yang's ability to range from 200m to 1,500m events, and believes he might be versatile enough to be a sprinter.

"It's definitely possible. It's not very common," she said. "I think a lot of distance swimmers wish they could be sprinters and try everything. Some people who are really talented are able to cross over. It's pretty unique."

SUN XIAOCHEN

Sun and Ye have the world's best fan

By SUN XIAOCHEN
in London
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

If you're impressing the best, you must be doing something right.

The Chinese swim team's successful showing at the London Olympics didn't escape the attention of Michael Phelps. Phelps grabbed four more gold medals — the 100m butterfly, 200 IM, 4x200 free relay and 4x100 medley relay — in London to bring his record haul to 18.

He's retired now that the Games are over but said he's relieved to see new stars popping up.

"That's one thing that I am very excited about in the next four years," Phelps said on Tuesday.

"It's being able to keep following

the production of swimmers all over the world and to see how much faster they can go. To have a lot of new faces is going to be fun."

Phelps said China's Sun Yang is the best of the lot.

"I've been able to watch all the swims," he said. "One of the most impressive is the men's 1,500m free."

"He's so talented. His stroke is perfect. His catch and kick, everything about his stroke is flawless. I think (coach Dennis Cotterell) could still help him improve in the future. Watching that (1,500), he was absolutely incredible."

Phelps defended double individual medley winner Ye Shiwen against the doping rumors that have been circulating.

"It's kind of sad that people have a

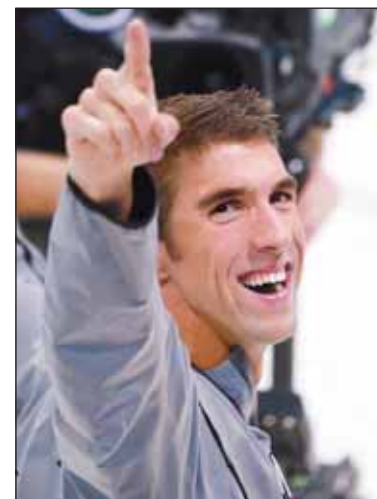
great swim and that's the first thing they say," Phelps said. "There are people who just jump to that conclusion sometimes, and it's not right."

Phelps remained shocked at her time in the last lap of the 400 IM, which was faster even than men's gold medalist Ryan Lochte.

"For the 400 IM, I am happy that I was able to out-swim everybody else in the last 100 meters (in 2008)," he said. "That's what we've been joking about."

He knows better than anyone how much work it took her to get there.

"It's cool to see someone swimming like that, because they actually work hard and they love the sport and they do have very high goals for themselves," he said. "And they are going out to realize that."



JAE C. HONG / AP
United States swimmer Michael Phelps acknowledges his fans at the Olympics.



HOTOONWEB

@Qin Kai

"I beat myself... but lost to destiny... Thank you for supporting the Chinese diving team. We all have tried our best." Chinese diver Qin Kai on losing the gold in the men's 3m springboard finals



@Yi Siling

"I hope everyone can take part in sports, we all do sports exercise!" Chinese shooting champion Yi Siling on National Fitness Day

@Liu Xuan

"Wait for me, Catalina Ponor. We can participate in the Olympics together after I give birth in two years." Former Chinese gymnastics Olympic champion Liu Xuan after watching the women's floor exercise

@Chen Yibing

"My performance in the Olympics was perfect, but also a great pity. When I saw teammates hanging the Chinese national flag in the highest place and singing the national anthem, my heart was really aching... I have dreamed of this moment countless times... You guys say yes to the performance I have had in the Olympics so far. But I still think there is one thing left uncompleted... and I have no chance to finish anymore... This is also a lifelong regret. A deepest pain in my heart... Goodbye, London!" Chinese gymnast Chen Yibing on losing the rings gold at the London Olympics

@TomDaley1994

"Crazy night at the pool!!! Chinese domination is over in the men's 3m springboard event!!! Aaaaahhh!!! Well done lya!!!" British diver Tom Daley on the men's 3m springboard. Russian diver Zakharov Ilya won the gold, while China's Qin Kai and He Chong bagged the silver and bronze

@paugasol

"All my support to all the families that are suffering the terrible floods in the Philippines #PrayForThePhilippines" Spanish basketball player Pau Gasol, on the floods in the Philippines

@MayorofLondon

"Brilliant fraternal victory in the triathlon for the Brownlee brothers. We've equalled our Beijing gold tally!" Boris Johnson, mayor of London, on Alistair Brownlee's gold and his brother Jonathan's bronze

@jonny_brownlee

"Wow! What a triathlon today. Great support and great race. I am so happy with my olympic bronze medal!! Jonathan Brownlee, apparently OK with losing to his older brother

@SeppBlatter

"Brazil v Mexico promises to be a terrific Olympic Final. Old Trafford was fantastic with 68,389 noisy fans #London2012" FIFA president Sepp Blatter on the soccer final after he watched Brazil beat South Korea 3-0 in the semifinal

@rioferdy5

"@usainbolt 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! Manchester United soccer player Rio Ferdinand taps Olympic men's 100m champion Usain Bolt

@DeronWilliams

"Trying to get my daughters to play tennis so I have the next Williams sisters but they ain't having it" US basketball player Deron Williams on getting his daughters to pick up a tennis racket

@jessicaalba

"these #Olympics are so very exciting and so very stressful at the same time" US actress Jessica Alba watching the women's floor exercises final

@frankieboyle

"Chris Hoy's success comes from the fact that if he slows down at all in Scotland his bike gets stolen" Scottish comedian Frankie Boyle on Hoy finishing his Olympic track cycling career with a sixth gold, the most of any British athlete