



Liu Xiang and Li Guoxiong, a leading adviser on his team, arrive at a London hospital before Liu's surgery on Thursday.

Liu plans to return after Achilles surgery

Injury not as bad as it could have been, **Chen Xiangfeng** reports.

Liu Xiang's surgeon, Nicholas Cullen, said he believes the injury was not as serious as feared, hinting the star hurdler might be able to resume training in six months.

The 29-year-old Chinese hurdler stunned fans again as he crashed into the first barrier in the first round of the men's 110m hurdles and ended his third Olympic Games with a ruptured Achilles tendon.

He underwent surgery on Thursday at the Wellington Hospital in London. It is the largest independent hospital in the United Kingdom.

Cullen visited Liu in the Athletes Village on Tuesday night and made a preliminary assessment.

Liu seemed somewhat relieved and appeared to be in



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LIU XIANG
CHINESE HURDLER, ON HIS PLANS
TO RETURN AFTER SURGERY

a good mood the next day. He sent a message to his father, Liu Xuegen.

"I had a very good sleep last night," the message read. "My doctor met me and confirmed the surgery last night. He will operate (Thursday).

"It's a small surgery and will not affect my life. Maybe I will

be stronger after I come back. I treasure the hurdling event. I will be back. Since the hurdles are still there, I want to conquer them.

"The key is how I go about recovering after surgery. Just take it easy. Take care."

For the first time since the injury, Liu's parents were made available for a public interview on Wednesday.

His father said Liu's condition wasn't good when he arrived in London last Friday from Germany.

"I had phone calls with his coach after his arrival every day. It's like it would be a little better one day and then get even worse the next day," Liu Xuegen said.

His mother, Ji Fenhua, said she thought about asking Liu when he struck the barrier and hit the track in pain.

"I thought, OK, he could retire now..." she said. "But then we saw his message. He said he still wants to come back. We will not be against his returning after the recovery."

After arriving at the hospital at 11:25 am on Thursday, Liu went through a series of physical checks and was pushed into the operating room at 3 pm.

It was reported by qq.com that besides linking his tendon up, the doctor would also remove a calcified area left over from the last surgery.

Liu underwent his first surgery on the tendon at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center in Houston in December 2008, four months after withdrawing from the Beijing Olympic Games.

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Gay knows something about pain

By **CHEN XIANGFENG**
in London
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US sprinter Tyson Gay doesn't know Chinese hurdler Liu Xiang at all, but he thinks they have something in common.

Injury prevented both from competing at the Beijing Games.

Both came back, strong and ambitious, for the London Games.

Both will go home from London extremely disappointed. Liu ruptured his Achilles tendon in his heat, while Gay finished fourth in the 100m final and failed to bring home an elusive Olympic medal.

The 2007 world champion, Gay, who in 2011 suffered another injury and career-threatening surgery, said he empathizes with Liu.

"That was a bad story. I know the whole nation wants to see him run," Gay said on Wednesday. "He is the man to see on the television for Chinese and Asians. He had to do that for his country."

Gay said he hopes Liu — whose Athens Olympics gold in the 110m made him the first Asian man to win a track medal — can pick himself up and keep fighting.

"That's hard. I think for years

he's been a fighter," Gay said. "He is doing something strong like I have. He has to continue to fight, and he has to continue to run well. People in China and in Asia will see how he continues to fight and how he keeps running well. That will bring the sport a lot more push."

Gay's own comeback story could serve as an example for Liu.

After hip surgery last year, Gay enjoyed back-to-back victories at the Paris and London Diamond League meetings.

The 29-year-old Texan then ran 9.86 seconds at the US Olympic Trials to make it to London.

He said he gave his best at the Games. His 9.80 would have won every Olympic 100 ever run — before the era of Usain Bolt, that is.

Gay said Liu needs to take things one step at a time after surgery.

"(You have to get) mentally strong to do that," he said. "Have the plan; the plan about dieting, (how to) work out smarter and work harder."

"Do not worry about the practice and training after the surgery. But you must worry about trying to ... not make things worse. Do not rush, take it in time and stay focused on technique."

Gay said he faced addition-

al pressure in London after failing to make the final in Beijing, where he suffered a hamstring injury in the 200m.

He is one of only three sprinters to have beaten world record holder and Olympic champion Bolt.



Tyson Gay of the US, one of the top sprinters in the world, still doesn't have an Olympic medal after finishing fourth in the 100.

It takes more than gold medals to make a hero

By **REUTERS**
in London

When fencer Ruben Limardo set off for the London Olympics, he little imagined that he would be cheered through the streets of the Venezuelan capital Caracas on top of a truck on his return, and honored by the president.

Nor could Shin A-lam have known that a tearful, lonely hour sobbing over the loss of her bout would make her known to millions and put fencing on the map in South Korea.

Many of London's medalists will see success rewarded with money and glory in their home countries, but just as many have won hearts and lifted spirits with their determination, dignity or sheer hard luck.

Limardo's gold, in individual epee, was Venezuela's first in 44 years. President Hugo Chavez gave him a replica of the sword used by South American independence hero Simon Bolivar.

Limardo also charmed London and beyond by wearing his medal on the capital's Underground system, posing for photos with passengers and teaching them Venezuelan sports chants. The US news and gossip site Gawker said a picture posted online was "the best Olympics photo yet."

South Korea felt a surge of sympathy for Shin, who sat in tears in a pool of light after losing her semifinal, refusing to leave the piste because to step off would have meant accepting the judges' ruling.

Tweets and Facebook postings took her side, but fencing itself had stepped out of the shadows in South Korea, and media reported that suddenly everyone wanted to learn the sport.

Her countryman Yang Hak-seon took over the sports pages not only for winning South Korea's first gymnastics gold, with a vault that he invented, but also because it emerged that he had used his training money to support his family, so poor that they had for a while lived in a greenhouse on a farm.

His reward? 100 million won (\$90,000) from his federation and ramen noodles for life from a sponsor.

Cornflake packets

Far greater fame and riches are already assured for some of the Olympics' biggest names.

American gymnast Gabby Douglas became her country's Olympic sweetheart overnight with her individual all-round gold and her winning smile.

Her face was appearing on cornflake packets within hours of her victory and experts put her earnings potential at between \$5 million and \$10 million over the next four years.

"The gold medal alone doesn't get you to first base in marketing — it's the persona that goes with it," said Lynn Lashbrook, a sports agent in Portland, Oregon.

"I can't think of another person in this category: female, young, articulate, great smile — this is unique."

US swimmer Missy Franklin, at 17, a year older than Douglas, made headlines for choosing a very different path.

Likeable, telegenic and winner of four golds in London, she has turned her back on endorsements so that she can keep having fun as an amateur in US college swimming.

China's Olympians look forward to material rewards as well as national adulation.

Lin Dan has become "Super-Dan" in the Chinese media for successfully defending his badminton title.

At the same time, he boosted the share price of the team's sponsor, the sporting goods firm founded by 1984 gymnastics triple gold medalist Li Ning, by 12 percent overnight.

Compatriot Sun Yang, winner of two swimming golds, is



lar Twitter-like micro blog, has jumped by 2.5 million since the start of the Olympics — dwarfing even Usain Bolt's following.

Gold coins

Four wrestlers and weightlifters will have to make do with adulation and more prosaic rewards for bringing golden glory to Iran in sports in which the nation has traditionally excelled.

The government has promised each of them 90 gold coins and civil service jobs but has outlawed endorsements as un-Islamic since former Olympic weightlifting champion Hossein Rezazadeh appeared in a commercial that aired on a banned satellite channel.

Winning gold in a sport that your country thinks of as its own is often a way to glory.

The young, handsome Aron Szilagyi is already being touted at home as the heir to a great lineage of Hungarian fencers.

Japan, the inventor of judo, is lamenting the fact that its men's team will go home without a gold for the first time since the sport was introduced to the Olympics in 1964.

Attention turned instead to Japan's women's soccer team. Authorities sparked a minor scandal by giving the women economy class flights to London while the men flew business class. If the women win Thursday's final, public opinion is sure to get them an upgrade.

Failure does not have to mean criticism back home.

The image that has gripped Italy is the shocked, vulnerable face of former champion Federica Pellegrini, known for appearing naked on the cover of Vanity Fair magazine with her fellow swimmer boyfriend, slumped in the water after failing to take a medal in her signature 200m freestyle.

Sport-crazy Australia finally has its heroes after hurdler Sally Pearson and track cyclist Anna Meares won the country's first individual golds of 2012. But it had already been inclined to forgive its great swimming hope, James Magnussen, who failed by 0.01 seconds to land the gold that he had loudly promised.

"Even the fact you failed, it has got you the immediate attention," said marketing expert Andrew Hughes at the Australian National University. "He is still very marketable, because he has got a natural, fresh appeal to him which makes people notice."

France likes its heroes to be intellectual and has found the perfect one in Yannick Agnel, the swimmer who grabbed gold from the United States on the last leg of the 4x100m freestyle relay, then added an individual sprint gold.

Agnel reads poetry in his spare time, is learning Russian for fun and speaks like an intellectual.

"Being an Olympic champion is my dream ... but being a writer must be nice, too," he told Paris Match magazine.



From top: Ruben Limardo, Gabby Douglas, Lin Dan, Sun Yang, Sally Pearson.

similarly attractive to Chinese sponsors and sports fans alike. The number of his followers on Sina Weibo, China's popu-

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