



# Diva dives out of spotlight

FOUR-TIME OLYMPIC CHAMPION GUO JINGJING SAYS SCHOOL IS SPRINGBOARD FOR NEAR FUTURE

By CHEN XIANGFENG  
CHINA DAILY

BEIJING — Retired diving queen Guo Jingjing has returned to Renmin University of China to study English, but that doesn't make her eligible to represent China at the Shenzhen Universiade.

Guo represented her nation three times — at the 2001, 2003 and 2005 Universiade — and won six gold medals. Now, she just enjoys relaxing on campus and not worrying about training or competing.

"I found I have so much to learn. I'm learning English right now. I also read books to get to know more about the world," said the multiple Olympic and world champion.

She also said she plans to move abroad to improve her English but admitted she sometimes missed the life of an athlete.

"You cannot help having those scenes flash in you mind — training with teammates, competing in big tournaments and smiling and crying after wins and failures," said Guo, who hopes to be involved in the 2012 London Olympic Games in a role outside of pool.

"I still want to go to the London Olympic Games and do something for the diving team," she said.

But Guo said she does not want to become a coach.

"No, I don't think I will be a coach. I'm a quiet and soft-hearted person and not suited to being a coach. You have to be strict with young athletes during training and competitions, but I'm afraid I could not do that."

After the Beijing Olympic Games, there was much speculation about what Guo would do next. Her last major event was the 2009 East Asian Games in Hong Kong, where she cruised to her fifth title.

She then disappeared from the pool, and her few forays into the spotlight have been in some advertisements and as a Youth Olympics ambassador.

The 29-year-old diving diva finally called it quits early this year and has rarely appeared in public since.

It's a world away from when she was constantly chased by the media and was a prime target for advertisers and sponsors.

"I always feel uneasy in front of you guys (media)," she said. "I did not like being in the limelight or answering questions. I think a quiet and normal life suits me."

Guo said winning four Olympic gold medals was the peak of a glittering career.

"After the East Asian Games, I thought about my future for a long time," she said.

"I still had the dream of competing at the London Games, which would have been my fifth Olympics. But I changed my mind as I found there was a rising generation in the team.

"Competing at the Olympics is every athlete's dream. I told myself it was enough for me, and I should give the chance of realizing that dream to younger athletes."

Guo's retirement marked the end of an era, during which she set an almost unbeatable record of four Olympic gold medals, five consecutive victories in both the individual and synchronized 3m springboard at the World Championships and 17 World Cup titles.

She took up diving when she was 6 years old at the Baoding training base. She started training for competitive diving in 1988, and was selected in the Chinese national team in 1992. Guo first competed at the Olympics in 1996.

She was not only a phenomenon on the springboard but also remains an eye-catching figure away from diving venues, with her good looks and well-known romance with Kenneth Fok, son of Hong Kong Olympic Committee president and tycoon Timothy Tsun-Ting Fok.

Reports claim Guo and Fok will marry this year, but she simply said: "I do not want to talk about my private life."

But Guo and Fok were seen during last month's Swimming World Championships in Shanghai, and reports claim it is just a matter of time before they announce a wedding ceremony.

## FACTBOX

**Born:** Oct 15, 1981 (age 29)

**Place of birth:** Baoding, Hebei province

**Height:** 5'4" (1.63m)

**Events:** 3m springboard, 3m synchro

## MEDAL RECORD

### Olympic Games

Gold: 2008 Beijing individual and synchro springboard; 2004 Athens individual and synchro springboard

### World Championships

Gold: 2009 Rome individual and synchro springboard; 2007 Melbourne individual and synchro springboard; 2005 Montreal individual and synchro springboard; 2003 Barcelona individual and synchro springboard; 2001 Fukuoka individual and synchro springboard



ED JONES / AGENCE  
FRANCE-PRESSE

China's diving diva Guo Jingjing participated in three Universiades and won a total of six gold medals.