

WEATHER

Today's
forecast

Nanjing	24/31 Overcast
Suzhou	24/31 Cloudy
Wuxi	23/32 Cloudy
Yangzhou	23/31 Overcast
Xuzhou	23/31 Overcast
Changzhou	23/31 Cloudy
Nantong	22/30 Overcast
Lianyungang	22/31 Cloudy
Huai'an	22/30 Cloudy
Yancheng	22/30 Cloudy
Zhenjiang	23/31 Cloudy
Taizhou	22/30 Overcast
Suqian	23/30 Overcast

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Youth doing China proud

By SUN XIAOCHEN

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China's vice-minister of sports is encouraging local athletes to continue with their off-court communication and cultural exchanges to forge a vibrant and outgoing image of modern China.

Xiao Tian, deputy director of the State General Administration of Sport and chief of the Chinese Youth Olympics, hailed young Chinese Olympians for their performances in Nanjing at the halfway stage media briefing on Thursday.

"So far, our athletes have competed at a relatively high level, as they should. We are happy about their performances in the events they compete in," said Xiao, who is also the vice-chairman of the Chinese Olympic Committee.

As of Thursday afternoon, the Chinese delegation had bagged 11 gold, four silver and eight bronze medals in 11 events and topped the



Xiao Tian

unofficial medal tally, Xiao said.

What excited the minister more than the medal haul was the active manner in which China's new breed of Olympians was socializing and communicating with foreign athletes.

"They are much more willing and more courageous to speak their minds and talk with foreign athletes and media than we did (as athletes) 30 years ago," said Xiao, who used to be a top-level fencer in the 1970s.

Back in the 1980s, when China

started to send its sportsmen and sportswomen to compete overseas, the athletes were as much known for their reticence as their athletic prowess. Silent and shy, they appeared colorless and blended into a background of collective solidarity.

In probably the most extreme example, four-time Olympic winner and diving diva, Fu Mingxia, was taught to answer all media questions with an "I don't know" — even when she was asked: "How old are you?" at the 1990 World Goodwill Games in Seattle.

"No one spoke English at that time and the mentality to restrain individuality then made Chinese athletes too shy to speak about themselves," Xiao said.

With more international exposure and education offered since the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the new generation of Chinese athletes has been trying actively to blend in with the international commu-

nity by learning English and using social media.

During the Nanjing YOG, scenes of young Chinese athletes talking with foreign counterparts in English, sharing selfies on social media and commentating on their performances in front of cameras are visible everywhere.

Dilana Dilixiati, a female 3-on-3 basketball player from China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, said she is using the Nanjing YOG as a platform to showcase herself, not only athletically but culturally.

"Sometimes, I am nervous facing media or too shy to open my mouth. But mixed in such a group of young and open peers in Nanjing, I am more willing to open myself up and make friends," said the 17-year-old.

Damir Eklic, the Serbian coach of the Chinese women's handball team, said the Chinese girls were more active in expressing themselves than he expected.

Teammate oversleeps,
forcing shooter to
miss chance at medal

By XINHUA

A Ukrainian shooter has cost her teammate the chance at a medal by oversleeping and missing a critical round of the 10m air pistol international mixed team event of the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games at the Fangshan shooting hall on Thursday.

Ion Aric of Moldova and Polina Konarieva of Ukraine were in the chase for a medal, but their chances were scotched by Konarieva's late arrival after waking up late.

The pair had beaten Margarita Lomova of Russia and Juan Sebas Rivera Ruiz of Colombia, 10-9, on Wednesday, to make the quarterfinals and the duo looked poised to challenge Zaven Igityan of Armenia and Chung Ting-yu of Chinese Taipei for a place in the semifinal.

But Konarieva's absence left the result null and void. The message "DNS" (did not shoot) appeared near the duo's score and gave their opponents free passage into the semifinals.

Konarieva reached the venue but competition had already begun. She was present at the shooting hall when the medals were awarded later in the day.

"I don't know what to say to him," she said, referring to Aric.

Her coach, Alexander Kaminsky of Ukraine, explained why she didn't reach the venue on time for the start of the competition.

"She was sleeping and woke up at 8 o'clock and went to the station to get a taxi. The driver didn't know the road but he said, 'OK, I know, shooting range ... no problem,'" he said.

"I think it is my mistake," Kaminsky said.

Aric, who was clearly upset during the quarterfinals, was inconsolable as he left the venue before the finals.

"Yes, there was a lot of emotion ... I did not know how to feel.

"Why she was late, I don't know why ... she is not responsible for her action. I'm a little angry," he said.

Jorg Brokamp of Germany, the ISSF technical delegate present blamed carelessness for the error.

"It's not the fault of the shooter but the fault of the team manager and coach. That's the first duty as a coach and manager, you have to prepare your athletes schedule and get all the necessary information," Brokamp said.



HEAD OVER HEELS

A multi-exposure photo shows American Nicole Ahsinger competing in the trampoline final on Thursday. Ahsinger finished fifth in the event won by Zhu Xueying of China. PHOTO BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY