

PROFILES

Born to board

High-school skateboarder credits parents for their support and vows to build skateboard shops in Nanjing

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From an off-hour hobby, skateboarding has now morphed into a major part of Zhou Quan's life. Starting skateboarding at the age of 14, Zhou, a 17-year-old high school student at the Experimental School affiliated to Nanjing Normal University, is a participant at the Nanjing 2014 Sports Lab.

He first became aware of the sport when he saw a group of guys doing jumps and tricks on a square not far from where he lived.

"It seemed so cool and I thought I could become more popular among my peers if I could do all the tricks," said Zhou.

He said he still has his first skateboard, a red Element that was bought for about 700 yuan, and it remains his favorite.

"I have used some 15 boards since then, most of which are broken or worn out after all these jumps and leaps," he said. "But they provide many memories."

He started practicing tricks in his free time and the more he could perform,

the more popular he became among his classmates.

"It gives you confidence," he said. "It makes me feel special and unique."

Zhou said his mother was not supportive at first but, realizing skateboarding could help draw her son away from sitting in front of computer games, she finally came around.

However, not all Chinese parents are as supportive as Zhou's mom, which means skateboarding is less popular in China than many other countries.

"I'm glad my parents are supportive and are not held back by my three micro fractures in my ankle and back," he said.

"Parents should be sup-



High school student Zhou Quan says doing tricks on his skateboard makes him popular among his peers and makes him feel special and unique. Skateboarding is one of four demonstration events at the Youth Olympic Games. PHOTO BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

portive of their kid's passion rather than strangling it."

Zhou said were it not for academic pressure, he might be on par with the best professionals in the world.

"Chinese students are

under enormous academic pressure that further prevents them from pursuing what they are interested in," said Zhou.

"With the college entrance examination com-

ing up, you have no choice but to put away your skateboard and go back to the books."

Also, Chinese roads and facilities are not exactly skateboard-friendly, he said.

Zhou, after he graduates, said he wants to dot the streets of Nanjing with various skateboard shops and outlets so people can get to know the sport's allure — just like he did.



US climber Josh Levin says the Nanjing YOG give him a unique opportunity to see and shape what direction the sport is headed. PHOTO BY ZHENG XIN / CHINA DAILY

Aiming to climb even higher

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Josh Levin, of the USA Climbing board of directors, is confident rock climbing is headed in the right direction to be listed as part of the Olympics.

"The sport is definitely in accordance with the Olympic motto, 'Citius, Altius, Fortius,' or 'faster, higher, stronger' proposed by Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern Olympic Games," said the president and founder of the Northeastern University climbing team.

"In rock climbing, you race to reach the top and it requires a lot of hard training to make you physically fit."

Levin is the sole US representative at the Nanjing 2014 Sports Lab, a unique all-in-one venue showcasing wushu

martial art, a skate park, a climbing wall and roller track, in an attempt to promote those events and move them closer to becoming Olympic sports.

More than a thousand people head to the park each day to try out the sports.

According to Levin, despite an attempt and subsequent failure to make climbing a sport in the 2020 Olympic Games, being included as a demonstration event at the Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing this year is a positive sign of the sport's ascent.

"I'm fortunate to have been selected by the International Federation of Sport Climbing as the sole US representative, which means I have a unique opportunity to see and shape what direction the sport is headed," he said.

As the best age for a male sport

climber is apparently in the 20s, Josh joked that he might not make it; even if the sport is included in the Olympic about 10 years from now.

However, that does not hold him back from dominating the climbs now.

"Many of us sport climbing enthusiasts have devoted our lives to training for it ... and it's out of pure fun," he said.

"You train hard to conquer the climbing walls and mountain tops, 10 hours a day to tone your abs to enhance endurance, do pushups and weights and finger lifting, all of which are out of love for the sport," said Levin.

"One thing does remain certain, no matter where the sport of competition climbing goes, we still will have our ancestry deeply rooted in the mountains."