

## AROUNDNANJING

## A WINNING TRADITION

## THE NEWEST STARS FROM NANJING

## YAN MEILING

Rugby Sevens player Yan Meiling's skin tone and physique underscore her level of dedication to the junior women's Rugby Sevens team.

Extra training, which has made her skin darker and body stronger, has helped establish her as the leader of the team.

Yan, 17, has a body well suited for rugby. Although she is only 1.60 meters tall, she has made up for it by training exceptionally hard. She doubles the amount of training time her coach asks of her and she has improved her skills by studying tapes of top-level rugby games.

That is why Yan has become the indisputable core of the team in just two years.

Under her leadership, the China women's junior rugby Sevens team won bronze at the Nanjing Youth Olympics. In the fight for third place, China beat the United States 12-0.

"Our goal in the tournament was to beat the US and we did it. We have done well and I am happy with a bronze," said Yan.

Talking about her training, Yan said: "We have to exercise really hard to build muscles and get stronger. We need to be very strong to protect ourselves during games.



We should never pull out of a confrontation during a game to avoid being hurt."

Rugby Sevens has been included in the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Yan said she and her teammates are ready to put in the hard work to hopefully make it to the podium in 2016.

"It is really a hard sport, particularly for girls, because of its physically demanding nature and high risk of injury," said Yan.

"The prospect of competing in the Olympics really inspires us. We hope that our hard work will pay off and lead us to Olympic glory."

## WU FAN



When Wu Fan was a 17-year-old track athlete, a coach saw her potential in rugby. Her parents were opposed to the transition at first, but that didn't stop Wu from falling in love with the sport once she picked it up.

"I told my mom 'I fell in love with it so there will be no regrets,'" she said. Wu, who is now 18, showed great skills right away. The first year she played Sevens, at the age of 15, she caught the attention of the

national team coach and made it onto the junior team.

At the Nanjing Youth Olympics, her solid performances helped China claim a bronze, fulfilling the team's goal of making it to the podium.

She still has a lot potential to be realized, both physically and technically. Two years from now, Wu hopes to be a key member of China's Olympic team and again stand upon the podium.

## WU SHENGPING

Wu Shengping has the potential to be as great a diver as Guo Jingjing. At the age of 18, the Jiangsu native has already claimed 16 medals in national and international competitions.

She is currently in the shadow of Chen Ruolin on the China women's team, but such is the fickle nature of the sport that you never know when a diver will suddenly burst to prominence.

Unfortunately, her career suffered a blow last year when she dislocated her right shoulder in

training. Due to the severity of the injury, the national team sent Wu back to the Jiangsu provincial team to focus on rehabilitation.

"I cried many times when I thought about my future and if I could continue diving," Wu told a CCTV reporter in July.

At the Youth Games, Wu's right shoulder has



recovered enough for her to be one of the two divers representing China.

Wu's coach, Xu Jie, said she never complains or throws any tantrums.

"It's hard to imagine that she could overcome such a big difficulty. Looking back, even I was in doubt at the time (she could come back)," she said.

## THE CITY'S BIGGEST STARS

## XIAO QIN

Xiao Qin (born on Jan 12, 1985) is a male Chinese gymnast. He specializes in the horizontal bar and parallel bars, but is best known for his work on the pommel horse for which he has won Olympic, world, national, East Asian Games, and World Cup titles. He joined the Chinese national team in 1999 and is part of the People's Liberation Army. He has qualified for two Olympics. At the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Xiao



was one of the favorites for the Olympic title on pommel horse, but his dreams were shattered when he fell during the qualification round. He qualified for the horizontal bar event final but placed sixth. It was also a disappointing Olympics for his team, who was favored to win gold but instead finished fifth. At the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, he redeemed himself by winning gold on the pommel horse along with gold for his team.

## ZHAO RUIRUI

A combination of brawn and brains, Zhao Ruirui (born on Oct 8, 1981) is both a former professional volleyball player and a best-selling science fiction writer. She was a member of the gold-winning Chinese volleyball team at the 2004 Athens Games and the bronze-winning team in Beijing four years later. Last year, Zhao was one of eight science fiction writers and editors to win top prizes at

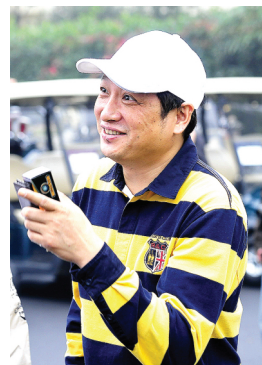


the fourth Xingyun (Nebula) Awards, organized by the World Chinese Science Fiction Association. Born into a family of volleyball players, Zhao inherited her parents' height, speed and power. Her versatile attack and defensive skills made her indispensable to the Chinese national team.

In 1999, she began playing professionally for the Bayi (Army) Keming Surface Industry team of Hunan province.

## YANG YANG

Yang Yang (born on Dec 9, 1963) is a former Chinese badminton player. He is one of two badminton players in the world to have won two World Badminton Championships men's singles titles consecutively (1987, 1989), the other being Lin Dan. He also won the men's singles gold medal when badminton was a demonstration sport at the 1988 Summer Olympics. He possessed great agility, quick footwork, accurate power, and coolness under pressure, and is widely regarded as one of the finest singles players in the history of the sport. As a member of China's golden badminton generation of the 1980s that included the almost



equally brilliant singles stars Zhao Jianhua and Xiong Guobao, Yang played an important role in making China the major world badminton superpower. His play was instrumental in China's consecutive Thomas Cup (men's world team) titles in 1986, 1988, and 1990. In 1991, he retired and started coaching in Malaysia. In the next year, he guided Malaysia to its first Thomas Cup victory in 25 years, the only occasion since 1967 in which neither Indonesia nor China has won the cup. He then stayed in Malaysia to develop his business for badminton equipment. He returned to China in 2000 and opened a badminton club named after himself in Nanjing.