

WEATHER

Today's
forecast

Nanjing	19/24 Rainy
Suzhou	24/27 Rainy
Wuxi	22/26 Rainy
Yangzhou	19/24 Rainy
Xuzhou	19/26 Overcast
Changzhou	20/26 Rainy
Nantong	21/25 Rainy
Lianyungang	19/28 Cloudy
Huai'an	20/27 Overcast
Yancheng	20/26 Overcast
Zhenjiang	20/26 Rainy
Taizhou	20/24 Rainy
Suqian	20/27 Overcast

YOG DAILY **NANJING**
2014
YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES

The official English publication of the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games

Published daily by China Daily

Issue: 14

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TALK TO US

Editorial

Tel: 86-10-6499-5311,
Fax: 86-10-6491-8377

Advertising

Tel: 86-25-84574342,

Subscriptions

Tel: 86-25-84574343,

E-mail: wuzhili@chinadaily.com.cn

FIND US

Address: No 15, Huixindongjie, Chaoyang District, Beijing

北京市朝阳区惠新东街15号

Address in Nanjing: Room 2602, Fuxin Plaza, No 359, Hongwu Road, Nanjing

江苏省南京市洪武路359号福鑫国际大厦2602东

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NECK AND NECK

Uzbekistan's Shakhodat Djullibaeva (left) and Egypt's Habiba Ismail grapple during their women's freestyle 52 kg qualification match at the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games on Tuesday. PHOTO BY REUTERS

Young Ali proving he's more than just a name

By SUN XIAOCHEN

sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

Featuring sharp jabs, superb reflexes and light footwork, young British boxer Muhammad Ali circled his opponent, biding his time.

His swift counterstriking style during the men's 52kg bronze-medal final on Sunday suggests the 18-year-old Briton shares more than just a name with one of the greatest heavyweight boxers of all time.

"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, here comes the latest Muhammad Ali", read a headline on the YOG's official website after Ali won by unanimous decision against Indian Gaurav Solanki.

Due to his famous name, Ali admits he used to struggle with all the attention but has recently learned to take it more as inspiration than pressure.

"People expect a lot because of my name. They start comparing me to the great Muhammad Ali. But slowly I have proved myself and it doesn't bother me anymore. People have begun to notice me for my accomplishments," said Ali.

"It's a beautiful coincidence that I share my name with one of the most legendary icons in the history of boxing, and that is reason enough for me to believe that the sport is my destiny," he said.

Despite his great respect for his namesake, Ali said he picked up his boxing gloves due to two-time world champion and compatriot Amir Khan.

"I've grown up watching him on

television and if I can be even half as good as him I will be happy," Ali said of the impact of Khan, who won lightweight silver at the 2004 Athens Olympics at 17.

Hailing from the Bury Amateur Boxing Club in Lancashire, Ali trains under Khan's former amateur mentor, Mick Jelley, and punched his way onto the international stage by winning a silver medal at the AIBA Youth World Championships in Bulgaria in April.

Entering the Nanjing YOG as a title contender in the 52kg category, Ali breezed through the preliminary rounds to book a revenge fight against US boxer Shakur Stevenson, who beat Ali in the Youth Worlds final.

However, lack of training due to a cut above his left eye took its toll on Ali, who lost to Stevenson again in the semifinals.

Still, the teenager feels satisfied to leave Nanjing with a medal around his neck given that he wasn't 100

percent before the Games.

"I am disappointed not to get to the final but, because of the lack of training, I am really happy to come away with a medal," he said.

"The bronze means everything to me. I stopped sparring early so this tournament was the first time I was back in the ring for more than a month and my fitness was nowhere near to what it normally is and neither was my timing, but I still got a medal so I am over the moon."

Despite having bagged medals at two major events this year, Ali won't be taking a break — the European Youth Championships will be held next month in Zagreb, Croatia.

However, representing Team GB at the Olympics and winning medals is Ali's ultimate goal.

"Whenever you represent Great Britain it is a privilege and I get such a buzz from it," he said. "I want to do it at a real Olympics further down the line and this is a great sign that I am heading in the right direction."



British boxer Muhammad Ali (left) fights Gaurav Solanki from India during the Youth Olympic Games. PHOTO BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

Coaches approve of new scoring system

Boxers at the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games are competing under the new International Boxing Association scoring system and thus far coaches seem pleased with the changes.

Under the new scoring system, the winner of each round is awarded 10 points, as is the case in professional boxing. Five ringside judges score the fight, but only three scorecards are tallied to form the final score.

"We think it is a better system, fairer, where they pick the three judges from the five. The judges are more scrutinized. It was anonymous before, but now they are accountable."

GARY HALE

British boxing coach

The former computerized punch-count system has been discarded and now only the time is displayed on screens during bouts, not a running score.

"We think it is a better system, fairer, where they pick the three judges from the five," said British coach Gary Hale, after his boxer, Peter McGrail of the United Kingdom, defeated Salem Tamma of Algeria three rounds to nil to win the bantamweight bronze. "The judges are more scrutinized. It was anonymous before but now they are accountable."

It is also hoped that the new scoring system will improve the safety of fighters by shifting the focus to technical skills and ring dominance rather than punch volume.

"It means the boxers have to engage and work more to get points," said Australia coach Marcus Wilson, whose fighter Satali Tevi-Fuimaono finished fifth in the middleweight section.

— NANJING2014.ORG