

# More aggressive 3-on-3 format wows the crowds

By SUN XIAOCHEN  
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

Boasting a dynamic and free style that appeals to young athletes, the 3-on-3 basketball event is growing in popularity at the Nanjing Youth Games as representatives of the sport hope for its inclusion in the Olympics.

At the outdoor basketball venue at Wutaishan Sports Center, the 3-on-3 games have been electric. Crowds applaud every 3-point shot and chant the names of players as hip-hop music blares. Every night, there are dynamic crossovers, no-look passes and thunderous dunks.

"It (the 3-on-3 format) is a perfect match (for young athletes). This is a game for young people, this is a game for hip-hop music and this is a fashionable game. This is something you want to bring to the city and it will be embraced by young people," said International Basketball Federation president Patrick Baumann after the men's dunk contest on Thursday.

The 3-on-3 version is at times a faster and more aggressive variant of the 5-on-5 format. Each game lasts for one 10-minute period. The team that first scores 21 points or scores the most points wins the game. There is a 12-second shot clock and a team secures a new possession after stepping from behind the 3-point arc. In the event of a tie at the end of regulation, the team that scores first in sudden death wins.

There are quick transitions from defense to offense, at times leading to smoother games than 5-on-5. Russian player Kirill



Jannes Hundt of Germany drives to the hoop against a French player during the 3-on-3 Group A match at the Nanjing Youth Olympics on Saturday. France won 20-11. PHOTO BY XINHUA

Gornaev said the 3-on-3 format provides more opportunities to showcase skills and power.

"This version is indeed challenging. It is a lot tougher than the regular basketball format. You not only need skills, but also power, stamina, strength ... and a lot of energy to play and overcome your rivals. It means you have to be on your toes all the time," the power forward said.

Former Olympian Jorge Garbajosa, who won gold with Spain at the 2006 FIBA World Championships and is a former NBA player, said it's more fun to watch the abridged version of the sport.

"It's very different from 5-on-5. Players have to practice specifically for this game. It's very exciting and there is no resting or breaks in transition. I think it's a great complement and almost a different sport to 5-on-5 basketball," said the 36-year-old, who is in Nanjing to promote the Youth Games.

Promoted worldwide since its debut at the 2010 Youth Olympics in Singapore, the 3-on-3 format is lobbying for entry to the Summer Olympics program.

Baumann, also an International Olympic Committee member, said the IOC's

plan to alter the Games program for its 2020 agenda could bode well for the 3-on-3 format.

"We hope with the changes for 2020 ... we think we have good cards in play," said Baumann.

Garbajosa agreed.

"I wish (it will happen). I think it will be a great opportunity (to further promote street ball). It will be like (the inclusion of both) volleyball and beach volleyball. It's like the same sport with a different way to play. It's exciting for the Olympic family to include new events," the Spaniard said.

The recently concluded FIBA 3x3 World Tour Beijing Masters is proof of the game's popularity as more than 1,800 teams in seven age and gender categories competed during the preliminary stage on 100 courts at the Wukesong Hi-Park in Beijing.

"Every country needs to look at the 3-on-3 format and how it best fits the development of the game of basketball. There are going to be many countries like Syria and Guam. They currently may not be considered as 5-on-5 powers, but the 3-on-3 format could be a tool for these countries to develop. It's like giving a home to all street ball players," Baumann said.

## New event a slam dunk

By SUN XIAOCHEN  
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

The high-flying slam dunk contest at the Nanjing Youth Olympics brought a taste of NBA All-Star-type glitz to amaze local fans.

For diehard hoops fans, windmills and between-the-leg dunks are common fare at the NBA's All-Star Weekend, but a group of young players competing in the 3-on-3 tournament displayed those iconic stunts in front of hundreds of boisterous fans on the outdoor court of Wutaishan Sports Center on Thursday.

It was the first time the YOG had included a dunk contest on its program and it attracted 21 contenders from 16 NOCs.

Amid thunderous applause from the crowd, local youngster Fu Lei stepped on the court as the first of the four finalists. He waved to the stands and then pulled a court-side barrier under the basket.

The 18-year-old then sprinted to the paint and leapt over the fence to finish a single-handed dunk, reminding some of Blake Griffin's over-the-sedan trick in the 2011 NBA All-Star dunk contest.

"I just wanted to prove that the yellow man can fly as well," Fu said of his high-flying exploits after the contest. "As the only Asian athlete qualified for the final, I tried to earn some respect for Asia."

Still, Fu's athleticism was not quite up to the level of his European peers.

Ziga Lah, a Slovenian hoopster, soon impressed he fans with a catch-and-go stunt. He grabbed the ball from a teammate's outstretched hand while leaping up in the air and slammed it in after changing hands across his legs. The powerful and stylish dunk earned a healthy round of applause.

"I said to myself, it's dunk-or-die situation (in the final) because this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance. I was trying to win," Lah said about his performance.

However, the first three performers, including Spanish player Adnan Omeragic Alic, came up short against eventual champion Karim Mouliom of France.

Boasting a fun and engaging style, Mouliom invited three girls from Hungary's 3-on-3 team and formed them into a human ladder crouching near the basket. The 18-year-old then soared over their heads and slammed his way to full points and victory.

Mouliom has competed in many dunk contests with even crazier stunts but winning an Olympic gold medal was a first.

"I am really excited (about winning a gold medal). The crowd is very cool. This definitely looks like the NBA All-Star Weekend," Mouliom said after the medal ceremony.

Lah claimed the silver while Fu won the bronze.

All the finalists enjoyed All-Star treatment as they were mobbed for autographs and selfies.



**"I think it will be a great opportunity (to further promote street ball). It will be like (the inclusion of both) volleyball and beach volleyball."**

JORGE GARBAJOSA  
Former Spanish Olympian