



A lab full of excitement

By ZHENG XIN

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Just imagine elite athletes showcasing their skills in roller sports, skateboarding, sports climbing and wushu all at the same venue.

Well, that is what you get at the Sports Lab in Nanjing, a unique place that features wushu mats, a skate park, a climbing wall and roller track.

As many as 64 athletes, international and Chinese, put on performances at the Lab each day and spectators are also invited to take part and share in the thrills.

“It is hoped more youngsters get to know these sports through this showcase.”

HU TIANYOU
skaterboarder

“It is hoped more youngsters get to know these sports through this showcase,” said Hu Tianyou, a 26-year-old skateboarder.

According to Hu, Nanjing houses a variety of parks, which are suitable for the young to start learning his sport.

“It’s a good opportunity to further promote this fun game,” he said.

Situated in Fishmouth Wetland Park, which is two kilometers from the Youth Olympic Village, the non-ticketed venue is open to the general public and accredited clients.

Participatory events take place between 8 am-10:30 am and 3:30 pm-7 pm each day until Aug 27.

The IOC Executive Board made the decision to invite the four non-Olympic sports to be part of the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games last year.

According to Wang Liping, a volunteer at the Sports Lab, the venue has attracted more than 1,000 people every day so far and fans were lining up as early as 7 am.

After the Games, the Sports Lab, and its showcase stadium, will become a sports venue for local residents.



ELEMENTS OF CHINA

Above: A foreign athlete participates in the bamboo dance, a traditional folk activity of the Li ethnic group, at the Olympic Athletes Village. The Li people often use song and dance in their traditions, sometimes dressing in folk costumes to dance on festive occasions, such as the Sanyuesan Festival, which falls on March 3 in the lunar calendar. The festival is a time for the young men and women of the Li ethnic people to express their love for each other.

Left: A barrier at the equestrian court uses the image of a horse and the wording “Year of Horse” to help promote Chinese culture and traditions.

PHOTOS BY XINHUA

8-year-old volunteer a hit

Primary school student works at Israeli cultural booth despite knowing little Hebrew

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Despite not being proficient in English, or any other foreign languages, 8-year-old Wu Yuhang has become the most popular volunteer at the Youth Olympic Games Village.

“There are no communication barriers between me and the athletes. They know what I’m talking about,” said Wu, a student volunteer from the Nanjing Longjiang Primary School.

As a representative of cultural exchanges during the Games, Wu, the youngest volunteer at the Youth Olympics, is responsible for introducing athletes to different cultures.

Wu is primarily responsible for presenting and introducing the culture of Israel, a task that appears challenging for an 8-year-old child who knows only three complete sentences in Hebrew: What nationality are you? How are you? How old are you?

But Wu has proved to be more than competent.

“I smile to people and greet whoever comes to the Israeli cultural booth,” Wu said. “Most smile back and I just come forward and show them what we have got in the booth, mostly through my body language.”

Wu said when there is no one around, she focuses on making sand sculptures.

“Israel is a country covered by vast areas of sand and that’s a message I’m trying to convey through my sand art,” the girl said.

Wu said she has benefited more from her volunteer duties than a semester’s work at school.

“I have gotten to know a dozen new friends, including Hannah from Barbados, my bff,” said Wu. “She gave me a ring as a gift, which was pretty. I want to go visit her in her country when I graduate and am capable of speaking English.”

Wei Fujia, a teacher from the Nanjing Longjiang Primary School, said Nanjing has about 100 elementary school students as volunteers for the Games.

“Most of the students are selected from as many as 106 elementary and middle schools,” he said. “Despite the young age, they are not the least inferior to those senior volunteers.”



Wu Yuhang is the youngest volunteer at the Games at 8 years old. PHOTO BY ZHENG XIN