

Chinese women dazzle in debut

FOCUSED TRAINING, STRONG ACC SUPPORT — NOT TO MENTION GREAT BOWLING — KEY TO VICTORY

By CUI JIA
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — “Chinese players are bowling machines,” said Nur Aishah, the 20-year-old captain of the Malaysian women’s cricket team, after her side lost to China “fair and square” in the opening cricket match in Guangzhou, which was also the debut of the sport at the Asian Games.

The Chinese women, making their first international appearance in cricket on Saturday, “surprised” everyone, said Nur, whose team lost to China by 55 runs. China scored 116 runs.

“They played very well, especially the bowlers who are unstoppable,” said Nur. “They are very confident and not nervous at all.”

Wang Meng, captain of China, was “extremely happy” about the team’s first win in an international tournament and very pleased with her players. She attributed the team’s success to a good pitch and the support from her players and the home crowd.

China did not have an official national cricket team until 2007 and it was formed simply because, as host, China had to make an appearance at the Guangzhou Asian Games. “The first win is always the sweetest. Three years of hard work have finally paid off,” said Wang. “We are not afraid of anyone. We just want to do our best in every game as there is still a long way to go.”

Despite a lack of experience at the international level, the team has been practicing hard to get the basics right. It has concentrated more on bowling than batting during training sessions because it requires less technique, said former javelin athlete Mei Chunhua, one of China’s top bowlers.

Mei, one of China’s opening bowlers, dismissed two Malaysian batters early in the game, which boosted the team’s confidence.

“I am pleased with all of the players, who have been drawn from high schools and universities,” said Liu Rongyao, coach of the two Chinese cricket teams. “I am very proud of them.”

Liu said there were no targets for the women’s and men’s team and said he only expected them to play their best. The China women’s team will now face the winner of the match between Pakistan and Thailand on Nov 22.

The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) had provided lots of support to the Chinese teams by assigning coaches, injecting funds and providing training facilities, Liu said.

However, he continued that the Chinese cricket teams were still “babies”, and needed time to grow.

“I never knew China could play this well,” said Krishna, a 32-year-old diehard cricket fan from India. “But it definitely needs to improve its batting skills.”

Krishna plans to watch more Asian Games’ cricket matches if he can get hold of tickets.



ANTHONY DICKSON / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Huang Zhuo of China swings away against Malaysia during the first match of women’s Group A on Saturday. China won by 55 runs.

“The only thing that disappoints me is that although most tickets for the matches have been sold, the audience hardly fills one stand of the stadium.”

Meanwhile, cricket was omitted from the list of events proposed for the 2014 Incheon Asian Games in ROK, which was released late on Thursday.

“I really hoped the ACC could keep the sport in the Asian Games,” Liu said. “But no matter what, it will continue to develop and promote cricket in China because Chinese are suited to the game as there is no body contact involved.”

COMMENT >> SHAHRIAR KHAN

China has excelled in many sports, and now it is starting to perform well on the cricket field as well.

Cricket’s a new game in China and, like everything new, it takes a while to come to grip with.

However, Chinese are beginning to understand it now. China’s women have already impressed by beating Malaysia and they could very well stun Pakistan.

And Guangzhou is providing the perfect setting for the “new” sport.

The buildings, the roads, the architecture and the friendliness of the volunteers say to visitors. “We may be an old civilization, but we welcome the new and we enjoy meeting you”.

We say the same to the people of Guangzhou.

