

Liu Xiang's 'three-peat' selling tickets

Ticket scalpers are demanding 1,600 yuan (\$240) per ticket to see Chinese superstar Liu Xiang attempt his third successive Asian Games title in the 110 meter hurdles.

Internet touts are asking for prices that amount to 20 times the 80 yuan face value of a ticket for the event, the Shanghai Youth

"LIU XIANG IS STILL A TICKET-SELLING MACHINE."

Daily said.

"Liu Xiang is still a ticket-selling machine," the paper said.

The Shanghai native, who disappointed millions by pulling up lame in a preliminary 110m hurdles heat at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, has dominated the event in Asia, winning at the Asiad in Bangkok in 2002 and in Doha 2006.

Liu, 27, remains a focal point of the Asiad despite a lingering injury that has kept him from the explosive form that won him an Olympic gold medal in Athens in 2004 and once carried him to a world record.

Chinese officials have downplayed their expectations for Liu, with deputy head of China's delegation Xiao Tian saying on Wednesday the star hurdler was past his prime.

Guangdong's 'Big Ben' chiming again

An historic clock tower dubbed "Guangzhou's Big Ben" by local residents has been called back into action to celebrate the Guangzhou Games, after its hourly chime was switched off almost three decades ago.

The century-old tower, known as Dazhonglou ("big clock building"), stopped chiming in the 1980s and has only been turned back on intermittently to serve important festivals.

Dazhonglou, located on the northern bank of the Pearl River in the city's busy downtown, was built in 1916 and subsequently served as the office building of the Guangdong and Guangzhou Customs.

It was later given a facelift and reopened to tourists and local residents at the Guangzhou exhibition hall of the Museum of Chinese Customs.

It was listed as a major historic and cultural site under state protection in 2006, when the customs office moved to the city's Zhujiang



Chinese diving champion He Chong was chosen to light the Asian Games' flame less than 24 hours before the final performance.

It was confirmed that Chen Weiya, chief director of the opening ceremony, cast his daughter, Chen Jiayu, in the ceremony to help keep details a secret.

DIRECTOR HAPPY WITH HE'S ACTING

Chen Weiya, chief director of the opening ceremony of the 16th Asiad, said he was happy with He Chong's performance after the Olympic and world diving champion lit a giant firecracker that sparked off the Asian Games' flame on Friday night.

"He is an athlete, not a theater actor. I think he performed naturally," Chen said when asked whether the diver lived up to expectations.

The athlete had to assume the air of a frightened but excited child before lighting the crackers in conjunction with two Chinese children.

Chen said his team decided to make He the final torchbearer less than 24 hours before the final performance, meaning that He had little time to prepare for the role.

The director also confirmed that one of the two children was his daughter, Chen Jiayu. The director said he chose her to help keep the ceremony details a secret.

(Pearl River) new town.

Apart from its hourly chime, the clock will play the Westminster Quarters every 15 minutes.

Murakami hoping to repeat success

Japan's Yukifumi Murakami will be looking for more Chinese magic in the men's javelin event at the Asian Games after the 30-year-old won gold at the Asian Championships in Guangzhou last year.

Murakami, captain of Japan's Asian Games delegation, became the first Japanese to win a world championships medal in the javelin in Berlin last

year with a throw of 82.97 meters, earning him a bronze.

"It is a huge honor to be selected as Japan's captain," Murakami told reporters. "It is our duty as athletes to perform to our full potential at the Asian Games.

"I have worked hard in the build-up to the competition to make sure I come away with the right result."

Pre-teen power of mind over matter

There are few sports where a 12-year-old can trounce somebody 17 years their senior. *Xiangqi*, or Chinese chess, is one of them.

Chinese Taipei's Peng Jou An beat her Japanese opponent within two hours on Saturday, despite the fact that Ayaka Ikeda is more than twice Peng's age, and vastly more experienced.

Peng, whose feet were not long enough to reach the ground beneath the chess table, said she experienced some butterflies in her stomach, but never felt intimidated.

"I did feel a bit nervous, but mostly because I only started learning how to play one year ago," she said.

Peng ranks as one of the three youngest athletes at the Guangzhou Games. The others, both *xiangqi* players from the Republic of Korea, are Kim Taeg-yeong (11) and Byun Sung-won (12).

Spotlight on Asiad hostess

Camera-friendly Wu Yi, a freshman from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, got some unexpected exposure after serving as a hostess standing beside guest speakers and IOC officials during the

Asiad's opening ceremony.

Wu's sweet smile caught the attention of local media and netizens when she posed beside speakers such as Guangdong Governor Huang Huahua, China's Sports Minister Liu Peng and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, president of the Olympic Council of Asia, as they delivered speeches for about 15 minutes on Friday night.

"I didn't know the camera was set on me. I thought they were only shooting the officials," said Wu, who trained hard to smile throughout and was subsequently dubbed "Miss Smile" on Internet portals.

Curiously, her twin sister, Wu Yue, is also serving as a volunteer at the Asiad.

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STUDENT WU YI HAS BEEN DUBBED 'MISS SMILE' ON THE INTERNET