

ASIAN ANGELS

HOSTESSES WENT THROUGH GRUELING TRAINING CAMP BEFORE MAKING THE GRADE



A group of hostesses for the Asian Games pose after being selected through the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games Miss Etiquette contest.

SUN XIAOCHEN / CHINA DAILY

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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GUANGZHOU — A training regimen worthy of any Asian Games athlete helped airline stewardess Xu Yameng become a member of the event's popular — and very photogenic — team of hostesses.

Xu, who hails from Shandong province, was one of the lucky young ladies selected through the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games Miss Etiquette contest.

They subsequently graduated from a tough summer training session to become full-fledged "Asian Angels".

"Life in the training camp was definitely the hardest time for us," Xu said.

"The high standards and tough physical exercise pushed everybody to the limit. But after graduating from the 40-day course, I felt that my soul was elevated by this accomplishment, and I know that any problems I might have in the future will seem like a piece of cake," she said.

The 380 women who attended the camp began their day at 6:30 am with two hours of military drills, followed by half an hour of posture exercises.

All the women had to stand against a wall with a book balanced on their head and a piece of paper held

between their knees. If the book or the paper hit the ground, the exercise would be started over again, said Xu.

"The daytime session usually concluded at 7 pm, but then another two-hour session of military drills awaited us after supper," she said.

The vigorous physical training was in contrast to the regimen for hostesses at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, who improved their smiles by biting into chopsticks with only eight teeth showing.

"How many teeth you are allowed to show or the proper angle to open your mouth are only measurements for being looked at," said Xu.

"We are required to express amiability and sincerity through our eyes, not just by striking a pose."

Xu admits the training helped her learn to better communicate with others.

"The training brought me the basic skills to serve as an Asian Games hostess and also helped me learn how to promote my personality," she said.

The training camp also included a series of related theory courses consisting of oral English, service manners and Asiad history.

After being a part of the opening ceremony, the "Asian Angels" have been assigned to each venue for medal presentation ceremonies.

Q & A >> HASAN UDDIN AHMED SHIMUL

How was the opening ceremony? Which part impressed you the most?

It was a fantastic show and a great spectacle. I've participated in many sports meetings, and watched many great performances, but this was definitely the best I've ever seen. The best part, I think, was the actors hanging in the air. They danced and formed different shapes. I don't know how they were able to do that. It was incredible, totally beyond what I imagined possible.

I noticed that you just came out of the dining hall. How is its night service for athletes?

The food for night meals is very good. They provide many varieties, just as they do during the day. There is also a McDonald's open around the clock, so any time you go there they have hot food waiting for you. But we Bangladeshis like KFC, because we like to eat chicken, and there aren't so many chicken dishes in the dining hall.

Have you visited the competition venue where the hockey matches will be played? How are the conditions?

I've checked the hockey field. It's good. The facilities and equipment are all fine. But it's too far from here, so we have to take a long bus ride to get there.

What do you do for recreation in the residential zone if your team has no competitions or practice sessions lined up?

That's a good question. Everything in the Village is good, but I do have one minor complaint.



China Daily reporter Sun Xiaochen (left) and Hasan Uddin Ahmed Shimul

There are no TVs in our rooms. We want to watch the games on TV to know our opponents, and for entertainment. There is a TV in every country's delegation office, but there are too many people there, so it gets very crowded.

We also don't have phones in our rooms, so it's inconvenient for us to organize meetings. I have to go up or down the stairs and knock on each of the players' doors to tell them.

Have you been to Guangzhou before? What do you think of the city?

It's my fourth time here. My first visit was back in 2002. The city is beautiful and modern. There are so many people and skyscrapers here. It's different from my country. I like it.

Hasan Uddin Ahmed Shimul is an official with the Bangladesh hockey team.