



YANG SHIZHONG / CHINA DAILY

Park Tae-hwan of the ROK celebrates winning the men's 200m freestyle final at the Asian Games on Sunday.

Park's record replay torpedoed Zhang

ROK'S OLYMPIC CHAMP SETS NEW ASIAN MARK IN 200M FREESTYLE, WHILE CHINA'S MAIN HOPE FLOUNDERS

By LEI LEI
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — The most anticipated individual showdown in the Asian Games pool — between the Republic of Korea's (ROK) Olympic champion, Park Tae-hwan, and China's world champion, Zhang Lin — ended with Park claiming the gold medal in Sunday's men's 200m freestyle.

Park, the Beijing Olympic champion in the 400m freestyle, led throughout to clock one minute and 44.80 seconds, breaking his own Asian record of 1:44.85.

Chinese teenager Sun Yang finished second in 1:46.25, while Japanese Takeshi Matsuda took bronze in 1:47.73.

Zhang, the world champion in

the 800m freestyle in Rome last year, finished a disappointing fourth in 1:48.10.

"I'm very happy. It's good to get a record," said defending champion Park.

"I didn't have a good start, so I thought I would fall behind. I didn't think I would break the record."

Besides the Japanese team, Park is considered the host's biggest rival in the pool. He won three gold medals at the Asian Games in Doha four years ago and narrowly beat Zhang at the Beijing Games in the men's 400m.

Getting off to a golden start in Guangzhou, the 21-year-old is now eyeing victories in his three other events — the 100m, 400m and 1,500m freestyles.

"I was nervous at the beginning of the race, but I told myself

to relax and do my best," Park said. "I'm very glad to have gotten off to a good start. The Asian Games have not ended. I hope I can continue to do well in the other events."

For Zhang, who is considered a new sporting icon in China, the race may provide some valuable lessons.

"I felt I was out of my normal form today. I really don't know what to say," said Zhang. "I don't know why it was like that. I can't accept my form today. I have to take stock and look at what I did. It was not because of the pressure. It was my own fault."

Four-time Olympic gold medalist Kosuke Kitajima of Japan was another star who failed to make the podium as he finished fourth in the 50m breaststroke.

China's Xie Zhi was the surprise

winner, clocking 27.80 seconds, followed by Japan's Ryo Tateishi, 0.06 seconds back. China's Li Xiayan won the bronze in 27.89.

"I don't know what to say. Even though it's my best result this year, I didn't get a medal," Kitajima said. "I will now try my best in the 100m breaststroke."

China's young gold medalist said the result was beyond his expectations.

"I was very happy and excited to compete against Kitajima and now I am thrilled to have beaten him," said the 23-year-old Xie.

"When I was in the water I realized I had a lead over him. I am very excited that I maintained that lead to the end."

Chinese swimmers swept other gold medals available on Sunday.

Zhou Jiawei won the men's 100m butterfly in 51.83 seconds,

beating Japan's Fujii Takuro, the bronze medalist in the event at the Pan Pacific Championships in August, by 0.02. Chinese butterfly specialist Wu Peng took bronze in 52.72.

Zhao Jing added another gold in the women's 50m backstroke in a new Asian record of two minutes, 6.46 seconds. Shiho Sakai of Japan won silver in 2:07.81, followed by her compatriot, Aya Terakawa, in 2:09.72.

In the women's 400m medley, Ye Shiwen beat teammate Li Xuanxu to win in 4:33.79. Asian record holder Li took silver in 4:38.05, followed by Cheng Wan-jung of Chinese Taipei (4:41.55).

The host also claimed gold in the women's 4x100m relay in three minutes, 36.88 seconds. Japan won silver in 3:37.90, while Hong Kong finished third (3:43.17).