



Family affair is a 'relay' great feeling

By TANG ZHE
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Zhai Xiaomeng carefully packed the Universiade torch "Rainbow" into its box after taking a number of photos with it and said his family was proud to be torchbearers of the Universiade.

However, they felt the 59-meter run was too short for them to fully enjoy the glory of the moment.

"The distance was too short, we reached the end when I felt we had just started. The torch relay staff by our side told us to run faster, but we really wanted to run longer," said Zhai, a citizen of Shenzhen, who passed the torch with his wife, Zou, and son, Zhai Chenyu, on Aug 8 as the No 47 bearers.

Zhai was a professional skier on the Jilin sports team and finished third in the ski jump at the eighth National Winter Games in 1995. He came to Shenzhen 12 years ago, and works as a grass skiing coach.

He was also appointed a skiing referee at the 24th Winter Universiade held in China's northeastern city of Harbin, and will work as scoring manager at the main gymnasium at the Universiade Center during the Shenzhen Universiade.

The South China city has also provided him with a family. He met his wife, Zou, a former skier from Heilongjiang province, in Shenzhen. Their son, Zhai Chenyu, is now six years old.

When they learnt Shenzhen would introduce family torchbearers for the Universiade torch relay, they decided to join without hesitation.

"The selection process started in June. My husband found the notice on the Internet, but we missed the application deadline," said Zou, who only gave her last name in the interview. "However, some days later, he was informed that we could apply through his company, then we rushed to write our names on the list at noon, though the selection started only three hours later."

Zou said they performed Korean chants during the selection process as the son sang and the parents danced, and they felt so lucky to become one of the few families to emerge from more than 10,000 and advance to the second stage.

After reaching the final with another fine performance, the trio spent a week rehearsing for the final selection.

"First, we showed the spirit of our family under the theme of environmental protection by walking on to the stage wearing clothes and hats made of plastic bags we designed ourselves," Zou said. "Then we



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Zhai Xiaomeng (right), along with his wife, Zou, and son, Zhai Chenyu, pose after their torch relayed on Aug 8 in Shenzhen.

displayed our talent with a show named 'Let the hope fly'. My husband and I recited poetry, while our son imitated sports such as weightlifting and soccer.

"Finally, the national flag rose and our son sang the national anthem with the flag at his back - just like the champions," she said.

Their performance won the final and made them one of 20 families to carry the torch.

"We were really happy to become torchbearers and we were singing all the way home that night. We even couldn't fall asleep after the final," Zou said. "A lot of

people have helped us, all the children in my son's kindergarten were encouraging us, and many teachers helped us to rehearse the program, and told us a lot about the Universiade."

"The Universiade gives Shenzhen a different look, from the appearance of the city to service quality at public places," Zou said. "And we feel so lucky to represent the city in the torch relay, and it's also a precious experience for our son to be a part of this event in his childhood."

Zheng Xin contributed to this story.

QUOTES



"I feel very lucky. Not only for the fact that I am the No 88 torchbearer (No 8 is a lucky number in Chinese culture as it means fortune), but I am also very proud to be running along with other bearers who also contributed to the success of this event. This is an event that encourages our young generation to learn and strive for their own success through sports and it's also a good platform for cultural sharing."

ALBERT CHEUNG, lead partner of PwC China - Shenzhen, the exclusive accounting services supplier for the Universiade.



"The (torch relay) route in Shenzhen is very special. It shows the beautiful and green aspects of Shenzhen. It was also a joyful experience for me as when I was running along Binhai Avenue, Hong Kong was just on the other side of me. The only pity is the passing route was too short and that it finished when I just started to feel excited. As the honorary head of the Hong Kong swimming team, I will watch the opening ceremony and Hong Kong competitors during the Universiade."

KENNETH FOK KAI-KONG, honorary head of the Hong Kong swimming team, No 23 torch bearer in the Shenzhen Universiade torch relay.