



GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Macao's twin divers, Choi Su-Tian (left) and Choi Su-Kuan, answer reporters' questions after the competition.

YOUNG CHINESE PLUNGE FOR GOLD

SHENZHEN — China's junior diving "dream team" showed early dominance of the pool by winning the two gold medals on offer during the first day of competition at the Universiade yesterday.

Olympic and world champion Qin Kai teamed with budding talent Lin Jin to claim the championship in the men's synchronized 3m springboard before teenage diver Shi Tingmao clinched the women's 1m springboard, an event which she also won at the Shanghai World Championships last month.

"I still made a mistake in a routine," Qin said.

"I want to challenge myself again and reuse that stunt. I did it without enough practice, and it's not easy to do," said Qin, who lost to national teammate He Chong at the Shanghai event's 3m springboard final due to the same mistake.

Shi said her performance wasn't perfect, with a flaw during a spin, but said she has "learned a lot from the unique Universiade experience".

SUN XIAOCHEN

Twin sisters add a twist to synchro

SIBLINGS AT THE FOREFRONT OF MACAO'S DESIRE TO BECOME A FORCE IN DIVING

By SUN XIAOCHEN
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Despite lackluster performances on the springboard, Macao twin sisters Choi Su-Tian and Choi Su-Kuan still enjoyed their Universiade debut.



DIVING

Coming to the Shenzhen meet as underdogs, the 21-year-old pair was eliminated from the 1m springboard finals yesterday at the opening event of the week-long

diving competition.

Although eliminated early, Choi Su-Tian and her sister still felt satisfied with their performances and said they enjoyed being at a carnival for international students.

"Actually, the 1m is not my best event and I made tiny mistakes today. But I thought I did well and I feel happy.

"Moreover, it's a rare opportunity for me to compete at such a big international meet and to talk with other countries' top young divers. It's a fantastic experience," said Choi Su-Tian.

Before showcasing their stunts in the Shenzhen spotlight, the sisters spent four tough years under coach Zhang Zilin's mother-like care and strict guidance.

Inspired by China's "Diving Queen" Guo Jingjing, the slightly-built twins started in the sport 10 years ago before debuting on the world stage at the 2005

"We love the sport very much but early on we lacked professional guidance. Coach Zhang's coming gave us a chance to learn some real skills."

CHOI SU-KUAN
DIVER FROM MACAO

East Asian Games in Macao, where the host launched its campaign to improve the sport's profile.

The Swimming Association of Macao China helped the sisters take part in the past three FINA World Championships and hired Zhang to coach them in 2007.

"We love the sport very much but early on we lacked professional guidance. Coach Zhang's coming gave us a chance to learn some real skills," said Choi Su-Kuan.

Zhang's lessons paid off when Choi Su-Tian won a bronze medal in the 3m springboard at last year's Guangzhou Asian Games.

It was Macao's first diving medal at the event and was evidence of the coach's fine guidance.

"I was so happy to see her improve so much and stand on the podium at a major event. It's also a dream that I

wasn't able to fulfill. I feel proud of her," said Zhang, who clinched the 10m platform's national championship in 1974 before retiring from the pool four years later.

"It's definitely a big confidence boost for me to continue my diving career and to compete here," Choi Su-Tian said.

As full-time college students, the twins have to make up all the time they have off school. They practice two hours a day and travel to Guangzhou on weekends for tough sessions.

Zhang, who treated the twins as her own daughters during their summer vacation camp in Guangzhou, prefers to play the "villain's role" in the pool, requiring the sisters to repeat each dive until it's perfect.

"As an athlete, I know it's all about the details at the elite level. I hope they can enjoy that split second when they plunge into the water without any faults," Zhang said.

After the non-Olympic 1m springboard, Choi Su-Tian will compete in her favorite 3m event on Aug 20 before teaming with her sister for the first time in four years in the synchronized event two days later.

Choi Su-Tian expects her "birth connection" with her sister to benefit their performance.

"I don't know (if the twin relationship will help), but I hope so. Anyway, we just need to limit the faults and try our best," said Choi Su-Tian.

Diving coach jumps back in with both feet

By SUN XIAOCHEN
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Zhang Zilin's 40-year diving career has come full circle.

The Macao diving team's coach started her professional career in 1971 and peaked when she claimed the national title on the 10m platform in 1971.

She met her husband — one of her coaches — while on the national team.

Zhang decided to be a teacher in Guangzhou University in Guangdong's provincial capital after leaving the pool in 1978.

She and her husband later moved to Laos to run a timber company.

Zhang never imagined she would return to the pool until she received the call from Macao.

"It was a tough time for me when they found me," Zhang said.

She returned to China with her son after her husband passed away in 2002.

"Returning to the pool, which I missed for years, was a great relief to me during that tough time," she said.

"I feel so excited to continue the dream I shared with my husband."

She will likely be coaching an ever-improving team, because Macao's swimming association started an eight-year program to recruit and cultivate youth to invest in the sport's future.

"We have 16 youngsters in the program now, and I believe the number will soon sharply increase," she said.

"Hopefully, all of our efforts will pay off."