



Italian athletes drive a hard bargain with a vendor on Dongmen Business Street.

LIN BAIYU / CHINA DAILY

A new game — bargain hunting

By MICHELLE FEI
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SHENZHEN — Don't be surprised if you happen to wander into the city's bustling Dongmen Business Street and find yourself surrounded by young foreign shoppers driving a hard bargain — even tougher than local residents.

The city's vibrant shopping area in Luohu district is more crowded than usual at the moment as Universiade athletes and delegates flock to get some shopping done in their spare time.

By Monday, the street had welcomed more than 2,000 foreign guests from 36 countries.

Electronic products, watches and traditional Chinese products, such as silk clothes, *qipao* and embroidered shoes are the most popular items, according to Luo Zhicheng, director of the Dongmen Business Street Agency.

"As one of the city's major shopping hubs, we are glad to see that

the street has been welcoming more and more foreign visitors," Luo said.

"We not only offer them a comfortable shopping environment, but also the essence of Chinese culture."

Gianni Maman, the Italian judo team's coach, has found his first trip to China exciting. On a sunny morning Tuesday, he took four of his young athletes away from the Universiade venues to take part in another form of fierce competition — bargaining for souvenirs.

"So far, I've had lots of fun in Shenzhen," Maman said. "The city is fantastic. We heard about the shopping street and we wanted to try to get some really good, cheap stuff."

Though Maman is on his first visit to China, he seemed at home bargaining with sellers. He immediately rejected a price of 30 yuan (\$4.70) for a 2GB flash drive and 300 yuan for a set of earphones. He said he would pay half those prices.



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Italian athletes search for goods.

His tactic of "starting with no more than half of the asked price" seems to have become a worldwide "shopping code".

While Maman and his Italian team members were still working to get better deals, Betina Lorscheitter, a swimmer from Brazil,

had already harvested a whole bag of traditional Chinese products, including 40 pairs of chopsticks with individual silk covers and 10 folding fans painted with peony flowers. All 90 items cost Lorscheitter a mere 90 yuan.

"I enjoyed my shopping here very much," she said. "I bought some souvenirs at a very good price. My family is going to love them."

Basketballers from the United States came to the shopping mall not only with their shopping lists, but also with a "shopping guide", said 15-year-old volunteer Luo Jianfeng, who works at a nearby U-station.

"A lot of athletes came to Dongmen to shop from sunrise to sunset," Luo said. "We work mainly as shopping guides for foreign guests, offering help whenever they run out of money, get lost or have problems finding certain products."

The athletes rewarded the third-year student at Shenzhen Foreign

Language School by giving him pins of their countries as souvenirs. The young shopping guide has collected more than 10 pins so far.

Meanwhile, the shopping zone was offering unconditional full-price refunds to Universiade athletes who wanted to return any purchases.

"We understand it must be very exciting for these young college students to hang out around the city and shop with friends, so we expect there might be lots of impulse buying, that's why we introduced the refund policy for athletes," said Li Junmei, Sun Plaza shopping mall's chief operating officer.

Li said that so far there had only been one refund, for 870 yuan worth of perfume.

To provide a better and more secure shopping environment, 722 security guards and policemen have been assigned to the Dongmen Business Street. As well, 42 CCTV cameras have been installed in the area.