



# Paddler completes a unique double

RAO REMAINS QUEEN OF UNIVERSIADE TABLE AFTER WINNING FOUR GOLD MEDALS FOR SECOND TIME

By TANG YUE  
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Chinese table tennis player Rao Jingwen repeated her feat from four years ago at the Bangkok Universiade by collecting all four titles on offer for women in Shenzhen. Rao won her fourth title yesterday with a victory over teammate Fan Ying in the singles final.

The paddler has also become the most successful athlete at this Universiade so far, surpassing compatriot swimmers Sun Ye and Lu Ying, who both won three golds.

“Before the Universiade, I said it would be good to win four gold medals again, but I didn’t really think about it. It is great that I made it again,” Rao said after upsetting the top-seeded Fan.

“I just try my best every time, no matter what tournament it is. I believe it will pay off finally. It is really interesting that it always turns out to be a Universiade,” said the 26-year-old, who has not enjoyed much success at other international tournaments.

Besides the singles title, Rao has led China to the team championship, teamed up with Ma Yuefei to win the women’s doubles and paired with Shang Kun to take the gold in the mixed doubles.

“I had expected the team title due to the overall strength of our squad. It wasn’t going to be very hard,” Rao said.

“For the doubles, the other players played a really crucial part and it’s good I had very good partners. So



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Rao Jingwen of China reacts during the women’s table tennis singles final match against teammate Fan Ying yesterday. Rao beat Fan 4-1 to win her fourth gold at the Shenzhen Universiade.

“I’m very lucky. I really love this city.”

Comparing her four golds here with her achievement in Thailand, Rao said: “This time the opponents were stronger, so it gives me more sense of achievement. Also we are playing in front of home crowds this time. They gave us great support. I love it.”

Rao fought back from losing the

first set to win four sets in a row and seal the victory in the Shenzhen Bay Sports Center gymnasium. She said the experience of three earlier finals helped.

“I think both of us played well today,” she said. “My only advantage over her was that I’d played two more finals than she had. It really helped me to adjust quickly and regain my

form after losing the first set.

“We are pretty good friends off the court and always play together. It also makes me familiar with her play. It is very helpful, especially as she is a chop player.”

Meanwhile, Fan, who is a student at Shenzhen University, said the failure in front of her schoolmates was an extra disappointment.

“It is really a pity (that I lost),” Fan said.

“Today I saw a lot of students from my University coming to cheer for me and I talked to some of them before the match. I hope they are not too disappointed by the result.”

China’s Xiong Xinyun and Ma Yuefei shared the bronze medals.

# Experience worth its weight in gold

By TANG YUE  
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SHENZHEN — The thriller came first, the easy victories followed.

A few hours after a seven-game singles semifinal, in which he fought back from 3-2 down to defeat Kenji Matsudaira of Japan, Chinese paddler Xu Xin completed an easy 4-0 victory over teammate Yan An in 40 minutes yesterday.

It was just one day after Xu had been through a similar journey to clinch the men’s doubles title.

Xu and Yan were just one game away from losing their doubles semi against Matsudaira and Jin Ueda before they won three games in a row to set up the final against Chen Chienan and Wang Yitse from Chinese Taipei. They then won that contest, 4-0.

Xu said the tense fluctuations in the semifinals helped him relax and paved the way for easy victories in the title matches.

“Actually, winning in this fashion is not that rare,” said Xu, whose singles championship helped China complete a clean sweep of all

seven gold medals in table tennis.

“Especially in major tournaments, the champions always go through one or several heart-stopping matches before the final.

“For me, fighting back from a very tough situation in the semifinals not only boosted my confidence, but also eased the pressure on me. I felt I had nothing to lose after that. You know, I could have already lost the chance to win gold.”

A frequent main-draw player in World Championships, Xu said experience also played a big part in

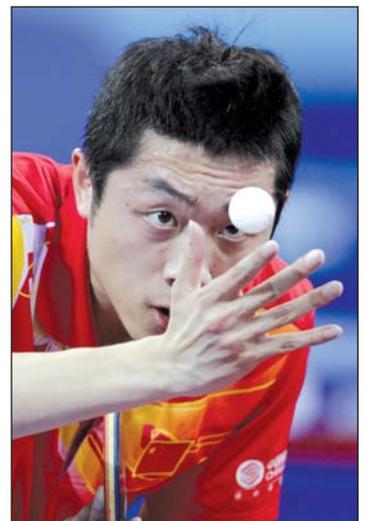
the one-sided final.

“I could feel Yan was nervous and really played below par today. By contrast, I’ve played more major tournaments than him, so I was more calm and just carried out my strategy,” he said.

The 18-year-old Yan agreed.

“It’s the most important match I have ever played and I kind of lost control at the table,” he said. “I was eager to win but I just lost the tempo.”

“But that’s normal. He is a stronger player than I am and I will try to catch up.”



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Xu Xin serves to teammate Yan An in the men’s singles final.