



CHEN JIANLI / XINHUA

China won the gold medal in the three ribbons and two hoops final yesterday at the Universiade.

China's golden rhythm

HOST SHOCKS FAVORED RUSSIANS BY CLAIMING TWO MORE GOLD MEDALS

By TANG ZHE
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — China's rhythmic gymnasts surprised everyone yesterday — even themselves.

The team finished with two gold medals and one bronze amid fierce competition from an excellent Russian team at Bao'an Gymnasium.

Deng Senyue of China snatched a bronze medal in the individual apparatus hoop, while the Chinese team, which won gold in the group all-around final on Sunday, unexpectedly claimed another two group titles in the five balls final and the three rib-

bons and two hoops final.

"It's inconceivable for me to take third place in the hoop competition," said Deng, who reached the final of all the individual events.

"There are a lot of top-class gymnasts here who are my sisters and idols, and I'm really happy to win the bronze medal," said the 19-year-old, who injured her stomach during training last week.

"I was very nervous before the games, but the passionate audience gave me lots of courage. The injury is still painful today, but I could hold on."

The Chinese squad was assembled four months before the Universiade, but still finished with three golds, leaving powerhouse Russia with three silver medals in the team events.

"We were more relaxed today," said Chinese captain Ma Qianhui.

"We hadn't expected this result before the games — we just wanted to do well in every detail today and gain more experience in international competitions.

"Though our team will be disbanded after the Universiade, we really cherish the days we were together, and I would like to thank every member of this team."

The Russians, meanwhile, were forced to take solace in a solid if not spectacular outing.

"We are very satisfied with our performance and we performed well," said team member Alexandra Makarova.

"I think there is nothing for the Russian team to improve. Our future goal is to rank at the top in every competition."

Teammate Evgeniya Kanaeva,

the gold medalist in the individual all-around at the 2008 Olympics, wasn't quite so satisfied.

The 21-year-old was expected to claim all five individual titles at the Universiade, but lost to compatriot Daria Dmitrieva in individual ribbon to finish with four gold and one silver.

"I'm not satisfied with my performance," Kanaeva said.

"I made a mistake with the ribbon, so I didn't win a gold medal."

Kanaeva won six gold medals at the 2009 World Championships, the only women's rhythmic gymnast in history to do so.

"It's sad that I didn't win all the individual gold medals, and I hope I will have a good performance at the upcoming World Championships in France," she said.

Retired gymnast back-flips to Games

By TANG ZHE
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — The 26th Summer Universiade has given former Chinese gymnast Li Hongyang a chance to return to the gymnasium.

Born in 1990, Li was the only Chinese to take part in the rhythmic gymnastics individual all-around in any Olympic Games. But she only finished 13th at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, although she was regarded as the country's most promising gymnast at the event.

But Li, who won bronze in the individual all-around at the 2006 Doha Asian Games, decided to retire from the sport in 2009 due to injuries.

After leaving the mat for nearly two years, Li returned to the gym as a technical official for the Universiade at Bao'an Gymnasium.

"No matter whether I am an athlete or an official at the Universiade, it's enough for me, as long as I can serve the Universiade," the 21-year-old said.

"The Chinese team was very eye-catching," Li said.

"They have improved a lot in artistic respects, and their performance was very expressive. Of course, the Russians still lead... and it's hard for others to surpass them."

Li said she is "very familiar" with Chinese gymnasts, such as Deng Senyue, whose nickname is "Genius".

"She was born for rhythmic gymnastics," Li said.

"I met Russian Evgeniya Kanaeva during the Beijing Olympic Games. She has become more mature after many international tournaments these years, and, personally, I like her very much."

Li's life is no less busy after retirement. She started studying Spanish at the Beijing Language and Culture University in 2010. She said dealing with the courses was not easier than daily training as an athlete.

"I felt physically tired in training. But now I feel mentally tired because there is a lot for me to learn and remember," Li said.

"The courses were really hard for me at first. I couldn't understand them. But there is one thing that's the same in sports and in study — setting a target for myself and working hard to reach it."