



British continue to shine

► Percy, Simpson win Star class, their nation's fourth gold in sailing

By ZHANG YING

QINGDAO: Iain Percy and Andrew Simpson capped a superb Olympic regatta for Britain, winning the Star class to secure a fourth sailing gold for the 2012 Games host.

Britain finished the Qingdao regatta as the top sailing nation for the third straight Olympics with a haul of six medals.

Percy, 32, won gold in the Finn dinghy in 2000 but said this triumph was "sweeter".

"It was unbelievable, so special. We felt good this morning, I knew we weren't going to bottle it and we didn't," said Percy, who was sixth in the Star in Athens along with

Steve Mitchell.

"It's been a killer four years and I am so glad it's behind me."

Brazil's Robert Scheidt and Bruno Prada took silver and Fredrik Loof and Anders Ekstrom of Sweden won bronze in the final race of the regatta.

Simpson said the need for flexibility during competition is the greatest challenge because the weather is so unpredictable.

After starting sailing at age 6 with his father, Simpson soon decided it was his passion. He was spotted by coach Jim Saltonstall, who brought out the best in talented Simpson and made it fun for the young sailor.

"He taught me so much and

has long been the most influential person in my sailing career," said Simpson.

He then chose the highly technical Finn class to herald in his professional career, achieving impressive results, including gold at the 2003 Finn US Nationals.

His teammate Percy said the unpredictability of the wind is the toughest part of the sport.

The 32-year-old Percy is one of Britain's most successful sailors with titles under the belt that include gold in the Finn class from the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Percy turned professional in 1998 and represented his homeland at the Olympics just two years later. He was honored by the Queen with a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his gold in Sydney.

Contemplating his own strengths in sailing yesterday, Percy said he is "level headed".

"I don't take the results all too seriously," he added.

Percy and Simpson have worked well as a team since joining forces at the beginning of 2007, winning a bronze medal in their first major test, the ISAF World Championships, and finishing sixth in the test event held in Qingdao a year ago.

Percy was then eagerly looking forward to adding to his Olympic medal collection, while Simpson was intent on triumph in his first Olympic foray in Qingdao.

Simpson will compete in Britain's challenge for the America's Cup next year along with Ben Ainslie, the 2008 Olympic gold medalist in the Finn class, who was named skipper of Team Origin, the boat to be used in Britain's campaign.

Agencies contributed to the story

Spanish pair secure Tornado gold

QINGDAO: Spain's Fernando Echavarri and Anton Paz held their nerve in choppy seas to win gold in the Tornado yesterday, possibly the last time the class will appear in the Olympics.

Australia's Darren Bundock and Glenn Ashby won silver and Argentina's Santiago Lange and Carlos Espinola took bronze.

The Spaniards, eighth in Athens four years ago, led their Australian rivals by three points going into the medal race but a fourth place in gusting winds on Thursday, with Bundock and Ashby fifth, was enough to take gold.

"After 10 years of training, we finally got our first Olympic medal," Echavarri told reporters.

"We feel like we're the luckiest here. We've been winning championships and regattas, but this is the most important win of them all."

Bundock, who also won Olympic Tornado silver in 2000 along with John Forbes, said a disastrous start to the medal race proved costly.

"We stuffed up at the start and we parked," he said.

"We broke our mast swivel and that's OK in 5 knots or



Fernando Echavarri (left) and Anton Paz of Spain compete in Tornado Class.

Ju Chuanjiang

under. But it was really breezy out there."

Twice Olympic champions Roman Hagara and Hans Peter Steinacher of Austria, winners in Sydney and Athens, sneaked into the medal race after a disappointing preliminary series and finished ninth overall.

The Qingdao regatta is the last Games for the Tornado class for the foreseeable future. An

Olympic boat since 1976 and arguably the most spectacular of the Olympic fleet, it was left out of the London 2012 schedule.

Spain's Tornado triumph was the country's first gold of the regatta, although it could yet be awarded a second by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

The Spanish Olympic Committee (COE), along with its Italian counterparts, has

appealed to CAS asking that Denmark's 49er team be disqualified from gold following a controversial medal race on Sunday. Spain's Iker Martinez and Xavier Fernandez are in silver position.

The Danes took gold after borrowing a boat from the Croatian team after their mast snapped on the way to the start.

Agencies

Qingdao residents devoted to Games

By HUANG YANHONG AND GUO XIN

QINGDAO: "I am so happy to have the chance to participate in the Olympics in my hometown in my old age," 71-year-old Zhong Yumin told China Daily.

"It is really a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," she added.

"I like singing very much. Every morning I join the amateur choir to sing for the Olympics at Music Square," she said.

"I just want to participate in the Olympics in the best way I can," she said.

Zhong is a member of the Little Grass Choir that like its name started at the grassroots level among a group of retired workers.

All its members have a passion for singing. Their slogan

is "cheering the Olympics with our songs".

"We prepared more than 10 English songs. When the foreign visitors pass by, hearing us singing English songs, they joined us," said Zhong.

Citizens like Zhong participating in the Olympics with their own ways can be seen throughout Qingdao.

Shang Jieqing, a quality inspector for Haier Group, has been learning English in her spare time over a year.

"The Olympics presents Qingdao the opportunity to become internationally famous. I do hope I can introduce the city and the Chinese culture to the world and English helps," she said.

Jiang Xiucheng, a bus driver, said he lost the opportunity to watch the sailing competition because of his work requirements.

"It is a pity that I could not cheer for the Chinese sailors competing on the venues," he said.

"But what I can do is to work well, presenting the passengers my best service and taking all of them safely to their destinations," he said.

When city volunteer Wang Tiantian arrives at her work place at the No 2 gate of the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center, the furnishings are very simple — one desk and four chairs under an awning.

Wang is a sophomore of Qingdao University, as a clinical major. As an emergency aid volunteer, she can make full use of her knowledge.

"Every day we work here for eight hours, although sometimes I am really exhausted after the day, I do feel honored that I can serve so near to the

Olympic areas," said Wang.

Qingdao has 2,100 Games volunteers, 1,000 city volunteers and 10,000 social volunteers.

The number who registered to be volunteers reached 420,000 for the Olympics and Paralympics.

As the Games approaches its end, citizens' smiles, civilized manners and enthusiasm have left deep impressions on the athletes, company officials and the overseas media.

Hein Verbruggen, chairman of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Coordination Commission for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, spoke highly of Qingdao.

"Qingdao locals' enthusiasm in participating in the Olympics really impressed me a lot. From the mayor to the normal citizen, they are all devoted," he said.



Top: Iain Percy (left) and Andrew Simpson of Britain, sailing in the Star class, celebrate after winning gold in Qingdao yesterday. Above: Fernando Echavarri (right) and Anton Paz of Spain celebrate winning Tornado gold.

Ju Chenghao/Ju Chuanjiang

Olympic park gives the feeling of a 'champion'

By ZHANG XIAOMIN

QINGDAO: The theme park in the Olympic Sailing Center has become a popular recreation site for residents, sailors and tourists to feel the charm of the Games in Qingdao, the host city of the Olympic Sailing Regatta.

The park has attracted more than 100,000 people since opening to the public on Aug 10.

Covering more than 10,000 sq m, it is adjacent to Qingdao's famous May 4th Square and the Music Square to the west.

One of its attractions is the 6m-high torch at the end of the Olympic Memorial Dock, which flies the Olympic and national flags on both sides.

The torch, lighted when the sailing competition began on Aug 9, is used as a popular tourist photo backdrop.

From the park, visitors have a close view of the sailors launching their boats and returning. They can also take part in various entertainment and sports activities organized by the Olympic partners and sponsors.

In the Haier interactive experience venues, children are enthralled by tennis and table tennis computer games. There is usually a long queue waiting at a simulated podium for the Olympic medal ceremony. Wearing a gold medal and the uniform of the Chinese team, people experience the excitement of being an Olympic gold medalist.

"I felt excited when I was standing on the podium with my son," said Liu Hongtao, holding his baby in his arms.

"I think he can be an Olympic winner when he grows up," he added.

Beer Square is a brew-lover's paradise, where tourists can taste fresh Tsingtao while appreciating the Olympic competition and the latest news on big TV screens.

"I like the feeling here. I like the beer. When you are in Qingdao, it is impossible that you do not have a taste of Tsingtao Beer," said Jiang Dawei from Jiangsu province.

Visitors can also buy authorized Olympic souvenirs in the park's licensed shop and appreciate a photograph exhibition that captures moments in the 2006 and 2007 Qingdao International Sailing Regatta.

Another highlight of the theme park is the international sculpture tour exhibition, which was moved around the world to Hong Kong, Seoul, Washington, Chicago and 23 other cities. It presents more than 100 pieces created by well-known sculptors from nearly 90 countries and regions.

This special supplement is co-published by the Information Office of Qingdao municipal government and China Daily