



# Qingdao hosts historic moments

► British wins most medals in a century; China tastes first sailing gold in Games

**QINGDAO:** When British crew Iain Percy and Andrew Simpson of Star class brought home the final gold of the Beijing Olympic Sailing Regatta, they not only snatched the fourth gold for their country, but also made Britain a top Olympic sailing nation for the third time in a row.

The success also left British sailors with their best Olympic medal haul for 100 years, as it tied the record set at the London 1908 Olympic Games, when they also recorded four golds, one silver and one bronze.

This is just one of the historic moments that Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center has witnessed in the past 13 days, when 400 sailors from 62 countries and regions competed in 11 events of nine classes.

Briton Ben Ainslie accomplished his hat-trick gold mission by claiming 2008 Olympic Finn

crown to be the third sailor in Olympic history for that title.

Australian crew Elise Rechichi and Tessa Parkinson completed double golds in the 470 fleets with their teammates Nathan Wilmot and Malcolm Page.

Denmark pair Jonas Warrer and Martin Ibsen were confirmed winner of 49er gold position after 19 hours of waiting on a protest decision.

The most historic moment, however, belonged to the host nation.

For the first time, China won the Olympic sailing gold, thanks to windsurfer Yin Jian's thrilling performance in RS:X Women.

China has already won two Olympic silver medals in windsurfing, with Zhang Xiaodong in Barcelona in 1992 and Yin Jian in Athens in 2004, but never gold.

It is also the first time that the host nation has been

crowned in windsurfing on the home waters.

Amid the screaming and flag waving of thousands of Chinese spectators, Yin, standing on the top of the podium and wrapped up with the national flag, couldn't stop her tears falling.

At the 2004 Athens Olympics, a small collision with another competitor in the 10th round relegated Yin to a silver medal finish, just two agonizing points shy of a gold medal.

Her teammate Xu Lijia also made history for China, winning the country's first Laser Radial bronze, a class in which Europeans usually excel.

These breakthroughs highlighted the improvement of the overall level of Chinese sailing, and will be recorded in history forever, said Chinese sailing team captain Yao Xinpei.

China is not the only country that has made a breakthrough on the Olympic sailing podium. Gintare Volungeviciute became the first Lithuanian to ever win

a medal in sailing at the Olympic Games by clinching the silver in Laser Radial.

Fushan bay of Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center also witnessed veteran sailors reap the fruits after years of hard training as well as rising stars set sail for their dreams.

Alessandra Sensini from Italy took the silver medal of RS:X Women, which is the only color missing from this remarkable 38-year-old woman's collection of gold from the Sydney 2000 and bronze from Atlanta 1996 and Athens 2004.

The 46-year-old Santiago Lange from Argentina won the bronze of Tornado in his fifth Olympics after Seoul 1988, Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000, and Athens 2004. His Tornado partner Carlos Espinola also gained his third medal of bronze after silver in Atlanta and bronze in Athens.

Off the water on the shore, thousands of audience members also realized their dreams of watching the Olympic sailing

from such a close distance with a clear visibility, thanks to the audience breakwater, the first-ever innovation in Olympic sailing history.

After watching two medal races at the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center and then attending awards ceremonies, Jacques Rogge, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), also a former Olympic sailor, was moved by what Qingdao has presented to the world.

"What you have achieved is outstanding," he said.

Xia Geng, mayor of Qingdao and also president of the Olympic Sailing Committee (Qingdao) of BOCOG, said the combined efforts from government and citizens managed to solve all the difficulties that they were confronted during the preparation for the Olympic Sailing Regatta.

"We have fulfilled the promise made to the rest of the world and we have realized the dream of our nation," he said.

Xinhua

## WHAT they are saying ...



**For an older athlete, competing in this Olympics was hard. I've had many injuries in the past four years. I was able to persevere until now because I wanted to make China proud in the Olympic Games that China is hosting.**

YIN JIAN  
China's RS:X gold winner



**I hope this is only the beginning. I hope I can get better results in the future. I would like to see more Chinese youth involved in sailing. It will be better to have a bigger Chinese voice in international regattas. I think I was very fortunate to get bronze here in Qingdao. After 11 years of hardship, I finally got what I waited for.**

XU LIJIA  
China's Laser Radial bronze winner



**The volunteers and people in Qingdao are amazing, so friendly and always kind. It would have been better to have more wind. Obviously, Qingdao does not have good wind some time.**

MALCOLM PAGE  
Men's 470 gold winner of Australia



**I am overwhelmed with emotion. It's a dream come true. The sailors have all been great competitors and we all deserve to be up here. It is not very often that we get a lot of spectators, so I thought it was very cool.**

ANNA TUNNICLIFFE  
Laser Radial gold winner of the US



**Winning an Olympic gold medal means you are the best in the world at what you do and that feeling is particularly special. Words can't describe it. We can't describe what we have been through these last four years. We looked at each other and it was just a look we have, we know we are the best — job done.**

SARAH AYTON  
Britain's Yngling gold winner



Britain's medalists in sailing pose for a group picture outside the press center at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games in Qingdao yesterday. Front row left-right: Paul Goodison, Sarah Ayton, Pippa Wilson, Olympic Manager for the British Olympic Sailing Team Stephen Park, Nick Rogers and Bryony Shaw. Back row left-right: Ben Ainslie, Andrew Simpson, Iain Percy, Sarah Webb and Joe Glanfield.

# Games powers more than sports in Qingdao

By Zhao Ruixue

**QINGDAO:** Watching sailing competitions, drinking Tsingtao beer and enjoying urban coastal life is how many foreigners spend their time in Qingdao during the Olympic Sailing Regatta.

"We like the city very much. It is well arranged. The seaside is very beautiful. We are planning to see the aquarium," French sailor Julien Bontemps said.

"The city is amazing. I love Qingdao," said Victor Kovalenko, head coach from Australia.

"The Olympics has not only brought great change to Qingdao but given the city an opportunity to present itself to the world," Xia Geng, mayor of Qingdao, told China Daily.

By hosting the once-in-a-generation event, Qingdao has promoted itself as a city for sailing, beer and tourism.

The Olympics made Qingdao more globalized. Skyscrapers now stand in great numbers, while some 74 financial institutions from home and abroad, including the Bank of Korea and Standard Chartered Bank, are seeking their fortunes in the city.

Preparatory work and organization of the Olympic sailing competitions provided the coastal city a broad platform to communicate with the world in not only sports and culture, but

also business.

Aggregate capital invested in Qingdao since 2003 exceeds \$17 billion. The total value of imports and exports have surpassed \$100 billion and 56 Fortune 500 firms have begun operations in the city.

Some 9.46 million containers were shipped through the city's port in 2007. Passenger numbers at its airport reached 7.87 million.

Gross income from tourism broke through the 40 billion yuan (\$5.8 billion) benchmark last year, generated by the spending of 30 million tourists.

"I have been to China before. That was 15 years ago. Now China has changed a lot. The Chinese people, in my eyes, are more and more globalized," said Bjorn Johansson, a coach from Sweden.

The Olympics also provided

the opportunity to upgrade the city's infrastructure. Qingdao was named "China's Excellent Business City" by the Chinese version of *Fortune* magazine in 2004 and 2005. It was listed as a "Golden City" for its sound investment environment by the World Bank in 2006.

Qingdao-headquartered domestic giants Haier Group, Hisense and Tsingtao Beer Group have adopted globalization strategies by joining with world-famous enterprises. More than 150 companies from the city now have operations overseas.

Its manufacturing industry has also rapidly opened to private investment, helping introduce increasing numbers of made-in-China products to the world.

Qingdao is also developing into a well-known city for international exhibitions and conferences.



Beautiful scene of Qingdao during the Beijing Olympics sailing competition. Ju Chuanjiang

# Talent supply keeps Britain ruling waves

**QINGDAO:** Britain's ability to produce sailors who leave no stone unturned to win Olympic gold is shown by their domination of Games regattas, the team chief said.

Britain, host of the 2012 Games, won four golds, a silver and bronze in the 11 events sailed in Qingdao, finishing as the leading sailing nation for the third successive Games.

"The secret of our success is people, first and foremost," Royal Yachting Association Olympic manager Stephen Park told a news conference on Friday.

"We have a group of very talented sailors who are driven to ensure they leave no stone unturned in the quest for Olympic gold medals.

"Those sailors are supported by a great group of coaches and support staff to help them fulfil their potential."

Britain's sailing team return home with their best Olympic medal haul for 100 years, surpassing the five medals won at both Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004, and matching the achievements of the British sailing team at the 1908 London Games.

The six medals easily surpassed Park's target of four from the Qingdao regatta, deliberately set low because of the unpredictable wind conditions in Fushan Bay.

Star sailors Iain Percy and Andrew Simpson became Britain's fourth gold medalists on Thursday, the final day of the regatta, adding to the titles won

by Ben Ainslie (Finn), Yngling trio Sarah Ayton, Sarah Webb and Pippa Wilson and Laser sailor Paul Goodison.

In addition, Nick Rogers and Joe Glanfield clinched silver in the men's 470 and windsurfer Bryony Shaw won bronze.

Yngling skipper Ayton, who now has two Olympic golds in her collection after triumphing in Athens with Webb and Shirley Robertson, said the foundations put in place had created a production line of talented British sailors.

"It stems from sailing from a young age in Britain, our federation does a fantastic job all the way from grassroots level all the way up to Olympic ... you are backed the whole way," she said.

"Sailing is not just about the helm and the crew, to win you have to be a team."

Surpassing the six-medal haul in 2012 will be a tough task, Percy predicted, despite the regatta being sailed in the home waters of Weymouth on the south coast of England.

"Other countries are hot on our heels. It's getting tougher and tougher every year," he said.

Agencies

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