



JUST LIKE THAT, CHINA'S 0-2

PHOTO BY CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Russian forward Andrei Kirilenko dunks over China's Yi Jianlian (center) and Zhou Peng during the men's preliminary round Group B basketball match at the London Games on Tuesday. Russia won, 73-54. Kirilenko and Yi both scored 16 points.

Winners will have to settle for gold medals

Wealthy Hong Kong family will revise how it rewards Olympians

By FU JING
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The golden era might finally be over.

Hong Kong's wealthy Fok family began awarding Chinese Olympic gold medalists a kilogram of gold right from the beginning.

It started in 1984, when China won its first Olympic title at a time when the government treated winners to a nice dinner and not much else.

Nearly three decades later, a change might be imminent as a growing number of sponsors has begun actively contributing to gold medalists.

"I will focus on inspiring youth participation in sports and also bringing sports, culture and education together," Timothy Fok, president of the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong and a member of International Olympic Committee, told China Daily in an exclusive interview in London.

"All in all, I am going to be advocating the concept of sports for all (instead of as a luxury) ... among the Chinese youth."

He is the son of the late tycoon Henry Fok, who began awarding the kilogram of gold. The reason? He told his son the most emotional moment of his life came when pistol shooter Xu Haifeng won that first gold medal for China at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

Fok said he decided to shake things up thanks to the Chinese sports federation's improved ability to obtain sponsorships as the country



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TIMOTHY FOK
IOC MEMBER FROM HONG KONG

has developed economically. Fok, born in Hong Kong in 1946, has been a member of the IOC for 11 years and president of the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong for 15.

He and his father began working for a Chinese IOC seat in the 1970s, and helped put together Beijing's two Olympic bids.

He is helping organize the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro after playing a similar role in Beijing.

"We are passionate about the Olympics for reasons that go beyond sports and gold medals," Fok said. "It is more about legacies and showcasing the inspirational side of a nation."

He considers the Beijing Olympics one of the best the world has seen.

"I can still remember the countdown at the opening... it was an emotional moment that nearly half the world's population was focusing on," Fok said. "Chinese history was condensed into hours."

He was also fond of London's opening ceremony.

"(Beijing and London) are different and unique and both implanted their own cultural heritages in (the ceremony)," said Fok, who was partially educated in the UK and grew up during a time when Hong Kong was a British colony. "I think both for us were very emotional moments."

His family will soon become even more firmly entwined with the Games.

Retired Chinese diver Guo Jingjing will wed his son, Kenneth Fok, though he's not sure when.

"But they will make up their own minds, and maybe I will be the last one to know," Fok said.

It has been reported the wedding will be held later this year. Guo, a four-time Olympic gold medalist, was with the Foks in London.

"She is one of the most accomplished athletes," Fok said. "She is very disciplined, very focused. She is a pleasant young lady."

Weibo: Athletes' chance to promote themselves

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Chinese women's water polo athlete Ma Huanhuan said athletes spend lots of time reading and following news on *weibo*.

"We can't do much in the Olympic Village," she said.

"All of us use *weibo*. We can't understand English in the newspapers and on TV, so *weibo* is the best way to find information and kill time."

Wang said the reason so many athletes use *weibo* is that it has become one of the most effective platforms for self-promotion to enhance their value.

"Star athletes like (hurdler) Liu Xiang find *weibo* is the best way to promote themselves and increase their social worth," Wang said. "More followers translate into more potential commercial value."

Gymnast Feng Zhe, who helped China defend its men's team Olympic title on Monday, also became a hit due to his witty and heartfelt postings. That is in sharp contrast to his cautious and shy behavior in front of the camera.

Renmin University of China journalism professor Yu Guoming explained: "Chinese athletes

are generally intimidated by media because they are aware of the media's power. So, they aren't willing to talk too much, for fear the media could distort their actual meaning. But they feel safer on *weibo*. And they love to express themselves in a brand new way."

Non-Chinese superstar athletes' agencies are also opening and running Chinese *weibo* accounts.

Jamaican star sprinter Usain Bolt has about 690,000 Twitter followers. But his Tencent Weibo account — opened by his agency to explore the Chinese

market — has 2.1 million.

A team has followed him to London to update his *weibo* in Chinese throughout the Games.

US basketball star Dwyane Wade also has a Sina Weibo account and updates in English. It now has more than 1.8 million followers — half the number of followers he has on Twitter.

Chinese fans also view *weibo* as the best way to get the fastest Games updates.

"I've followed several athletes on Chinese *weibo*, and it has shown me a different way to watch the Games," said Beijinger Han Yu, who is studying at the

University of Southampton. "In other words, I'm not only getting the objective information from the media but also know about how the players feel about the Olympics from their own point of view."

Zhe Li of the University of Cambridge uses the alerts system created by Sina Weibo to know when a gold medal is awarded with a ring.

"It's great for people who can't simultaneously watch multiple matches," Zhe said.

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Games begin not with a bang, but a Tweet

By CHEN XIANGFENG

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Twitter is overseas Olympians' first choice of social media.

The London Games were once billed by the British Olympic Association's chief executive Andy Hunt as the "Twitter Games".

Six million users were on the service in 2008, compared to more than 600 million today — and London 2012 is expected to see an unprecedented amount

of social media activity for a sporting event.

Tennis players have been some of the most active users. They have already been posting pictures and quips from Wimbledon and the Olympic Village.

Although strict guidelines from the International Olympic Committee are in place — as is advice from their own national Olympic committees — players are encouraged to share the Games' experience with the world.

Ten of the 16 men's singles seeds and nine of the 16 wom-

en's singles seeds are on Twitter.

Novak Djokovic of Serbia is the most followed male tennis player at the Games, with around 1.1 million followers, and local star Andy Murray is second, after recently breaking the 1 million mark.

Rafael Nadal of Spain, who was forced to withdraw from the Games because of injury, is the most followed men's player, with more than 2.7 million followers.

World No 1 Roger Federer does not have a Twitter account, although he has more than 11

million "likes" on his official Facebook page.

Serena William of the US is the most followed female player with 2.9 million followers. Her sister, Venus, is second with around 845,000, and Sania Mirza of India — who ranks 247th in the world — is third, with around 626,000.

However, tennis players still fall way behind basketball superstar LeBron James — the most followed athlete on Twitter at the Games, with more than 5.5 million followers.

Sharpshooter Kevin Durant

boasts 2.65 million, and All-Star guard Chris Paul has 1.37 million.

Among Britain's athletes who are most followed on Twitter is diver Tom Daley, with 500,000 followers.

But none of them are any match for China's tennis No 1 Li Na, who does not have a Twitter account but does have more than 6 million followers on her Chinese Sina Weibo.

There are more than 2,000 verified Olympians, present and former, on Twitter for London 2012.

GETTING SOCIAL

• Live chats

Live chats between fans and Olympians, a widget for media websites and a host of new platform integrations are among the initiatives.

• Olympic athletes' hub

This included the launch of the Olympic athletes' hub, where the Twitter and Facebook streams of past and present Olympians are aggregated for quick and easy reference, allowing users to track the top tweets and trending athletes in real time. A different athlete is featured every day before and during the Games, offering the public an opportunity to put questions directly to athletes.

• Faces of Olympians

New to the hub is the Faces of Olympians, where athletes' photos will appear on a "wall" in what is designed to be one of the most entertaining online photographic chronicles of an Olympic Games.

• Searchable widget

The IOC is also offering to media outlets worldwide a searchable widget that can be embedded on their websites to provide instant access to an athlete's Twitter and Facebook feeds via the Hub.

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