

## ALL IN THE FAMILY

Generations of Foks continue to support Chinese Olympians, **Fu Jing** reports from London.

From China's first Olympic gold medal in 1984, to Beijing 2008 and the ongoing London Olympics, Hong Kong's rags-to-riches Fok family has taken it as a journey. Along the way, their lasting passion and contributions have helped Chinese athletes shine at the global competitions.

Timothy Fok — with three sons and soon-to-be daughter-in-law Guo Jingjing, a well-recognized Olympic champion — is now in London cheering on the athletes and mobilizing resources to promote sports, culture and education for China and other parts of the world.

"I feel lucky I can become not only a witness but also a contributor during the journey," says Fok, who has "several hats" on his head at the Hong Kong, national and global levels.

Apart from being a business executive who manages a multi-billion-dollar business empire handed down by his late father Fok Ying-tung, Fok has been president of the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee since 1997, when Hong Kong was returned to China.

Born in 1946, Fok has also been a member of the International Olympic Committee and now he is enlisted in the IOC commission for organizing the 31st Games in Rio de Janeiro after playing such a role for the 29th Summer Games in Beijing. He believes the 2008 Games were one of the most successful in Olympic history.

Though he says football is "a failure for him" and his favorite sport is tennis, Fok also acts as president of Hong Kong Football Association.

All the titles and responsibilities have resulted from the family's lasting contribution and most emotional moments in life. "We are passionate about Olympics mainly because it is beyond sports and gold medals," says Fok, whose family has a history of donating many sporting and cultural facilities throughout China. "It is more about legacies and showcasing and inspiring a country."

In London, he says, the opening ceremony last Friday showcased the British way of life and immense cultural heritage. Both the Beijing and London Games had the stamp of the UK's own cultural heritages, says Fok, who obtained part of his education in Britain and his native city was a British colony. For his family, he says, both Games "were very emotional moments."

At the Beijing Olympics, he says, "I can still remember the countdown at the opening ... it was an emotional moment which nearly half of the world's population was focusing on. And Chinese history was condensed into hours."

For Fok and his father, the most emotional Olympic moment happened in 1984, at the Los Angeles Olympics, when Chinese athlete Xu Haifeng won the country's first gold medal in Olympics history.



International Olympic Committee member Timothy Fok is at the center of media attention at the launching ceremony of China House in London.

FU TIAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Kenneth Fok, the eldest son of Timothy Fok, and his fiancée Guo Jingjing, four-time Olympic women's diving champion, watch the women's 3m springboard synchronized diving competition at the London Olympics.

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"My father confessed to me that the moment had been the most emotional one in his life," Fok recalls, adding that his father was a very traditional Chinese with a poor and difficult childhood and who found it easy to hide feelings.

However, when they asked Chinese sports officials how the gold medalist could be rewarded, the answer was, "They can be treated to a nice dinner." Then, father and son decided to reward Chinese Olympic gold medalists with a kilogram of gold.

The practice was sustained until the Beijing Games. Now, the Fok family is thinking of changing the reward plan, since the number of sponsors for Chinese athletes has grown so much.

"I will focus on inspiring youth participation in sports and also bring-

ing sports, culture and education into one," says Fok. "All in all, I am going to advocate the concept of sports for all, (instead of the wealthy) and new lifestyles among the Chinese youth."

The younger Fok says he will use Nansha, a growing modern coastal city in Guangdong province, as a base for the plan.

With his family's investment, Nansha, close to Hong Kong, has been turning into an active and flourishing business environment supported by a wide variety of social amenities and services from a fishing town in the 1980s.

Fok says he will recruit China's outstanding to advocate sports for all and new lifestyles in Nansha. With sports, culture and education in one package, Fok says Nansha will become an



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TIMOTHY FOK  
IOC MEMBER FROM HONG KONG

attractive city to work and live in.

"This is my late father's dream and we will fulfill it," says Fok. His father had a special love for Nansha, a place the Fok family has ancestral roots. It is reported that the elder Fok had visited Nansha 500 times. Once Fok's father famously said: "I will not do business in my homeland. I will not take a single cent from it. My investments and donations here are meant to boost the economy and make the nation wealthy and strong."

From the beginning, as the senior Fok was a frail person himself, he believed that for a country and its citizens to meet the challenges in life it was necessary to have a strong body and mind.

In support of this belief, he invested HK\$100 million (\$13 million) in the Sports and Physical Education Foundation in 1984 and devoted much personal time and effort developing sports and sports related activities. Up to now, this foundation has contributed in excess of HK\$400 million to

building more than 20 modern sports centers, gymnasiums, and facilities for nurturing talents in the mainland and Hong Kong.

In addition, the foundation has also promoted badminton and Chinese chess, two popular sports in the country, and nurtured talent to compete in the international arena.

It has also offered various incentives and bonuses to encourage sports excellence. In the early 1970s, the senior Fok successfully helped China restore its position in the international sports arena. During the past two decades, the family contributed to Beijing's bids in hosting Olympics. For Timothy Fok, his vision has gone beyond a strong body and mind for the nation.

"China now needs to find instruments to tell stories to the rest of the world and I believe sports and Olympics are ideal," he says.

The Fok family may be in expansion mode after former diving queen Guo Jingjing and his son Kenneth Fok get married. Timothy Fok says he is happy to see that they have a wonderful wedding. "But they will make up their own mind and I may be the last one to know," says Fok.

It is reported that the couple will be wed later this year.

After winning four gold medals in the Olympics, Guo retired last year. And Guo was with Fok's family in London to support the current Games.

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

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## Games starve host city's Chinese restaurants

By WANG YU  
in London

Many Chinese restaurants in London had expected the 2012 Olympics to bring a business glut but are actually finding leaner patronage than normal.

Tang in the Black Bean Chinese restaurant's 49-year-old manager is one of them. Tang Yixiang said only one in 10 of his customers came to his Chinatown eatery because of the Games.

"It's far fewer than we had hoped," Tang said.

The 17 days of the Games have actually seen a decline in restaurant customers because regular local customers are

avoiding going out because of traffic concerns.

Tang said central London is emptier than usual. Other Chinese restaurant owners agreed and said the Olympics have contributed nothing to their businesses.

London's transport authorities forecast up to 1 million visitors a day in London and 3 million journeys added to the usual 12 million on the Games' busiest days, the Financial Times reported.

Chinatown hosts about half of the city's roughly 100 restaurants.

Lucy, who refused to give her full name, has been working in the Baozi Inn Chinese restaurant for over a year. She said her restaurant suffered "a slump"

last week.

"Although the proportion of Chinese visitors is higher than before, the total number of customers dropped over the last few days since July 20," she said.

She said the visitors are busy watching the Games and don't have enough time to tour Chinatown.

And local residents and overseas students — two major customer bases — are heeding warnings to avoid central London's transport chaos.

The upside for customers, Lucy said, is that making a reservation is easier than usual.

Diners have also sensed the bleakness of business. Goldsmiths University of

London graduate student Yang Xinyi said there were only eight other customers at the Chinese restaurant she and her boyfriend ate at on the night of the opening ceremony.

"Because the restaurants don't have TVs and the transport system is in chaos, my friends preferred to go to local bars or other places with big-screen TVs to celebrate the opening ceremony," Yang said.

But some Chinese eateries have actually gotten more business because of the Games.

Bright Courtyard Club's managing director Kevin Tang was worried his staff might not be able to handle the rush.

"Many groups of guests come at the

same time during the Olympic period, which makes management and customer service difficult," Tang said.

"Our seats are booked up three weeks in advance. Our restaurant is running at full capacity during the week. There are no low and peak days, from Sunday to Saturday."

Tang's restaurant is located on Baker Street, which, like Chinatown, is far from the Olympic venues.

He said his eatery would be busy three or four — rather than seven — days a week before the Games.

Tang also said weekly sales have doubled during the Olympics to reach 40,000-50,000 pounds (\$62,000-78,000).