

Wang still strides tall on world stage

By TANG ZHE
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — China's Wang Hao reaffirmed his status as the world's best race walker by easily winning the men's 20km event in front of thousands of spectators on the road outside Aoti Main Stadium on Sunday.

Making his Asian Games debut, the 21-year-old World Cup champion beat out teammate Chu Yafei, who won the silver medal, and Korea's Kim Hyun-sub, who took bronze.

"This is the first gold medal in athletics in the Asian Games, so it was very important not to lose," said Wang.

"Of course, Chu Yafei and I had pressure, but we knew we had to ignore it and just fight hard to win."

Wang controlled the race right from the start and recorded his best time of the season at 1:20:50. Chu clocked 1:21:57 while Kim was 1:22:47.

"My result is not good enough," said Wang, who has been hampered by a tibia for the past year and only finished second in the 50km walk at the 2009 National Games. "But it's my best of the season, so I am satisfied with it."

Runner-up at the 2009 Berlin World Championships, Wang was China's third male athlete to win a medal in the event. His sole target in Guangzhou was to snatch the gold.

"I trained really hard before the Asian Games, and there are not many rivals in Asia, so the race was not really tough," said Wang, who is already focused on the 2012 London Olympic Games.

"You know Chinese athletes have some advantages in race walking because we are smaller and lighter than other nationalities and we are natural athletes," he said.

"The coach told us to keep the leading positions. I controlled the rhythm of the race and my teammate Chu cooperated with me very well."

Korea's Kim was considered Wang's main rival before the race after clocking the world's third-best (1:19:36) earlier this year.

"I'm disappointed not to win, but I didn't walk well," Kim said. "This was not my best time."



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

China's gold medalists compete in the synchronized swimming combination final at the 16th Asian Games in Guangzhou on Sunday. China won gold, Japan silver and Kazakhstan bronze.

Huang in watery wonderland as synchro team defeats Japan

By ZHANG YUCHEN
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — Studying *Alice in Wonderland* helped Huang Xuechen and China beat Japan for another synchronized swimming combination title on Sunday, one day after the 20-year-old put in an equally inspired performance for a share of the team gold.

Huang took the movie soundtrack to heart before performing to it at Foshan Aquatic Center, an experience she likened to method acting.

"Not only did I listen to the music, but I watched the movie time and again," she said. "I tried to understand the character and study her facial expressions to reflect the emotional changes Alice goes through."

"In brief, I totally incorporated myself into the character."

China's Japanese coach, Masayo Imura, said she was satisfied with

Huang and her teammates in the synchro after they flattened their longstanding rivals for a second time at the Asiad, this time with a score of 97.125.

"They have shown what they have, but they are still short of a perfect 10," said the 60-year-old, dubbed Japan's "mother of synchro".

The Chinese dazzled with high jumps and lifts as 10 water ballerinas performed as individuals, pairs, fours, eights and a whole to see off Japan (94.000 points) and relegate Kazakhstan (85.375) to third place.

It was the first time that the combination was competed at the Asian Games since the sport made its debut in 1994.

Imura coached the Japanese national team for 27 years as they secured podium finishes in all six Olympic Games to Athens 2004, where they finished second behind Russia.

She was picked up by the

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HUANG XUECHEN
ON HER INSPIRED
PERFORMANCE

Chinese camp after it dethroned Japan as the region's long-time synchro leaders at the 2006 Asian Games in Doha.

As they proved again this weekend in Guangzhou, China's swimmers are not ready to roll over and give up their hard-won trophies just yet.

Twins Jiang Wenwen and Jiang Tingting executed perfectly on Saturday to play a key role in

China's second straight team gold after the camera-friendly pair retained their duet crown on Friday.

Much of China's success has been attributed to Imura, who led the team to its first Olympic medal in the sport, a bronze, at Beijing 2008 before signing a new contract this September to assist with training for the Asiad.

However, she said plenty of work remains to be done before the team can catch up with its rivals on the world stage, led by Russia.

"Russia ranks first and this is a status that won't be jeopardized in the near future," she said.

Imura said she has no plans to renew her contract once the games end but that she would "think about it" if China asks her to coach the team again for next year's world championships in Shanghai.

AFP also contributed to the story