



HK a crowd favorite despite blowouts

By SUN XIAOCHEN
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Hong Kong's basketball team was outsized and overpowered at the Universiade, losing three consecutive group matches by vast margins.

Without big guys in the paint or sharpshooters on the perimeter, the team could hardly secure its basket while struggling for an outside open shot.

The squad has slipped to the bottom of all 23 lineups at the meet while ranking last in six out of the 12 team-statistic categories.

But Hong Kong's players rolled with the punches and celebrated every fast break and free throw, with zealous support from the crowd.

Head coach Chiu Wing-Leung remained upbeat after the team lost to European powerhouse Serbia 102 - 46 in its third game yesterday.

"We knew where we were before the meet," Chiu said.

"We only expected one victory in the preliminary round. Although we didn't make it, I still feel satisfied about our performance."

The Serbian team's power advantage led to 57 rebounds and 54 points in the paint while allowing the Hong Kong squad only 21 rebounds and 18 points within the key. And the Serbs' offense shot a solid 50 percent from the field (37-74 FGs) as five players scored

double-digit points while nailing nine 3-pointers.

The Hong Kong players were trapped inside and were consistently forced to shoot without effective chemistry. They delivered only five assists and turned the ball over 25 times per game — the most at the event.

Chiu attributed the losses to poor offense and a limited amount of training.

"We are pretty equal on height, but our body strength is far less than theirs," he said.

"We haven't reached the international standard physically."

All 15 of the roster members are full-time university students, who could only train twice a week during the eight-week summer vacation, Chiu said.

The team's top scorer, Chan Yik-Lun, who scores an average of 14 points a game, shrugged off the blows to their confidence while hailing the fans' applause.

"(The defeat) won't hamper our minds or our self-confidence," the 24-year-old said. "We are already proud to have played here. We feel like we're playing in Hong Kong here. The Shenzhen fans cheer for us, which motivates us."

Chiu has set no scoring goals as the team prepares to face Canada in its next game, where a loss would knock it out of the event.

"We cherish this meet very much, as we don't have many chances to play international games," the coach, who was a guard with the Hong Kong Basketball League's Flying Eagles team, said.



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Players from Hong Kong fight for the ball during the team's 102-46 loss to Serbia yesterday.

Elite swimmers enjoy opportunity to have fun at the pool

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SHENZHEN — Everybody took a step forward.

Or, at least, a stroke forward.

A group of promising swimmers from the United States and Australia plunged into the pool at the Universiade yesterday,

approaching the event as a chance to gain experience at an elite event.

"It means a lot. To win international medals any place is very meaningful, something I don't get many of," said American swimmer Annie Chandler, who won

the 50m breaststroke gold. "I am very happy to be here and racing with the rest of the best (student) swimmers in the world."

China's rising star, Lu Ying claimed the 100m butterfly title and set a new event record at 57.86 seconds.

Even so, Lu, who had already won gold in the 50m butterfly, said she wasn't feeling her best.

"Actually, I was not in my best form. I feel so tired after racing at the Shanghai Worlds last month. Anyway, the result is not so important here, it's a stage for learning," she said.

Lu also teamed with Tang Yi, Zhu Qianwei and Liu Jing to deliv-



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China Lu Ying set a Games record on her way to winning the women's 100m butterfly gold medal yesterday at the Universiade.

er a bronze medal in the 4x200m freestyle relay.

Chandler won her race with a time of 31.13 seconds.

"I've never been to a University Games before. I was really impressed with the quality of the competition," she said. "(Coming to the Universi-

ade) is something that makes you feel you're reaching a new level. To be exposed to a different culture is something that can help you feel like you've done it."

Australia's Olympic gold medalist, Alice Mills, echoed Chandler's sentiment in the mixed zone after finishing third in the women's 100m butterfly in 59.11 sec.

"It's my third Universiade," Mills said. "Every time I come here, I'm surprised with the enthusiasm and confidence the young swimmers gain through the meet. It's a good thing to be part of it."

Mills claimed gold in both the freestyle and the medley 4x100m relays at the 2004 Athens Olympics.