



China's Ji Jing wins the gold medal in the women's 53kg weightlifting at the 26th Summer Universiade in Shenzhen.

EDMOND TANG / CHINA DAILY

Weighty expectations now on Ji

NOW THAT WINNING GOLD AT SHENZHEN IS BEHIND HER, WEIGHTLIFTER SHIFTS FOCUS TO OLYMPICS

By SUN XIAOCHEN
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Ji Jing knows all about years of gut-busting training just to enjoy some brief moments in the spotlight.

However, she still enjoys the exhilaration lifting a barbell over her head provides.

Ji, who claimed the women's 53kg weightlifting title to deliver China's fourth gold medal at the Universiade on Monday, knows her sport's tough and unheralded side, but also stresses a deep love of its tacit beauty.

"Many spectators see weightlifting as a boring event, and I don't blame them because only the athletes can experience the moment when you feel all your efforts have paid off after lifting the bar," Ji said emotionally at the Qiaodan Sports' Chinese delegation reception center.

"No matter what kind of job they do, people often say 'the toughest rival is yourself'. My way to challenge myself is simple, just lift a weight that you never did before," said Ji, who also won the national title in the same category in May.

Debuting at the Universiade on home soil, Ji said she was inspired by the home

crowd's support and hailed the event as an ideal stage for young people from all over the world to share their different experiences and cultures and also find things in common.

Born in the rural area of central China's Hubei province, Ji fell in love with physical play as a child.

Chasing scared skunks on farmland and scuffling with cousins for fun are among her most joyful memories of childhood.

When she entered a local sports school, she found weightlifting an outlet to release her energy.

"I was more like a boy than a girl when I was little. And I have a fighting personality; never admit defeat. That connected me to the sport perfectly," Ji said.

China boasts a bunch of female Olympic champions and world record holders, but Ji shrugs off the pressure of fierce competition, stressing, "pushing myself to be the best" is the only way to qualify for the London Olympics next year.

After originally contending in the 48kg event, Ji went up to the 53kg category recently to fulfill her potential.

After winning her first international title with a solid performance at the

Shenzhen meet, Ji has become another title favorite for London, behind Li Ping, the category's Asian Games champion and reigning world record holder.

She expects to learn a lot from her potential teammate and opponent.

"She (Li) is now my target. I hope to improve myself through catching up with her. She is an experienced lifter with consistent performance. I am looking forward to competing against her for the only berth to London at next April's domestic championships.

"The top podium at the Olympics is my ultimate goal," said the 24-year-old.

Unlike her rival, Ji has the distraction of also being a student athlete — at the Wuhan Sports University, majoring in kinesiology.

After a full morning of lessons, Ji plunges into the gym for a three-hour training session.

The daily alternating between lectures and practice have not wearied her, said Ji. In her limited spare time, Ji enjoys reading and singing karaoke.

"Yeah, I like singing. But mostly, I sing only when I am in a room alone. I don't want to scare others," joked Ji, whose favorite singer is Faye Wong.



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Ji Jing presses her hand print at the Qiaodan Sports Chinese delegation reception center at the Shenzhen Universiade.