



Qingdao Mayor Xia Geng

City sets sail for success

► Qingdao mayor promises to host a spectacular Olympic sailing competition

BY ZHANG XIAOMIN

QINGDAO: Xia Geng, mayor of Qingdao and chairman of the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Committee promised to give the world a splendid Olympic sailing regatta yesterday at the launching ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Sailing Competition in Qingdao of Shandong province.

Xia wished the world's top sailors success in the regatta and hoped that they enjoy their stay in the coastal city.

"Qingdao, a pearl on the Yellow Sea, is a national economic center featured with port, open economy, famous brands, tourism and marine science and research. The century-old city fi-

nally joined hands with the Olympics. After seven years of preparation, we are ready for the Olympic Games. Today, our dream is coming true and we shall share the glory. When the Olympic sailors race in this bay, this 'Capital of Sailing' of prosperity, rich culture and harmony will be in the spotlight under the Olympic Rings," he said.

"The 2008 Olympic Sailing Competition is not only a grand event for sailors, but a gathering of the people from all over the world and a festivity of the citizens. Inspired by the Olympic motto of 'Citius, Altius, Fortius', we will listen with our hearts to the exciting melody of sailing and share the joy and success of the Beijing Olympic Games."

Singapore's IOC Executive Board

member Ng Ser Miang also gave credit to the local organizing committee as well as the thousands of volunteers.

"Thanks for its strong and continuous efforts including providing world-class sailing facilities, Qingdao will make the Olympic sailing event unique and exceptional."

Qingdao built a world-class Olympic sailing center and hosted two test events in 2006 and 2007. The 2007 regatta was held totally in line with the Olympic practices.

Qingdao thoroughly tested the facilities and the operating system for these events, said Xia. The organizers, volunteers and all the other staff became familiar with their working procedures.

The athletes and coaches can enjoy both Chinese and Western cuisine, and, with its convenient traffic system, especially the public transport network, citizens, athletes, and tourists can easily get to any corner of the city.

The environment in Qingdao is getting better and better. Last year, all days in August and 332 days of the year were of fine air quality.

Qingdao upgraded its emergency response system and set up a comprehensive security system to safeguard the Olympic regatta.

The city has also established a highly qualified volunteer team, with around 400,000 locals registered as volunteers serving the regatta.

Weeks before the Games, officials and local residents struggled with a stubborn adversary: algae. The local government immediately set up an emergency-response department. Within a short period of time, the Olympic sailing venue was cleaned up.

"It is an honor to host the Olympic regatta. I believe that the organizing committee, the ISAF officials, the technical officials, and the volunteers will do the utmost to guarantee the success of the regatta," said Xia.



Qingdao sets sail
Boats return after a sailing practice prior to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games in Qingdao.

Reuters

Sailors to slug it out

BY ZHAO RUIXUE

QINGDAO: According to the International Sailing Federation (ISAF), 400 competitors from 62 nations and regions will compete for medals in 11 competitions in Qingdao.

Therefore, the 2008 Olympic sailing competitions are described as a struggle among bests, with each nation getting just one entry to each event.

Sailing competitions are unpredictable thanks to the changeable weather, leaving more room for people to speculate on the possible results.

Over 2,500 sailors attended competitions at 10 qualification regattas across Europe, Oceania and North America to gain their nation a place at the Games.

Among Chinese competitors, women's windsurfer Yin Jian, men's windsurfer Wang Aichen and Xu Lijia in Laser Radial event are medal contenders.

The 21-year-old Xu Lijia stands at the forefront of the ever-increasing Chinese challenge. The young woman won the 2006 sailing world championships and she is currently ranked second worldwide according to the latest ranking list released by the ISAF in July.

Anna Tunnicliffe of the United

This special supplement is co-published by the Information Office of Qingdao municipal government and China Daily



Sailors in the Yngling class approach the leeward mark yesterday, the first day of the Beijing Olympic Sailing Competition.

Ju Chuanjiang

States, who is currently the world's No 1 and won the gold medal for Laser Radial at the 2007 Qingdao International Regatta, is Xu's strongest competitor in the Olympic Sailing Competition.

Australia will be one of the most competitive teams with three competitors currently ranked No 1 in three of the 11 events, including Tom Slingby of Laser who won the champion at the Kiel Week held in Germany. The country was ranked second on the medal tally of the 2007 Qingdao International Regatta with two golds, one silver and one bronze.

Charles Benedict Ainslie from the United Kingdom is no doubt a favorite this year. Ainslie won his first Olympic gold medal in Laser at 2000 in Sydney, a second gold medal in Finn at 2004 Athens and showed his talent by winning gold at 2007 Qingdao International Regatta.

Austrians Roman Hagara and Hans Peter Steinacher are also eyeing a third consecutive Olympic gold medal in the Tornado, and the experienced fleet dem-

onstrated their capability by securing gold at the 2007 Qingdao regatta.

Carlos Espinola of Argentina has won medals at three consecutive Olympics but never gold. "I am not sure whether I will make my dream come true at the Beijing Olympics, but I will try my best," Espinola said. Spain's Iker Martinez and Xabier Fernandez, gold medalists at Athens in 2004, are also coming back to fight for another gold in the 49er at Qingdao.

Another Athens gold medalist France's Faustine Merret, who won the Women's Windsurfer event at Athens, will compete on the newly-designed RS: X board.

Athens gold medalists Sarah Ayton and Sarah Webb of the United Kingdom is lined up with new teammate Pippa Wilson and will race against the Norwegian Yngling helmed by Siren Sundby, who won gold in the single-handed Europe dinghy in Athens and Sofia Bekatorou helming the Greek Yngling, a gold medalist in the two-person 470 four years ago.

New rules make spectators joyful

BY HUANG YANHONG

QINGDAO: The 2008 Beijing Olympic Sailing Competition has adopted new rules so spectators can get closer to the action.

Spectators watching the sailing competition of the 2008 Beijing Olympics are very lucky since they can get nearer to athletes thanks to the building of the spectator dam, a first for the Olympics.

According to Qu Chun, from the Competing Department of 2008 Olympic Sailing Committee, the Beijing Olympic Sailing Competition witnesses major adjustments and improvements to its rules of competing, such as the arrangement of the venue and the competing schedule.

This year's medal race will continue to use the rules used at the International Sailing Competitions in 2006 and 2007.

In the last round of the competition, in which the rankings are determined, the scores are doubled. Before the finals of the competition are the preliminary contest, in which only the top 10 of each event can take part in the medal round.

The time for medal race is shortened from the preliminary competitions' 45 minutes or one hour to 20 minutes.

Compared with the 2004 Athens Olympic Sailing Competition, one more venue has been used this year.

The arrangement of the venues is also adjusted. Venues B, C, D and E have moved half a nautical mile

westward, leaving 1.5 square nautical mile's space for flexible uses.

The victory course after the medal race is also a unique and innovative design.

The above two routes were tested at the 2007 Qingdao International Sailing Regatta and received a great deal of praise from ISAF officials and the media.

Compared with the 2007 International Sailing Competition, seven more days have been provided for athletes to conduct training, from July 27, the opening of the competition venues to August 9, the first competing day, a total of 13 days.

The number of medal-awarding

days reaches six, two more days than before, which offers more opportunities for the audience to watch the grand awarding ceremony.

Compared with the International Sailing Competition 2006 and 2007, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Sailing Competition provides all equipment such as sailing boats and windsurfing boards at the four events - RS:X Men/Women, Laser and Laser Radial.

Being required to follow strictly the customs of the Olympiad, all competing boats can only use the country/region code published by the Olympic Organization Committee, their national/regional flag and their names.



New technology like windmills are used during the Olympic Sailing Competition in Qingdao.

Ju Chuanjiang