



# Aussies find redemption

▶ Winning gold the best way to erase terrible memories in Athens

By Zhao Ruixue

QINGDAO: Australian sailors Nathan Wilmot and Malcolm Page found Olympic redemption yesterday, winning a gold medal in the men's 470-class to make up for a medal wipeout at the 2004 Athens Games.

The pair's 22-point lead over nearest rivals, brothers Sven and Kalle Coster of the Netherlands, gave them an unassailable margin going into yesterday's medal race.

But the Dutch duo ended up out of the medals after finishing seventh in the final, in which double points are scored.

Britain's Nick Rogers and Joe Glanfield won silver and France's Nicolas Charbonnier and Olivier Bausset took bronze.

"This is without doubt the highlight. It's what we have been working for ever since Athens," Wilmot said.

Wilmot and Page went to the Athens Olympic Games as favorites for medals as the reigning world champions and the No 1 crew in their class in the ISAF world rankings.

But their campaign got off to a disastrous start with a disqualification in race two from which they never fully

recovered. The penalty eventually resulted in them finishing well back in the fleet and 12th place overall.

"Our biggest issue was psychology. It was our first Olympics and I don't think we appreciated what it was. We also made little errors that compounded and let it slip away," Page said of the Athens Games.

"It is a matter of experience — we were not consistent enough, sometimes going up and down like a yo-yo. Sometimes pushing it too hard and not pushing it enough at other times," Wilmot said.

The duo then won the ISAF Sailing World Championships three times and came to Qingdao ranked world No 1 in the men's 470 class.

To cope with Qingdao's light winds, the duo stick to tough exercise and a dietary regime that resulted in Wilmot losing 10 percent of his body weight at 60kg.

"The diet is very hard for us, especially for Nathan, who is 183cm tall and trying to get to 60kg. No matter how you modify your sail, losing weight is the best thing to gain speed," Page said.

The pair said they now plan to retire from 470 because staying thin has been so taxing.

Growing up in one of Sydney's leading sailing families, Wilmot began his involvement in the sport at age 4. His father Jamie competed in the 1984 Games, while his uncle Bobby took part in 1984 and 1988 Games.

Besides sailing, Wilmot swam at the state level until he was 13, played football for 10 years and won a South Pacific Championship for dancing when he was 11 years old.

At 5, Page was placed onto a boat tied to his grandparents' wharf on the Lane Cove River. "I bawled my eyes out. I hated every minute of it," he recalled. At 8, he got over the fear of sailing and began racing.

### Another Aussie gold

Fellow double-handed dinghy pair Elise Rechichi and Tessa Parkinson — dubbed "Perth's pocket rockets" — then made it a day to remember for the Australians by claiming the women's 470 class gold.

Marcelien de Koning and Lobke Berkhout of the Netherlands took silver and Fernanda Oliveira and Isabel Swan of Brazil grabbed the bronze.

Rechichi and Parkinson crossed the finish line of their medal race in ninth place, but it was enough to secure gold after their nearest rival, the Netherlands, failed to make up enough ground to trouble them.

Agenies contributed to the story



Nathan Wilmot and Malcolm Page of Australia, sailing in the men's 470 class, compete for gold during the Beijing Olympic Games in Qingdao yesterday. Ju Chuanjiang



Elise Rechichi and Tessa Parkinson of Australia celebrate after winning the gold medal in the women's 470 class during the Beijing Olympic Games in Qingdao yesterday. Ju Chenghao

# Tourists throng to Qingdao

By Zhang Xiaomin and Huang Yanhong

QINGDAO: The ongoing Olympic sailing competition has attracted tourists and fans from all over the world to this coastal city in Shandong province.

In addition to a spectator breakwater that can accommodate nearly 10,000 people, the nearby Olympic Sailing Center is a magnet to thousands of residents and visitors.

Louise Georgsen and Iben Stubbe wearing Dannebrog T-shirts are eye-catching among the spectators.

"We will stay in Qingdao for a week, traveling around and cheering for our team. The city is so beautiful," said Georgsen.

"Qingdao is a brilliant city. I like it very much. I think our sailors can win three to four gold medals here," said Philip Anderson from Britain, an enthusiastic sailing fan.

Scenic spots such as the May 4th Square near the sailing venue and the Badagan area famous for its European style architecture are host to numerous foreign tours daily.

Many visitors choose to swim and enjoy the sun at the First Bathing Beach.

"The most charming for me is the contrast between two parts — the old and the modern," said Nadia Lysjuk from Russia.

"People here are smiling, very shiny with Chinese faces, happy and energetic. It leaves one of the brightest impressions of my life," she added.

Olivier Fleitz from France said Qingdao is like the south of his country.

"The city is a good destination for tourists. We have the sea, the mountains. The weather is very nice," he said.

Visitors and spectators speak highly of the services and facilities provided by the local government.

"People here are very friendly. There are many volunteers on the streets. They really help a lot," said Zhuang Ruming from Beijing.

Altogether 1,000 city volunteers and 10,000 from all walks of life are offering help on the streets, providing consulting, emergency aid and language services.

A multilingual call center was set up to provide language services for the tourists. The 100 volunteers working in the center can answer calls in eight languages, including English, Japanese and Spanish.

According to Wang Jiangong, director general of the city's tourism bureau, the Olympic regatta will attract more visitors by promoting the city's reputation worldwide.

In recent years, Qingdao's tourism witnessed a growth rate of 33.4 percent each year. Last year, one million foreign visitors flocked to the city.

Wang said that the local government invested 5.3 billion yuan (\$712 million) to refurbish and upgrade more than 100 star hotels and travel agencies before the Games.

# Enjoying fun and success, brothers at the center of limelight

By Zhang Ying

QINGDAO: Many brothers and sisters are teamed together battling in Qingdao to realize their Olympic dreams.

Two pairs of brothers, Jan-Peter Peckolt and Hannes Peckolt from Germany and Pietro Sibello and Gianfranco Sibello from Italy, are among those who are title contenders in the 49er-class medal race on Sunday.

The German duo won the bronze medal while the Italians tied for fourth.

"Sailing with my brother in the Olympic arena is very exciting," said Pietro.

Fierce competition started from the first day of 49er races on Aug 10, with all the top sailors in the class joining field, including Athens gold medalists and world's top-ranked pair Iker Martinez and Xabier Fernandez from Spain,

and Stevie Morrison and Ben Rhodes from Britain, winners of the Olympic test event in Qingdao last year.

Racing was intense, but "the stress is important — it helps you maintain concentration", said Pietro. "It is important to focus the stress toward a positive result."

"Our strength is that we are brothers," he added. "We know what is going on with the other all the time, and the coordina-

tion between skipper and crew is the most important thing."

When the two started their sailing career together, Pietro, four years junior, was a green hand. Only his strong elder brother knew how to manage the boat at that time.

The 32-year-old Gianfranco remains the skipper while 28-year-old Pietro serves as crew, following his brother's orders and advice on the boat.

They have grown both

professionally and personally in their pursuit of the 2008 Olympic goals.

At the very beginning, the brothers didn't have a real coach, but their father, who sailed in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, gave them advice.

Talking about their love for 49er, the brothers said: "the skiff is so attractive to us — you must have both speed and coordination to control it.

Sailing on that kind of boat is really exciting. It is our favorite class we ever sailed.

"49er races are fast and technical, so keeping the boat under control really challenges us.

"It is most important to find fun in training and competition," noted the brothers.

"For us, sailing a lot of hours with a brother is a kind of enjoyment not many people have."

# Danes Warrer, Ibsen keep 49er gold after protest

QINGDAO: Denmark's Jonas Warrer and Martin Kirketerp Ibsen were awarded the gold medal in the 49er skiff class yesterday after a jury rejected a protest over a broken mast, a borrowed boat and capsized vessels in rough waters of the Yellow Sea.

The decision meant that the silver went to Spain's Iker Martinez and Xabier Fernandez, who won the title in Athens four years ago. The bronze went to Germany's Jan-Peter Peckolt and Hannes Peckolt.

In Sunday's medal race in strong winds and rough conditions, the Danes broke their

most just before racing started. They rushed back to port and borrowed the skiff from the Croatian boat, which failed to qualify for the 10-boat medal races, and sailed to overall victory. Protests that were rejected yesterday included one from the race committee that the Danes had switched boats illegally.

Three protests were filed: One saying that the race started too late, after a 4:30 pm deadline, another that the conditions were too rough for racing, and a third that the Danes had illegally changed boats. The first two protests were dismissed Sunday, but when deliberations on the boat change dragged into the early hours of Monday, the jury took a break.

"This is surreal. What a drama," Ibsen told Danish reporters after Sunday's victory

was confirmed by a protest jury. "I couldn't have written a greater thriller."

The Danes had an 11-point lead in overall points after 12 races over Italy's Pietro Sibello and Gianfranco Sibello, with Australian World Champions Nathan Outteridge and Ben Austin in third overall, three points further back and just one ahead of Martinez and Fernandez and the German brothers.

The Danes needed just a seventh in the 10-boat fleet in the medal race to win.

But winds that had failed Qingdao in previous days picked up with a vengeance Sunday, churning the sea into a rough chop. During the practice ahead of the start, the Danes were horrified to see their mast break and their dreams of Olympic gold seem to vanish.

"Right when the mast broke, I thought it was all over. But never give up," Ibsen said. The team raced back into port and borrowed a boat from Croatia's Pavle Kostov and Petar Cupac, who had failed to make it to the 10-boat final. They rigged the boat with lightning speed, and rushed back out, crossing the line after the rest of the fleet and just seconds before a start deadline ran out.

"We snap the mast, we go in, we take the Croatian boat. We make the start with four seconds (to spare). If we had been four seconds later, we wouldn't have been Olympic champions. And then the protest and the postponement of the protest. Everything is just unreal," said Ibsen.

The wind and the waves turned so wild that every boat in the fleet capsized at least

once. Warrer and Ibsen were fighting the weather in a boat they had never sailed.

The lead changed constantly as the light, manta-ray like 49ers cart-wheeled and capsized in the wind. The Danes capsized about 100m from the finish, stood on their boat's keel in the rough water, and managed to right it. They took seventh for an overall win, but their ordeal was not over.

The protest meant the Danes spent the night not knowing if they had won a gold medal.

"I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy. You're down, you're up, you're down. You think you win, you lose. In my heart I hoped for it, but that's one thing. Another thing is what will happen in the jury room," Ibsen said.



Jonas Warrer and Martin Kirketerp Ibsen of Denmark compete during the 49er medal race on Sunday in Qingdao. Ju Chuanjiang