



China's Sun Yang won the 400m freestyle at the London Olympics on Saturday. Inset: Park Tae-hwan avoided being disqualified in the heats, but still couldn't get the best of Sun.

CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

The hard way is better

China's Sun says beating rival Park made gold medal more satisfying, **Sun Xiaochen** reports.

Super Sun got to do it the right way.

China's star swimmer can thank FINA, the sport's governing body, for overturning a false-start disqualification of South Korean Park Tae-hwan in the Saturday morning heats of the men's 400m freestyle.

"I wouldn't have been happy if I had won the gold medal without beating him in the pool," Sun said after clocking 3 min 40.14 sec to out-perform Park with a 1.92 sec edge in the final at the London Aquatics Centre on Saturday night.

The 20-year-old became China's first male swimmer to win Olympic gold.

Park, the defending champion and the man Sun has been chasing for several years, was ruled out of the final race, although he won the heat with ease. The Korean delegation filed an appeal, and the call was overturned.

Sun was somewhat upset after

learning of the disqualification.

He preferred to face Park in the final, especially after Korean media mistakenly blamed a Chinese judge for the ruling. As it turned out, it was a judge from the United States who made the call.

"I think if I took advantage of his disqualification to win tonight, many of the Korean media would have said that my gold was not convincing enough," Sun told a packed mixed zone after he'd finished weeping.

Sun said Park's return gave him an extra push.

"I took (Park's successful appeal) as motivation," said the 20-year-old, who lost to the Korean at last year's Shanghai Worlds and the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games.

"I learned from last year's failure and improved my first 200 meters a lot."

Park was apparently upset about losing to Sun.

"Today has been a long day for me," said the 22-year-old Park. "I am not



I wouldn't have been happy if I had won the gold medal without beating him (Park Tae-hwan) in the pool."

SUN YANG
CHINESE SWIMMER

going to say the disqualification affected my result, but it's difficult for me to come back after waiting for so long."

The race was every bit the classic you'd expect from the top rivalry in Asia.

Park took the lead after the first 100m, improving after every turn. Sun maintained his strength in the first 250m, hanging on to let Park lead the field and gradually reeling him in before leaving him for dead over the last 100m.

Sun and Park got reacquainted again in the semis of the 200m free on Sunday, where Sun again finished ahead of Park. The Chinese star clocked the fastest semi time of 1:45.61 in the second heat to finish ahead of Frenchman Yannick Agnel (1:45.64) and Park (1:46.2). The trio advanced as the three fastest qualifiers for Monday's final.

Sun and Park will also race-off in the 1,500m.

Peter Vanderkaay from the US won the 400m bronze medal 4.55 sec behind Sun, who shaved 0.45 off the Olympic record.

"Obviously, they're off to a great start," Vanderkaay said. "Sun Yang had a great swim, and I can just tip my hat to him. They're swimming great, and hopefully we can match them as the meet progresses."

Sun has emerged as a rare international sports icon in China, following in the footsteps of former NBA All-Star center Yao Ming, Olympic champion hurdler Liu Xiang and

Grand Slam winner Li Na.

Sun jumped on the podium a bit earlier than the call, a move reminiscent of Liu at the 2004 Athens Games.

"In the past, not only I hoped I would be on the podium, a lot of Chinese people did so as well. So I was impatient to get on there," Sun said.

Since smashing Australian distance swimmer Grand Hackett's 10-year-old 1,500m world record at the Shanghai meet last year, the Zhejiang native has become the vanguard of China's growing supremacy in the pool, and a new breed of athlete as well.

Under the guidance of Hackett's mentor Dennis Cotterell, Sun said he has improved his strength for a better result in the next two races.

"I've trained extremely hard over the past two years, pushing myself to the limit. I am ready for the 1,500," he said.

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Robots? Nope — just really good athletes

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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While most Chinese Olympic champions train at unfathomably high levels, Ye Shiwen is a little more fortunate.

The new women's 400 individual medley world record holder stole the limelight on Saturday with a time of 4 min 28.43 sec. And, by the way, she's only 16 years old.

As quiet as any other high school girl, how is it possible Ye has already achieved so much? Is she another product of China's State-run factory?

The international media has been asking that same question. Time Magazine and the (London) Guardian just unveiled stories highlighting some of the Chinese athletes' long roads to London.

"I am not a robot. I am a lucky girl. I don't need to practice over and over every day," Ye said at a news conference. According to Time, 30 members of the Chinese weightlifting squad have to repeat their routines six days a week in a pungent gym filled with sweat and chalk as they prepare for the Games.

Most of the lifters resemble workers in a factory, with little passion

for their sport.

British diving star Thomas Daley recently told the Guardian that his Chinese rival Qiu Bo performs as flawlessly as a robot on a conveyor belt from the medal machine.

His remarks prompted curiosity about China's traditional means of cultivating athletes, as well as the system's tough requirements in practice.

Some though, like Ye, don't consider it too difficult.



CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

China's Ye Shiwen (right) celebrates with teammate Li Xuanxu after winning the women's 400m individual medley and setting a world record on Saturday. Li won the bronze medal.

"My training program is intense but scientifically arranged as well. I don't need to spend long hours in the pool every day, and it's not overly demanding for me," said Ye, who was sent to Australia twice for advanced training before the Games.

The same question was posed to young shooter Yi Siling, who claimed the Games' first gold medal in the women's 10m air rifle on Saturday.

"I spent a lot of time with the team, but I actually practice two hours every day — not as much as people might think," she said of her reported six-hour daily drills.

Still, hard work is part of the deal. Ye hailed her teammate Sun Yang, who claimed the 400m freestyle gold on Saturday, as a major milestone for Chinese swimming, but she was just as impressed by his work ethic.

Sun also attributed his success to a lot of sweat.

"All the hard work in the past two years finally paid off, so I am too excited (to contain my emotions)," Sun said while weeping in the mixed zone.

The view from the top has been changing as well.

Shifting its attention from the medal haul to athletes' well-being after retirement, the governing body in

China is looking to fine-tune its system, cutting short training sessions, making them more effective, adding education programs and importing help from the West.

"It's the time for a reform of our talent cultivation system. We have to replace the old, highly demanding methods with a smarter, more scientific approach," said Sports Minister Liu Peng.

Ye says she's not done yet. Although she's already broken the 400 IM world record, Ye thinks she can still do better.

"I feel like I still have room to improve my stroke," Ye said. "I've strengthened my backstroke and butterfly, so I am getting better at the start. But I am still young and have some more potential in my body."

Given that the event is usually a lead-up her favorite event — the 200 IM — her future does indeed appear bright.

Ye's current time of 4 min 28.43 sec is nearly seven seconds faster than she clocked at last year's world championships, where she won the 200m title.

"I dreamed of winning the gold medal, but I never ever expected to break the record. So I am overwhelmed," she said.



HOTONWEB

@Sun Yang

"I made it. I succeeded. I did it! Thanks for all your support!"

Chinese swimmer Sun Yang after winning the men's 400m freestyle

@DwyaneWade

"Congrats to #SunYang on being the first chinese swimmer to win GOLD!!! #DreamsDoComeTrue"

NBA star Dwyane Wade on Sun's gold medal



@Lang Lang

"Sun Yang was so great! He made history! Come on. More gold medals are waiting for you."

Chinese pianist Lang Lang on Sun's victory

@Liu Xiang

"Ye Shiwen! You stunned me! New world record! The freestyle at last was too overwhelming. Chinese swimming is so terrific!"

China's star hurdler, on Ye Shiwen's gold medal and world record.

@MarkCavendish

"Gutted. After 250km, less than a minute to 20 guys. My guys were INCREDIBLE & there was nothing more we could do. Victims of our own success."

Britain's Mark Cavendish after finishing a disappointing 29th in the cycling road race



@millarmind

"I think @MarkCavendish needs a hug from the nation. Normally he's angry when he loses, today he was just sad. He feels like he let GB down."

British cyclist David Millar

@swimhardy

"Just come for dinner and the Queen walked past."

US swimmer Jessica Hardy after an unexpected brush with royalty at the Athletes' Village

@BeckAdlington

"Poor doggies!! They were so cute!!"

British swimmer Rebecca Adlington, worrying about the corgis' welfare after they played a starring role alongside the queen and James Bond actor Daniel Craig in the film spoof shown during the opening ceremony.

@katiejobrien

"My sister just rang me: 'Katie, where r u?' 'Switzerland' 'Oh. The cycling road race is about to go past your flat. Guess you won't see it!'"

British tennis player

@lolojones

"Of course I'll RT the photo. my legs look amazing."

US hurdler Lolo Jones

