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OLYMPIC SPECIAL

# CHINADAILY

TUESDAY, JULY 31, 2012 chinadaily.com.cn

中國日報

Issue No 7 £1



TYM GLASER

## Sun shines on new era in the pool

*I'm walking on sunshine, wooah  
I'm walking on sunshine, wooah  
I'm walking on sunshine, wooah  
and don't it feel good!  
Walking on Sunshine  
— Katrina and the Waves*

Sun Yang was on the verge of becoming the greatest freestyle swimmer in Olympic history. With a victory in Monday's 200 meter freestyle final, the Chinese super fish would have been in line to complete the unprecedented feat of winning a sprint (200m), middle distance (400) and marathon (1,500) in the pool.

Unfortunately for Sun, and the history books, he had to settle for a shared silver with his Asian nemesis Park Tae-hwan and behind French rocket Yannick Agnel.

Before you launch water bombs at me and spout the names of Johnny Weissmuller (AKA Tarzan), Mark Spitz, Graham Thorpe and Michael Phelps as the greatest proponents of propelling oneself through the water, please remember the word "freestyle" when I proclaim Sun among the best splashers of all-time.

None of them challenged for freestyle titles at a Games over the 200, 400 and 1,500 distances.

In fairness, there wasn't a 200 race in Chee-tah's pal's day in Paris in 1924, and it's prudent to note that (and I really want to beat my chest and make that primal African call now) Weissmuller won five Olympic gold medals and set 67 world records before leaping from the pool to Hollywood and making 12 Tarzan films.

But that's by the by, Sun is transcending his chosen stroke, and with a win in the 1,500 on Sunday (Beijing time), which should be a *fait accompli*, he will set a gold-silver-gold standard in freestyle that may never be emulated.

In the 400, he was a solid favorite, but Monday's 200 seemed to be a novelty event to whittle away the time before his blitz in the pool's marathon event.

That was before he decided to earnestly take on all-world opponents like new American superhero Ryan Lochte, Park, Agnel and Germany's Paul Biedermann.

It's almost frightening how much better this 20-year-old from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, can get over the next few years. He already boasts the world record in the 1,500m (14:34.14) and it seems only a matter of time before those shorter-distance records are his as well.

To put his potential feat in a terrestrial perspective, it would be like champion Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt competing over those distances (200, 400, 1,500) on the track ... but that just couldn't happen.

There's no doubt Bolt could win the 200 and 400 (he was a 400 star in juniors before he dropped it for the 100), but few athletes in the world — if any — are physically configured to sprint and endure.

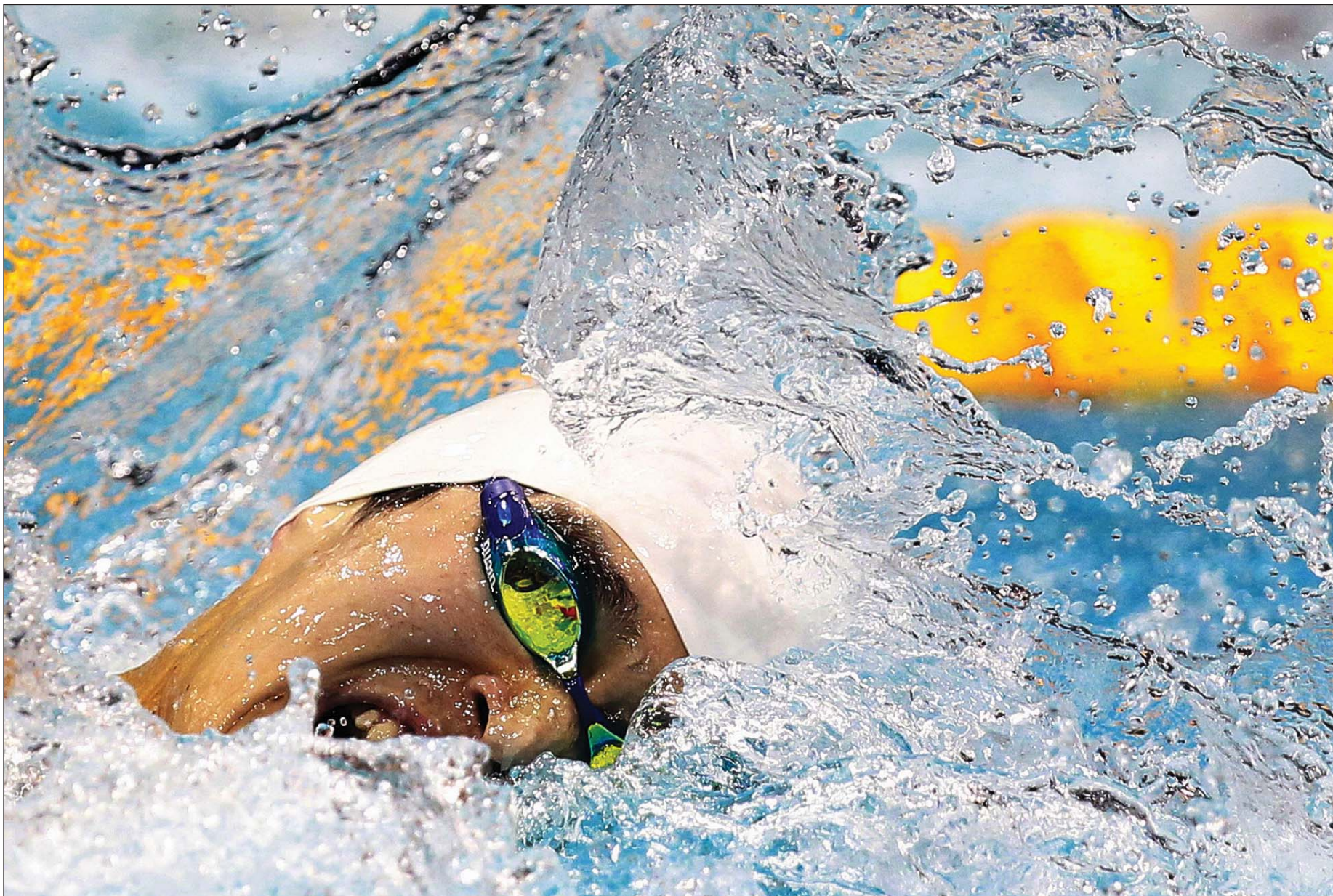
Sun is cut from a unique cloth; one which we should all appreciate and enjoy in equal measurements.

Sit back, relax and enjoy Sun shine.

*Tym Glaser is a senior sports copy editor who is very proficient at staying afloat. He can be contacted at tymglaser@chinadaily.com.cn.*

1:43.14 The gold medal time of Yannick Agnel in the 200 meters freestyle final.

1:44.93 Sun Yang's time in a dead heat for second with Park Tae-hwan



CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Sun Yang cuts through the water during the men's 200m freestyle final at the London Olympics on Monday. Yannick Agnel captured the gold medal while Sun tied for second with South Korea's Park Tae-hwan.

## Agnel steals thunder in 200m

Frenchman races to second gold medal and spoils Chinese star's dream of a hat-trick

By REUTERS in London

Yannick Agnel captured his second gold medal in 24 hours at the London Olympics when he won the men's 200 meters freestyle final on Monday, beating a stellar field in one of the most exhilarating races in the pool.

Agnel, whose stunning anchor leg swim won France the 4x100m freestyle relay the previous night, led all the way to win gold in a time of 1 min 43.14 sec, 1.14 outside Paul Biedermann's world record, set at the 2009 World Championships in Rome when the now-banned polyurethane bodysuits were allowed.

China's Sun Yang, who won the 400 freestyle on Saturday, dead-heated for second with South Korea's Park Tae-hwan in 1:44.93 while American world champion Ryan Lochte was fourth.

The 200 requires a combination of speed, stamina and tactical nous and Agnel had all three in abundance, dictating the race from the outset then bursting clear of his rivals on the final lap to provide France with its third gold medal in London's Aquatic Centre.

In the women's 100m breaststroke, Lithuanian teenager Ruta Meilutyte survived the ultimate test



FEI MAOHUA / XINHUA

China's Ye Shiwen (right) was the top qualifier in the 200m individual medley semifinals in 2:08.39.

of nerves to win the gold medal.

The 15-year-old not only became the first swimmer from her country to win an Olympic medal, but she did it in under extraordinary circumstances.

The start, a time when swimmers are already battling their nerves, was delayed by a technical malfunction that saw the starter's gun go off before he had called "on your marks". American Breeja Larson dove into the pool on the gun but was able to race because of the malfunction.

The eight finalists sat down while the problem was fixed and an unfazed Meilutyte still got off the blocks fastest and led at the turn, but then had to survive a fierce challenge from American Rebecca Soni, the reigning world champion in the event.

The more experienced Soni drew level in the final few strokes but Meilutyte kept her cool and got her hands on the wall first in 1 min 05.47 sec.

Soni was second in 1:05.55 while Japan's Satomi Suzuki finished third in 1:06.46.

Also on Monday, China's Ye Shiwen recorded the fastest time in the semifinals of the women's 200-meter individual medley.

## Silver and bronze are golden too, say fans

By CUI JIA and PENG YINING

Despite winning silver in the men's 56kg weightlifting event at the Olympic Games, Wu Jingbiao, Chinese double world champion, apologized profusely for, as he put it, letting down his fans and his country in an

interview with China Central Television on Monday.

"I feel terribly guilty for disappointing my country, the Chinese weightlifting team and all the people who supported me," he said fighting back the tears in front of the camera. "I really wanted to be the best but I didn't make it," he said. "I am sorry!"

The CCTV reporter hugged Wu, 23, and told him that it was a proud achievement to win the silver medal and he would have another opportunity.

After all, the Olympic maxim states that it is not the winning but the taking part that counts.

Back in China, public opinion and online comments over-

whelmingly supported Wu and other Chinese athletes who failed to get gold. The obsession for Olympic gold should not lessen the remarkable feat of getting an Olympic medal of whatever hue, they said.

"It's understandable that Wu regretted not getting the gold but he has nothing to apolo-

gize for," said Guangzhou resident Wu Zhilin, an avid sports fan.

"His reaction shows how much he, as a Chinese athlete, cared about the gold. But winning silver also deserves to be celebrated."

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Advertisement (86-10) 6491-8631  
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