



CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

China's Sun Yang reacts after he wins gold in the men's 1,500m freestyle final in a world record time at the Aquatics Centre of the London Olympic Games on Saturday. Sun clocked in at 14 minutes, 31.02 seconds. "This is the event I most wanted to win, and all my effort paid off at this moment," he said.

A leap forward for China's swimming

By TAN JINGJING in London
Xinhua

When the curtain came down over the eight-day swimming competition at the London Olympics on Saturday, China had accomplished one major achievement: It placed second in the medal tally.

The remarkable medal count represents a breakthrough for Chinese swimmers since Olympic doping scandals rocked the nation in the '80s and '90s.

The epic triumph came when Sun Yang won the 1,500m freestyle final on the last day of swimming, wiping more than three seconds off his previous world record and winning by a whopping eight seconds.

Sun and compatriot Ye Shiwen both clinched a pair of gold medals. China became the first country to have a man and woman swimmer win a pair of golds at the Olympics.

Sun, who secured two golds, one silver and a bronze, is now a legitimate superstar. Both he

and Ye won nearly half of China's 10 medals in the pool.

All of Sun's four Olympic medals are historically significant.

His opening day victory in the 400m freestyle — he defeated Park Tae-hwan, his long-time rival from South Korea — gave Sun the distinction of being the first Chinese male swimmer to claim an Olympic gold. His silver in the 200 free was China's first Olympic medal in short course swimming.

In the final leg of the 4x200 freestyle relay, Sun took Team China from fifth to third place to bring China its first medal in the event.

His win in the 1,500 free, his signature event, marks the first time a Chinese man set a world record in swimming.

Ye, another Chinese star, stunned the world with a pair of individual medley golds and two records — a world and an Olympic record — in her Olympic debut.

The 16-year-old smashed the world record in the women's 400 individual medley by more than one second. It was all the more remark-



MARK J. TERRILL / ASSOCIATED PRESS

China's Ye Shiwen gestures after women's 200m individual medley swimming semifinal on July 30. Ye stunned the world with double individual medley gold medals.

able because she swam the last 50m faster than American Ryan Lochte's last leg in the men's individual medley.

Ye's record swim of 4:28.43 was accomplished in a textile suit, while Australian Stephanie Rice got the previously held record of 4:29.45 in the age of polyester suits. She also smashed two Olympic records in the semifinals and finals for

the 200m individual medley event.

Other Chinese swimmers also excelled at the London Games: China's world champion Jiao Liuyang won the women's 200 butterfly in Olympic record time, Lu Ying bagged a silver in the women's 100 butterfly, and teenagers Li Xuanxu and Tang Yi pocketed two bronze medals in the 400 individual medley and 100 free.

Other notable Chinese swimming include Hao Yun, who placed fourth in the 400 free; Zhang Fenglin and his fourth place finish in the 200 backstroke; and Chen Yin's securing a spot in the finals for the 200 butterfly.

It has been 20 years ago since the Barcelona Olympics, when China took home four golds and five silvers in swimming. Since then, there have only been three other Olympic champions: 100 free champion Le Jingyi (Atlanta); 100 butterfly winner Luo Xuejuan (Athens); and 200 butterfly champion Liu Zige (Beijing).

Team manager Xu Qi said the nation's success in swimming at London ties directly to the State-scale sports system and its dedication to training and instilling confidence in Chinese swimmers.

Record-breaking Phelps a champion for the ages

By JOHN MEHAFFEY in London
Reuters

Flashing a lopsided smile of satisfaction and relief, Michael Phelps left the Olympic arena for the final time on Saturday after finishing his competitive career with a scarcely credible 18 gold medals.

The boy from Baltimore, who had set out to redefine the boundaries of his sport, had succeeded beyond anybody's expectations with twice as many Olympic titles as any other athlete in the modern Games.

At the age of 27 he will move on, secure in the knowledge he could not have done any more in the sport that became his life.

"I told myself that I never wanted to swim when I was 30," he said. "I've been able to do everything I wanted, I've been able to achieve the goals I wanted to achieve and I've managed to do every single thing. It's time for other things."

Phelps, the most accomplished all-around male swimmer ever, set his sights high from the start.

"Nothing is impossible," he wrote in his autobiography *No Limits* published after his record eight gold medals at the 2008 Beijing Games.

"You can't put a limit on anything. The more you dream, the farther you get. When I'm focused, there is not one single thing, person, anything that can stand in the way of my doing something."

The magnitude of Phelps' achievement as he quit the pool and entered the history books can be measured by the list of the other Olympic mul-

tiple medalists.

Phelps collected 22 medals after starting Olympic life as a 15-year-old at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

A distinguished quartet comprising track and field athletes Carl Lewis and Paavo Nurmi, gymnast Larisa Latynina and swimmer Mark Spitz won nine gold medals. Latynina, now 77, was in London to witness Phelps overtake her previous overall total of 18.

After his final race, Phelps accepted a silver trophy from world governing body FINA which described him as the greatest Olympian of all time. It is an accolade Phelps has never bestowed on himself and he was not about to start on Saturday.

"I have been able to become the best swimmer of all time," he said. "I said (to coach Bob Bowman) we have been able to get here together and I thanked him."

Phelps has trained under Bowman since he was 11 and there was plenty of emotion on both sides on Saturday.

"My first memory of him running around the pool when kids were playing dressed in his own tiny speedos, playing games in the pool," Bowman said.

"Now he has a real perspective, back then the only perspective was performance. And it was really focusing on every detail we could."

"But he was only focused on that, he didn't have an appreciation for the bigger picture."

Phelps' final Olympic campaign after he dropped the 200 freestyle from his Beijing program and aimed for seven gold medals in London started badly on July 28 when he finished



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US swimmer Michael Phelps holds up a trophy after being honored as the most decorated Olympian at the Aquatics Centre on Saturday.

fourth in the 400m individual medley behind compatriot Ryan Lochte.

Lochte was immediately, and prematurely, hailed as the new face of American swimming but he began to fade while Phelps started to flourish.

Beaten to the touch in the 200m butterfly, his signature event, Phelps retained the 100 butterfly by sheer force of will after he was seventh at the turn.

A day earlier he had won the 200 individual medley title to become the first man to win three Olympic gold medals in a row.

"The first race (400 IM) took the

pressure off," Bowman said. "We said 'We might as well enjoy it because it doesn't look as if it's going to go too well.'"

"We should at least have fun while we are here. But I do think that allowed us to relax a little bit and he started to swim well in the relays and kind of picked it up again."

Tributes have been pouring in all week from other members of the US swimming team, including one from 17-year-old Missy Franklin, another multi-eventer who will take over the torch from Phelps for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

"What he has done is incredible,"

Franklin said. "And he's kind of made people rethink the impossible — rethink what they can do and how they can push themselves."

Asked to assess Phelps' career, Bowman said: "It's not only the number of medals, it's the quality. Eighteen out of 22 gold medals. Two silver, two bronze. World records. You can look at all that."

"I just think the quality of it is so great, nobody can match that."

The aftermath for Phelps will start with traveling, some publicity appearances and plenty of rest and relaxation.



HOTOONWEB

@MichaelPhelps

"Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened."

US swimmer Michael Phelps, re-tweeting a Dr Seuss quote after ending his career with a 22nd Olympic medal

@LauraTrott31

"What a day!!! Olympic champion!!!! Thanks to everyone there today who has helped me along the way!!! I love u all!! Oh and when my postbox is painted gold tweet me your pics with it :-)"

Britain's Laura Trott, after winning the women's cycling team pursuit, looks forward to the Royal Mail repainting a post box in her hometown to mark the occasion

@ranomikromo

"Wahoooooooooooooooooooooo"
Dutch swimmer Ranomi Kromowidjojo tweets for joy after winning the women's 50m freestyle gold

@Feng Zhe Xiaopang

"I dared not eat ice cream and dessert in the past few days when I was preparing for the competition."
Chinese gymnast Feng Zhe

@Woshishuangniu'er

"Sun Yang is too handsome!"
Chinese women's basketball player Zhao Shuang on Sun winning the men's 1,500m freestyle

@He Wenna



"Happy birthday to you, my dear dad! I love u! I wish to be your daughter again if there is another life."

Chinese gymnast He Wenna, who earned third place in the trampoline finals

@Zhang Chenglong2012

"In this Olympic Games, what I need to do is to make you listen to more of the Chinese national anthem, *March of the Volunteers*."

Chinese gymnast Zhang Chenglong

@Yi Siling

"That's too bad. I have developed again a bad habit of eating instant noodles each night! Wow ... I'd better do some embroidery and be a weaving girl!"

Chinese Olympic shooting champion Yi Siling talks about her life

@Women's Basketball player No 8 Miao Miao

"When I got back to the village, I met Liu Xiang. How great if I met you earlier. Your kindness has helped cure my stomach troubles. Wish brother Xiang a good result in the competition!"

Chinese basketball player Miao Miao on meeting Chinese hurdler Liu Xiang

@Du Li

"A very harsh competition in the Olympics! I've prepared 4 years for this day, but today I seem to be a little unlucky. I cried, and smiled. I have tried everything! This is also a greatly valuable wealth in my life! Thanks for your support. I am OK now. I won't cry anymore."

Chinese shooter Du Li on losing the 50m rifle

@TomDaley1994

"Does everyone have #Olympicfever yet?"

British diver Tom Daley on the Olympic atmosphere

@chrisoy

"Does anybody remember a few days ago when some people were moaning about lack of GB medals? Seems like a long time ago now!"

British cyclist Chris Hoy on Britain's performance on Saturday with five gold medals

@MayorofLondon

"Forget about Super Saturday, this was Spectacular Saturday! What a night! So so proud."

London's mayor Boris Johnson on Britain's spectacular performance Saturday