

A blast from the past tells his story

THE NATION'S FIRST ASIAD GOLD MEDALIST TALKS ABOUT A DIFFERENT TIME IN CHINESE SPORT

Thirty-six years ago, a 25-year-old Chinese pistol shooter named Su Zhibo signaled China's emergence on the international stage by picking up the country's first Asian Games gold at the 1974 Teheran event.

Now, Guangzhou hosts China's second Asian Games, Su dusts off those old memories for China Daily.

The history-maker won three gold medals and a bronze in Teheran, but he received no prize money, only a certificate of merit.

"People were really simple in those days, I never thought of a salary or getting prize money," Su said, "I was just very happy that I didn't disappoint my countrymen."



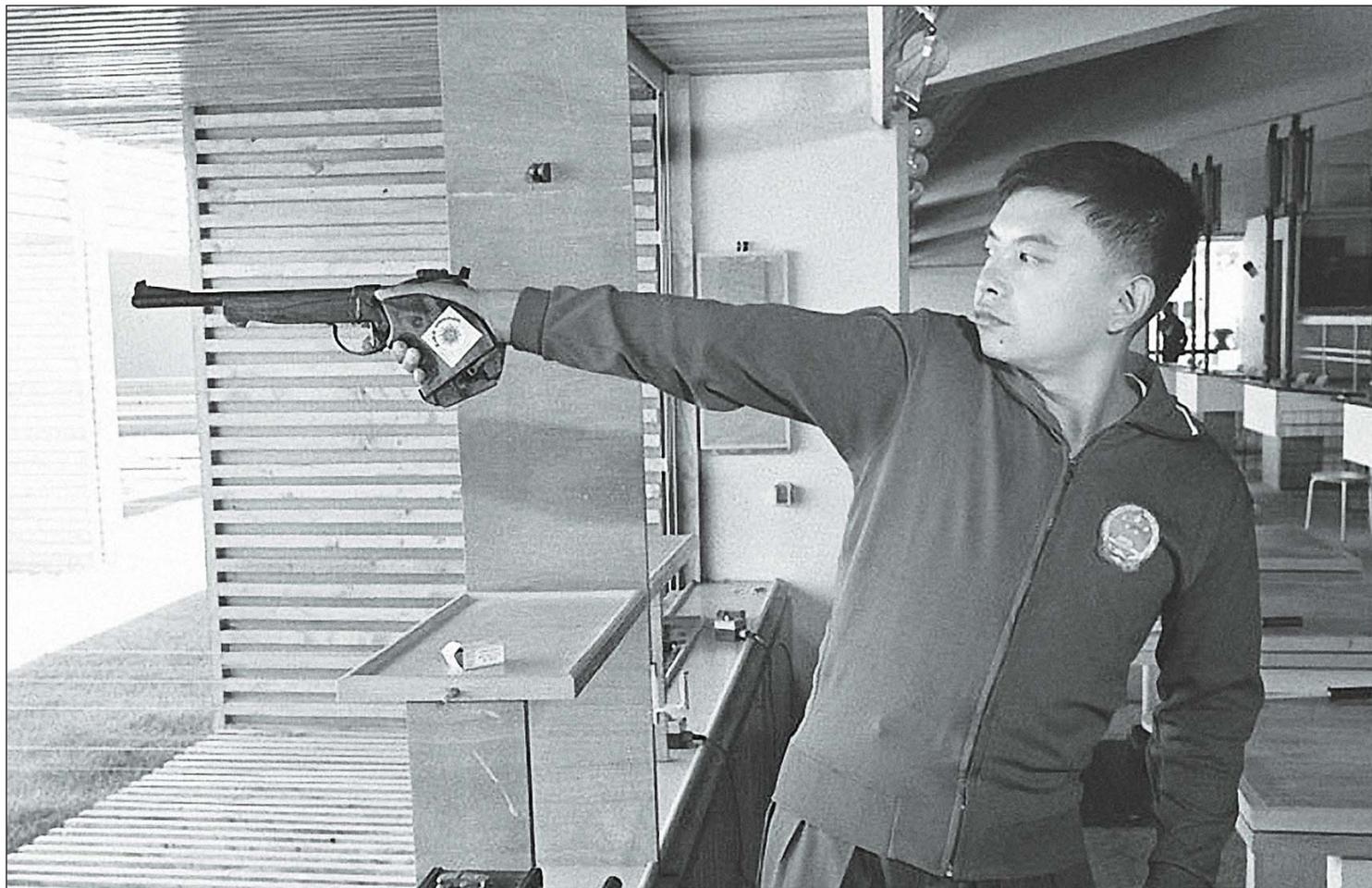
Su Zhibo

Four years later, Su stood atop the podium twice at the Bangkok Games, and was among the first group of sportsmen to receive the honorary badge of sports issued by the State Physical Culture and Sports Commission.

"I remembered I was awarded 300 yuan (\$45) and I was very satisfied," he said.

In the 1970s, the training and competition conditions for Chinese athletes were vastly different from today.

"Nowadays, athletes even have special-made podium-wear," said the 61-year-old. "I only got two suits during those years. We wore the Chinese tunic suit when walk-



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Su Zhibo won the 1974 Asian Games men's free pistol gold medal in Teheran to become China's first gold medalist at an Asiad.

ing into the stadium at the opening ceremony, and pinned a national emblem to our sportswear when accepting a prize," he said.

He also said the shooters struggled with their tools of the trade.

"We had to repair the pistols from time to time in 1974, because those of small caliber were all old ones made long ago," said Su,

whose pistol stopped working the night before the shooting final at the 1974 event. "Luckily, the coach worked on it all night, so I could join the final with a well-fixed pistol."

Though Su notched five gold medals at three Asian Games, he missed out on the Olympic Games twice, which remains a great disappointment to him.

"Wang Yifu and I were selected to join the 1980 Olympic Games, but the schedule was cancelled due to our country's boycott of the Moscow Olympics," Su said.

"When the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics came, Xu Haifeng scored better than me, so I missed the event again."

In Los Angeles, Xu turned a new

page for Chinese sport by becoming the country's first Olympic gold medalist.

"Maybe it was destiny," said Su, who retired as the national shooting team's manager in 2009. "I was dedicated to shooting for more than 40 years. I have no regrets."

CHINA DAILY

India unfazed as China guns for revenge at the range

GUANGZHOU — India gets an early chance to dent China's massive reputation in Asian Games shooting when its two leading marksmen hit the ranges on Saturday.

Olympic champion Abhinav Bindra and compatriot Gagan Narang will battle their Chinese rivals in what could be an intriguing tussle for gold in the men's 10m air rifle on the first day of competition.

Bindra, 28, returns to the country where he clinched India's first and only individual Olympic title

in Beijing two years ago, sparking wild celebrations in his cricket-obsessed nation.

Narang, who was forced to watch close friend Bindra's Olympic triumph from the stands after being ousted from the finals on countback, hit back with a vengeance after Beijing.

Narang overshadowed Bindra at the Commonwealth Games at home in New Delhi last month with four gold medals, including an easy win in the 10m air rifle event.

Many Indians were disappoint-

ed Narang did not win the David Dixon Award for the athlete of the Games, a feat achieved by compatriot Samaresh Jung in Melbourne in 2006.

The award went to Jamaican Trisha Smith for her gold medal in the women's triple jump.

A confident Narang, 27, predicted a good showing at the Aoti ranges in Guangzhou, but remained wary of his Chinese competitors.

"It will be a lot tougher to win here than it was during the Commonwealth Games,"

said Narang, who will carry India's flag at Friday's opening ceremony.

"The Chinese are always strong in shooting, but this is a sport where the competition is within yourself, not the other guy."

The man who could ruin the Indians' quest for glory is former Olympic champion Zhu Qinan, who was reduced to tears at the press conference in Beijing after being denied gold by Bindra.

Zhu later said the pressure of living up to his countrymen's

expectations — most wanted him to retain the gold he won in Athens in 2004 — hurt him.

Zhu has an opportunity to avenge the Beijing humiliation and also lift the team gold medal in the event with compatriots Cao Yifei and Yu Jikang.

Veteran Chinese coach Wang Yifu refused to predict a winner.

"We are all on the same starting line," he said. "There are good shooters taking part in the Asian Games. They all have an opportunity to win."

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