

Teng recaptures former magic

CONFIDENTLY LOOKING AHEAD TO 2012 LONDON OLYMPICS

By LEI LEI
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — Veteran Teng Haibin showed there was still life in the old dog as he emerged as the most successful men's gymnast on a star-studded Chinese team at the Guangzhou Asian Games.

With three gold medals and a bronze at the Asiad, the former Olympic champion has rediscovered his confidence and now has his sights set on next year's World Championships and the 2012 London Olympic Games.



GYMNASTICS

"It has not been easy," Teng said of his recent struggles in the sport. "It's a new start for me. The gold medals have given me much confidence as I look towards next year's World Championships and the 2012 Olympics."

In Guangzhou, Teng helped the men's squad win the team gold for the 10th successive time. He was also crowned the all-around champion. On the individual apparatus, he claimed gold on the pommel horse and bronze on the horizontal bar. He missed the podium in the parallel bars due to a fall.

"This might be my last Asian Games. Winning these gold medals here, I have no regrets at the Asiad," he said.

The Asian Games have been a lucky competition for Teng as he rose to international prominence at the Busan Asian Games eight years ago. There, the 17-year-old pocketed three gold medals — in men's team, pommel horse and horizontal bar.

At the Anaheim World Championships the following year he claimed titles in the men's team and pommel horse competitions.

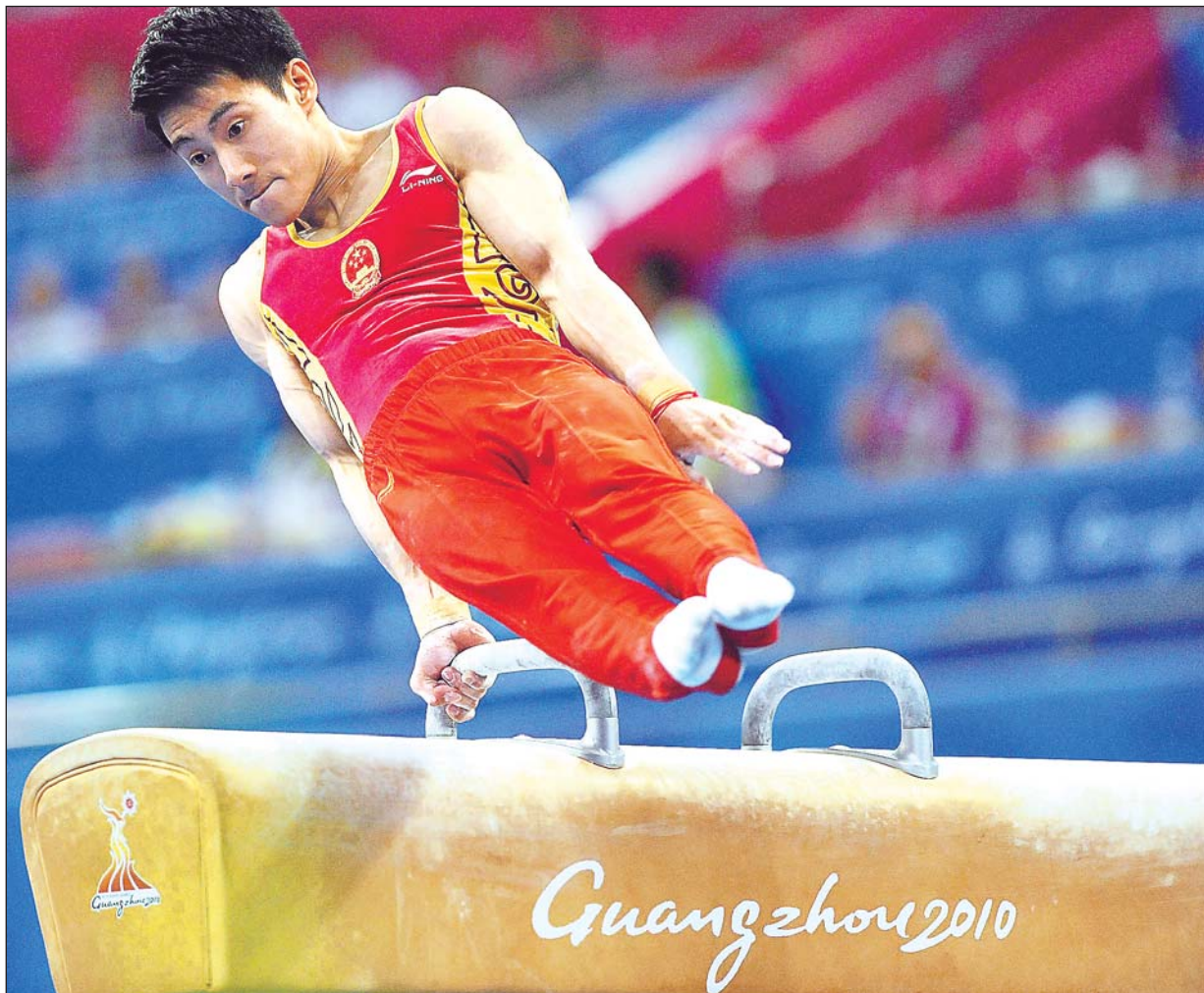
He went to the 2004 Athens Olympic Games with high expectations, but his luck turned.

After winning gold on the pommel horse, China's only gymnastics gold medal at that Games, Teng fell from the high bar in the team competition. The Chinese men's team, considered a strong gold medal contender, finished fifth.

The failure hurt him deeply and he almost disappeared from the international stage.

"The gold medal on the pommel horse could not hide my mistake in the team event," Teng said. "The whole team worked hard for that gold for four years, but my mistake cost us all."

At the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the Chinese men's team reclaimed its crown by winning the gold, but Teng



SAEED KHAN / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Gold medalist Teng Haibin of China performs on the pommel horse in the artistic gymnastics at the 16th Asian Games on Tuesday. China dazzled and dominated the gymnastics competition at the games, winning a total of 13 gold medals out of possible 14. The Republic of Korea won two, including sharing the floor exercise gold with China.

could only share the excitement in front of the TV.

"I had mixed feelings at that time. On the one hand, I was very glad to see our victory, but on the other, I was disappointed with myself. I didn't know what to do next," said Teng.

After the Beijing Games, Teng took a long vacation and thought about retiring from gymnastics. But he decided to return at the end of 2008.

"I asked myself many times whether to continue or not, but I was always hoping the Chinese team needed

me," said Teng. "If I left like that, I felt I would have been a failure — even though I was an Olympic champion."

"Winning the all-around gold medal at the Guangzhou Games has given me great confidence," said Teng. "But I know I still have a gap to bridge with the world's top gymnasts, such as Kohei Uchimura (of Japan, the reigning men's all-around world champion). I still have to work hard on my weak apparatus — the rings and floor exercises."

"I hope I can stand on the highest podium in London 2012 with all my teammates."

GOLD MEDALISTS >> OTHER OUTSTANDING ATHLETES



AFP

SHOOTING

Wang goes wall-to-wall

Wang Chengyi added the individual title to the team gold as China swept the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event on Wednesday. Wang led from the start to finish with 584 points, two more than second-placed Elaheh Ahmadi of Iran. The Chinese trio of Wang, Wu Liuxi and Yi Siling had earlier won the team title.



AFP

TAEKWONDO

Golden day for Iranian

Yousef Karami of Iran runs with a national flag to celebrate defeating Park Yong-hyun of the Republic of Korea in the men's under 87 kg taekwondo final at the 16th Asian Games on Wednesday. Karami won 4:3. China's Yin Zhimeng and Nguyen Trong Cuong of Vietnam won the bronzes.



AFP

SWIMMING

Jeong wins women's 200m

Jeong Da-rae of the Republic of Korea weeps as she leaves the pool after winning gold medal in the women's 200m breaststroke final at the 16th Asian Games on Wednesday. Jeong hit the wall in 2:25.02 ahead of Sun Ye (2:25.27) and Ji Liping (2:25.40), both of China.