



Favorite's fall gives China the gold

By LEI LEI
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — A fall by the gold medal favorite in the women's all-around gymnastics final allowed China's Xiao Kangjun to win the gold medal at the 26th Universiade yesterday.

South Korea's Jo Hyun-joo was the gold medal favorite after qualifying first for the final. But during the second rotation, she fell off the balance bar and landed heavily on her back.

Her fall alarmed spectators but prompt work by the gymnasium's medical team eased concerns over Jo's condition.

They quickly went to Jo's aid and carried her away on a stretcher for immediate evaluation.

China's Xiao went on to win the gold medal, followed by Japan's Mai Yamagishi and Alena Polyan of Russia.

Before the end of the competition, a spokesman for the South Korean squad said Jo's condition was not serious and she had already rejoined her team after treatment.

A spokesperson for the Universiade said Jo suffered a soft tissue injury to her neck, instead of a cervical vertebra fracture, which officials had originally feared.

Jo's fall affected teammate Cha Myeong-ji's performance.

"When she fell, I was very worried and became more nervous," said Cha, who finished 15th in the final. "I think her fall had a negative effect on my performance."



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Members of the medical team carry South Korea's Jo Hyun-joo out of the arena after she fell heavily in the all-around final on Monday.

Gold medalist Xiao felt sorry for Jo.

"We feel sorry for the South Korean gymnast," Xiao said after the final. "If that happened to me, I hope I'd be able to finish the competition without showing the pain."

Despite an error on the balance beam, Xiao's performance was elegant and precise. It was China's fourth successive Universiade individual all-around title.

"My coach didn't set any goal for me for the final. Only that if I performed as well as usual, it would be fine," said 18-year-old Xiao.

"I didn't feel too much pressure. With so many foreign friends

together, the atmosphere was quite good."

In the men's all-around final, the bronze medal went to a Canadian whose parents made him take up gymnastics when he was a boy because he was very clumsy.

You would never think Nathan Gafuik was clumsy in everyday life, but the Canadian insisted he is just that.

"My parents got me into gymnastics when I was very young because I kept getting hurt at home from falling off things," Gafuik said after the men's final. "So they decided it would be important for me to do balance and things like that.

"I learned that I was good at it and I loved it so I continued with it.

"I'm not sure (whether gymnastics helped my balance). Outside the gym, I'm still very clumsy. But it's OK. It's who I am."

In the final Gafuik finished third, while Mykola Kukshenko of Ukraine and Shoichi Yamamoto of Japan claimed the gold and silver.

"I think the result was pretty good. Nothing really too exciting but very solid," Gafuik said. "I didn't expect such a result. I came in just to do the best I could. What I ended up with is great for me."

At the age of 26, Gafuik, who

started gymnastics 20 years ago, is a business major at university.

"I love gymnastics. It keeps me in good shape," he said.

The next goal for Gafuik is the Gymnastics World Championships in October in Tokyo.

"I will compete in the World Championships and try to qualify for another Olympics," said Gafuik, who finished 17th in the men's all-around final at the 2008 Beijing Games.

"It's a good competition to prepare me for the worlds. I will continue from here, keep doing my routines and perform as well as I can."

Volunteers ease the pain as fierce heat hits beach volleyball

By TANG ZHE
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Lots of bare skin means lots of burned skin.

Sand temperatures at Dameisha Park reached 59.7 C on Monday as bare-foot beach volleyball players got into the swing of things at the Universiade.

Nothing like a little adrenaline to keep the pain away.

"In the match, actually, I was so focused and I even didn't pay much attention to (the hot sand), so it's good, but after that my feet hurt,"

said US player Geena Urango, after playing her first international game. "My feet definitely have to build up a resistance to that."



BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Temperatures hit 33.8 C at the beach, said Zheng Hui, a weather service staff member.

To keep the athletes from being burned, volunteers cooled the sand with water at least three times during the day, especially when the temperature of the sand surges

between 11 am and 2 pm.

"We have two volunteers at each court, and we will also cool the sand if players feel it's too hot to continue to play," said volunteer Chen Xiaodong, who lost his voice after working under the sun for two full days. "The temperature of the sand will drop five to six degrees each time."

Their efforts make it easier for players to focus on their games.

"(The volunteers) are amazing - they helped us so much, especially in this weather," said Urango, who is studying communication at the

University of Southern California. "It's a good thing that they water it down before. This event wouldn't be possible without them."

Other precautions are also in place to protect the players and audience from heatstroke.

"We have installed spray fans at the players' rest zone ... and prepared enough ice for them," said Fu Xuan, operations manager at the beach. "We also provide heatstroke prevention handbooks in four language — Chinese, English, French and Spanish — for audiences and players. (So far) there have been

no people seriously affected by the heat."

Beach volleyball games are frequent victims of other kinds of harsh weather as well.

"As an outdoor event, beach volleyball is subject to weather changes like wind and rain," said Fu. "If the rain doesn't interrupt the view of audience, the game will be carried on as scheduled. Otherwise, we have to stop the game and wait until the rain stops."

Zheng said showers are predicted for Wednesday and Thursday, but they shouldn't affect the games.