



Star adds more gold to collection

UKRAINIAN KHARLAN EARNS REWARDS FOR GRUELING TRAINING SCHEDULE ; AND SHE'S NOT DONE YET

By ZHANG CHUNMEI
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Olga Kharlan, the 20-year-old Ukrainian fencer who has just added a Universiade gold medal to her Beijing Olympics one, plans to win many more.

"I have a lot of medals, but I still have not collected all the ones I can," said Kharlan, who won gold in the women's individual sabre at the Shenzhen Exhibition Center yesterday.



FENCING

Kharlan defeated Kim Ji-yeon of South Korea 15-10 in the semifinals and beat Pascu Bianca Alexandra of Romania 15-9 in the final to take the gold.

"It is very important for me as I know many people are watching the Universiade in my country," said Kharlan. "I was not nervous, like I was at the Olympics. I was more relaxed."

Kharlan was a member of the champion sabre team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In the final against China, she was the diving force. She staged a spectacular comeback for the Ukrainian team by scoring more than half of its 45 points.



ZOU ZHONGPIN / CHINA DAILY

Olga Kharlan of Ukraine celebrates her victory over Pascu Bianca Alexandra of Romania in the women's individual sabre final on Monday.

For that victory, Kharlan was named Ukraine's sportswoman of the year in 2008. She also won gold in the individual and team competitions at the 2009 European Fencing Championships.

As a fencer who keeps winning medals, Kharlan has the key to success.

"I think physical strength, the right state of mind, good tactics and self-confidence are the key



ingredients of success," she said.

Kharlan started off dancing, but quit because her family could not afford the fees. She took up fencing when she was 10 years old because it was free.

Her godfather was her first coach. "He discovered and encouraged my passion for fencing. He kept saying that fencing was exactly what I should dedicate my life to," said Kharlan.

She has been fencing for 10 years and is now one of Ukraine's brightest prospects for Olympic glory in 2012.

"There is a saying 'your destiny is in the stars'. I am really happy that I started fencing. I think I am one of those people who are lucky enough to say they have found their true calling in life," Kharlan said.

While some Olympic gold medalists enjoy celebrity status, Kharlan is immersed in the daily grind of training.

She spends most of her time at the country's Olympic base in Kiev, a six-hour drive from her hometown. She sees her parents every few weeks, only speaking to them on the phone or the Internet in between visits.

"I train hard for at least three hours a day, getting up early in the morning for a jog, then training and having personal lessons after lunch. When I get back to my room I don't even have the strength to watch TV.

"My grandfather says I already have what they never managed to get in their whole lives, but I will keep striving for more," said Kharlan.

The young fencer is dreaming of another Olympic medal at London 2012.

"I sometimes think about London, as it might become another important period of my life," Kharlan said. "All Olympic athletes are really strong and experienced. I will train as hard as possible to win.

"When I was a little kid I dreamed of being a shop assistant, but after my mother took me to dancing classes, I dreamed of being a world-famous dancer. But destiny decided to change my plans and I am really happy about that."

Zhang has prescription for success

By GAO CHANGXIN
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — The doctor is already the quiet star of many teams. But what about when the sport involves getting strangled?

Zhang Hongyao, 57, has one of the busiest and most crucial jobs on the Chinese judo team at the Universiade.

Judokas are quite prone to bruises and other injuries, as a judo match, which is fought through grappling techniques, is filled with strikes, thrusts, chokes and strangles.

"In judo, there are so many uncertain factors that threaten to hurt athletes. So we have to always

be on alert," said Zhang, who has worked as a rehabilitation doctor in Tianjin People's Hospital for more than 20 years.

Zhang's involvement begins well before a match, and ends long after.

Twenty minutes before a match, he gives muscle massages to help his athletes relax. During the match, he remains poised to rush out in case of an injury. When a fight is over, he delivers massages again, to put the stressed muscles to rest.

And Zhang's job is not over until late at night. When judokas are back in the village, he goes to their rooms to treat their old injuries as "it's very rare for a judoka to not have old injuries," he said.

"My work is tough, but worth it. Team doctors guarantee that judokas can compete in their best shape," said Zhang.

Zhang's medical method is an integration of traditional Chinese and Western medicine. He compares the two to select the most effective way to treat the athletes.

"When it comes to athletes, you have to soothe their ailments as soon as possible, but not necessarily cure them, because they still have competitions waiting," said Zhang, who practices acupuncture.

Zhang's work doesn't stop with the body.

During his pre-match massages and treatment, he talks with the judokas to calm their nerves and keep their morale high.

"I think the mental part is more important than the physical part," he said. "Once you are relaxed mentally, your muscles are not as strained and old injuries not as painful."



ZOU ZHONGPIN / CHINA DAILY

Doctor Zhang Hongyao (right) helps out a Chinese judoka.

And at the Universiade, populated largely by young athletes who are subject to mood swings, mental guidance is doubly important.

In some cases, athletes who participate in world-class games for the first time are so nervous, they find it hard to even walk

normally, Zhang said.

And after traveling three times with the Chinese judo team to the Universiade, Zhang has solidified his tactics.

"Typically I will tell them not to thinking about winning, but losing, that will reduce the burden," Zhang said.