



Spain's Personal Plus cheerleaders dance during a break in a beach volleyball match at the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games. The dancers are just as much a spectacle as the competitors. PHOTO BY XINHUA

Athletes embrace ice bucket challenge

By XINHUA

It is the craze that has swept the world. Now the ice bucket challenge has reached the Nanjing Youth Olympic Village.

Athletes, ambassadors and even Lele, the official mascot of the Games, have taken up the challenge to generate awareness and raise money for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis patients.

The online challenge dares participants to have a bucket of iced water dumped on their heads and then nominate others to do the same.

A common stipulation is that nominated people have 24 hours to comply or forfeit by way of a charitable donation to the ALS Association.

"I did it on one of the first days after arriving in Nanjing and I'm donating the money for research as soon as I return to the United States," Young Ambassador Jess Luscinski said. "I have a few family friends affected by the disease so being in China wasn't going to stop me."

Artistic gymnast Sydney Townsend and diver Molly Carlson, both from Canada, posted videos on Instagram that showed them getting drenched in iced water at the Youth Olympic Village. Their team's young ambassador, Dillon Richardson, followed in their footsteps, taking up the challenge a few days later.

"A friend who I volunteered with nominated me all the way from Canada. It's very special to be a part of this campaign and raise awareness about the disease around the world through a simple video," he said.

"We cannot forget how important it is for people to donate to the cause to support research that can help find a cure for ALS. There are many people suffering from this disease."

The athletes in Nanjing are simply the latest to lend support to the campaign that has witnessed participation from George Bush, Victoria Beckham, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates and many more.

Athlete Role Model and 2013 world fencing champion Miles Chamley-Watson of the US also participated in the campaign in Nanjing between autograph sessions and interviews.

The official mascot of the Games was not to be left behind as volunteers emptied buckets of iced water on the colorful Lele.

Putting on a beachside show

By ZHENG XIN
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Bikini-clad cheerleaders are turning heads at beach volleyball competitions at the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games.

Each day, fans have flocked to the sand to watch the highly spirited play on the court and the energetic cheerleaders on the sidelines.

"The cheerleaders were no less splendid than the competition on the court," said Sun Yang, a beach volleyball fan attending the quar-

terfinals at the Sports Park beach volleyball venue.

Among the cheerleading squads, the group from Spain called Personal Plus, the first professional beach volleyball cheering squad in the world, has by far been the most popular. The team was also in the spotlight during the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the London Olympic Games for its performances and model-like looks.

"We put on cheerleading performances in 1996 during the Beach Volleyball World Tour in Tenerife (part of the Canary

Islands) and many people came to us afterwards, inviting us to cheer across the globe," said Nadia Sarudiansky, the squad's leader.

"We were lucky enough to go cheering during the 2004 Athens Games in the beach volleyball competitions and have seen our popularity skyrocket."

Sarudiansky said most of the women from Personal Plus are between the ages of 18-22 but the team members for the Youth Olympic Games are younger to meet the Olympic organizing

committee's requirements. The youngest is 18.

"The Chinese audiences are very friendly and they are responding very well and many have asked us for group pictures between games," said Omaela Bela, a 22-year-old cheerleader from Personal Plus.

Bela said this is her second time to China, after appearing at the 2012 Asian Beach Games in Haiyang, Shandong province. "We hope to have more chances to come to China to extend our performances here," she said.



Megan (left) and Nicole McNamara of Canada celebrate reaching the semifinals of the beach volleyball event on Monday. PHOTO BY XINHUA

Clean and nonstick sand a hit

How are the Youth Olympians at the Sports Park beach volleyball venue in Nanjing managing to look so pristine after diving and tumbling in the sand?

According to Song Bo, a staff member of infrastructure construction at Sports Park, it is all because of the sand.

"It's a special and highly regulated sand that we apply at the courts," he said.

As much as 3,380 metric tons of sand was transported from Hainan province for the beach volleyball venue. The quality of the sand is similar to the standard used during the 2008 Beijing Games.

"It's in high demand for its size, shape,

color, edges and corners. It doesn't stick to the volleyball players and they don't have to scrub it off their bodies."

Song claimed the sand being used won't get stuck between your toes. There are no pebbles or bits of shells and the shape of each grain of sand is consistent in size and smoothness.

"You need to make sure there is no excessive dust or other stuff in it so that the sand won't stick to the skin of players," he said. "We also are using a mixture of white and yellow sand because the blend of colors is more photogenic for the TV cameras."

— ZHENG XIN