

# Friend is mightier than sword

Fencers come together in mixed format to show competitive spirit and trust to win team title

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**  
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**W**hen the six young fencers of Asia-Oceania Team One stepped onto the top podium hand in hand in their respective uniforms of Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea under the Olympic flag, the venue erupted with thunderous cheers.

More than 1,000 fans stood and applauded the emotional scene on Wednesday afternoon, which perfectly demonstrated the Olympic spirit of uniting the world through sports.

As one of the Youth Olympics' initiatives to encourage exchange and unity, the fencing mixed continental team competition featured six fencers, three males and three females, fighting in their own category of swords.

Compared to the Olympic team event, the YOG brings fencers together from different National Olympic Committees based on individual rankings.

After six thrilling fights, Asia-Oceania Team One claimed the gold in a dramatic 30-26 comeback victory over Europe Team One, made up of fencers from Hungary, Poland, Russia and Italy.

Regardless of the result, fencers on both teams hailed the event as an ice-breaking tool to build communication and trust with each other despite their different cultural backgrounds.

"It feels wonderful to play with teammates from other countries," Hong Kong male fencer Choi Chun-yin said after beating Polish opponent Andrzej Rzadkowski, 7-5, in their foil bout.

"However, there was pressure as I had no idea how my teammates would perform and we had to make up points lost by others in their fights. But this is about teamwork and that is what this event promotes," said the 16-year-old.

Patrik Esztergalyos, the men's epee individual gold medalist from the Europe team, said "the mixed nationality event taught us how to build teamwork with new teammates".



Japan's Emura Misaki of Asia-Oceania Team One celebrates with teammates after her victory, which helped the team win the mixed continental team title on Aug 20 at the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games. PHOTO BY XINHUA

Asia-Oceania's victory proved again that, collectively, a champion team will always beat a team of champions.

The Europe team boasted four gold medal winners in the individual categories but still lost to the Asia-Oceania squad, which had three individual runner-ups.

The Asia-Oceania team trailed 4-1 after the men's epee and women's foil bouts. South Korean Kim Dong-ju managed to beat Russian Ivan Ilin, who claimed the gold medal in men's sabre over him, registering 14 touches to Ilin's 10 to pull the Asia-Oceania team ahead 15-14.

The Asia-Oceania team cheered after each point in different languages.

Choi, who was beaten by his Polish rival in the individual foil the previous night, followed up by winning his bout with seven touches and raised the total score to 25-21, providing Japanese teammate Emura Misaki with a comfortable buffer for the final bout.

"I felt like I took my revenge," Choi said excitedly. "Actually, I thought I might be better than him (in the individual event) but I failed to grasp the chance yesterday. Today's result proved that I can beat him and I am capable of being a champion."

After the medal ceremony, all 18 fencers posed for a colorful group photo featuring different uniforms but the same grinning faces.

The Japanese team coach, Yusuke Aoki, said the mixed event also offered more opportunities for coaching exchanges between Asia and Europe.

Zhong Man, the 2008 Beijing Olympics men's individual sabre champion, is already a fan of the innovative format.

"It's a fresh, new initiative and it is entertaining to watch," said the 31-year-old Jiangsu native. "It helps promote friendship among different countries and continents and lets the athletes know that winning is not everything."

## Judo mixed team event creates 'family' ties across borders

By **XINHUA**

In the last judo bout of the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games, a boy from Serbia stood by the mat screaming out in support of his teammate, a girl from Chinese Taipei, as they battled for the gold medal in the mixed international team competition.

And when Wang Yu-jyun of Chinese Taipei was tossed upon her back by Morgane Duchene of France, losing the fight by ippon, it was 18-year-old Serbian Nermanja Majdov who offered words of comfort and congratulated her on the team's silver medal.

"We didn't know each other before," Maj-

**"We didn't know each other before. But today we are family."**

**NERMANJA MAJDOV**  
A Serbian judoka

dov said after the fight.

"But today we are family."

The other members of the team were Anastasya Turcheva (Russia), Layana Colman (Brazil), Dzmityr Minkou (Belarus), Ivana Sunjevic (Montenegro) and Ryu Seung-hwan (South Korea).

Each judoka stood on the side of the

mat, arms in the air, shouting for an ippon score to be awarded in their favor when Wang appeared to put Duchene on her back. When none was awarded, Majdov served as cheerleader to keep his squad's spirits up.

"Today we are one team," Majdov said. "And now we share the same silver medal."

Maria Siderot (Portugal), Adrian Gandia (Puerto Rico), Ayelen Elizeche (Argentina), Sukhrob Tursunov (Uzbekistan), Lisa Mullenberg (Netherlands), Mikhail Igolnikov (Russia) and Duchene won the gold.

In the most exciting match of the final round, Mullenberg trailed Sunjevic but

scored an ippon toss in the final second of the bout.

"It's very special," said Mullenberg, who celebrated her 18th birthday on Thursday by claiming a gold medal with her team. "It was just one second on the board so it was great."

The two teams were tied when Mullenberg secured the win.

"I really like the team," Mullenberg said. "Normally we don't have competitions like this but I think we should have more."

Two teams shared bronze medals in the event, giving a total of 29 judo medals in the final day of competition as four Olympic flags hung from the rafters.