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The Wang sisters stay in perfect sync to seal artistic swimming gold for China

**TWIN IT
TO
WIN IT**



Gold medalists Wang Liuyi and Wang Qianyi of China perform in the free routine of the artistic swimming women's duet competition at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou on Saturday. The twin sisters performed a cheetah-themed free routine, scoring 266.5767 points for a total of 526.8620. By winning gold, the pair also earned Team China a spot in the duet event for the Paris 2024 Olympics. The team final will be held on Sunday, with male athletes featuring for the first time. NG HAN GUAN / AP

Putting athletes first

Chinese table tennis great Ding Ning among new members elected to OCA's Athletes Committee after Hangzhou vote

By HE QI in Hangzhou
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The Olympic Council of Asia on Saturday announced the addition of nine new members to its Athletes Committee.

"We have an election for our Athletes Committee for the first time in OCA history," said Mikako Kotani, chair of the committee, at the Main Media Centre following the vote, which was conducted across the athlete villages at the Hangzhou Asian Games.

"We were delighted to see candidates from all five zones (within the OCA). We had 26 athletes stand for election, which is a great number," Kotani added.

"I was glad to know athletes are serving for the betterment of athletes. We keep pushing forward and now we have athlete committees in most of the National Olympic Committees in Asia."

Former Olympic champion table tennis champion Ding Ning of the Chinese mainland, and Lee Chun-ho of Hong Kong, China, with 4,435 and 2,188 votes respectively, were elected as East Asia's female and male representatives on the committee.

"I am honored to be on this com-



Ding Ning

mittee. I am very happy to join and I will try my best to help athletes in need," said Ding.

"I have competed multiple times (in major sports events) and this occasion is a special one.

"This whole experience is a memorable one. There is also a Korean candidate sitting in the audience, and we have spent a lot of time together. I hope we can work together to promote the Olympic Movement and support our cause."

Ding stressed that she is keen to expand her knowledge in order to conduct her role as best as possible.

"I want to help athletes enjoy a better life when they retire. I want to help these athletes realize their dreams and help them make the right decisions when they retire," she added.

Julyana Al Sadeq of Jordan, with 4,410 votes, and Husein Alireza of Saudi Arabia, with 2,381 votes were elected as West Asia's representatives.

Central Asia is represented by Zulhumar Dashkinova and Merdan Atayev, both of Turkmenistan, with 3,340 and 3,411 votes, respectively.

Saina Nehwal was elected as the only candidate in South Asia, with 7,785 votes. Ng Shayna and the only male candidate, Terry Tay, were elected as Southeast Asia's representatives, with 3,147 and 7,785 votes, respectively.

As the first-ever election for the OCA's Athletes Committee, there was a 66 percent voter turnout at the Asian Games Village.

"It's very nice to see the numbers and how the numbers were increasing day after day," said Tony Tarraf, director of the athletes development department of the OCA Athletes Committee.

"Until the last day (Friday), we reached 7,785 votes — a 66 percent voting rate. This is a big percentage for elections taking place for the first time. It's really great to see other athletes from Asia being so interested and really looking forward to placing their votes for their representatives at the OCA," Tarraf said.

Flippin' the light fantastic



China's Li Shifeng celebrates winning the badminton men's singles final at the Hangzhou Asian Games on Saturday. Li won the gold after besting teammate Shi Yuqi in a 23-21, 21-13 victory. AP

A magical performance

By LI YINGXUE in Hangzhou
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Within the Hangzhou Asian Games Village, a musical fountain graces the riverside, attracting numerous athletes who enjoy sitting around and simply relaxing.

On several evenings during the Games, this location has turned into a stage where a succession of captivating performances have unfolded, showcasing acts like acrobatics, magic, and, of course, music, as well as other, more interactive activities.

The special acrobatic and magic show was held on Sept 25 and the show started with a choreographed dance performed by robot dogs. Then a clown made an appearance, crafting various shapes with balloons and engaging with the athletes.

Soon after, acrobats took center stage, showcasing the traditional act of balancing jars on their feet. Amid the enthusiastic cheers of the audi-



Various performances featuring Chinese culture have been staged around a musical fountain in the village. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ence, the performers went even further, skillfully balancing square tables in the air, executing nimble flips and seamlessly swapping positions with each other.

"The opening ceremony of the Hangzhou Asian Games has already presented a magnificent spectacle to athletes from across the globe. On the stage of the Asian Games Village, our goal is to deliver an exquisite and

minimalist performance, emphasizing the beauty in simplicity," explained Zhang Yunzhi, the coordinator of cultural and artistic activities in the Asian Games Village.

"We also aspire to integrate elements of Chinese culture and the unique essence of Hangzhou into the entire show."

Pakistan squash player Farhan Zaman really enjoyed the perform-

ance. He visited Dalian in Liaoning province last month and had a good time there, but he was more excited about coming to Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, with his wife, who is a team official.

"The Asian Games Village is like a big family, it's our family," he said.

Md Mazharul Islam, a team official from Bangladesh liked the dance shows. After the performance concluded, he couldn't contain his enthusiasm and eagerly joined the performers on stage to get photographs with them.

A splendid showcase of traditional folk music was also held on the river bank in the village. Instruments like the *guzheng* (a Chinese plucked zither), *pipa* (a Chinese lute), and *erhu* (a two-stringed bowed instrument) took center stage one by one, their melodious and evocative tunes eliciting a chorus of applause from the athletes.

Li Chengle, a member of the Asian Games Village cultural and artistic activities team, revealed that the performance saw the participation of many young, talented instrumentalists hailing from different parts of the country.

"We've carefully chosen experi-

enced performers to take part in this show, aiming to offer the attending athletes a rich and diverse experience of Chinese traditional culture," Li said. "We're blending modern performances with classical ones to give the athletes a unique experience."

It was Saudi Arabian archer Saud Nasser Alarifi's first time listening to traditional Chinese folk music, and he thought the show was excellent.

"This is my first time in China. Everything here is very good, the people are very friendly, and I am very happy to be here," he said.

As the *pipa* resonated with a clear and vibrant sound, and the *qin* (a plucked, seven-stringed instrument) produced a continuous, enchanting melody, the performance continued, prompting athletes to eagerly capture the moment with their smartphones. Some even chose to share the scene with their family and friends through video calls.

Among them was Iranian kabaddi player Milad Jabbari, who recorded the whole performance on his phone. "This music is exceptionally beautiful, and the Asian Games Village is truly remarkable. I have a deep affection for this place," he said.



Shi Haoyu, one of only two male artistic swimmers who featured at the 19th Asian Games, in action with Team China in the team acrobatic artistic swimming event at the Asian Games on Friday. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

In sync with the times

With two men competing in artistic swimming for the first time at the Asian Games, the once female-dominated discipline is evolving

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Hangzhou
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Bringing power and diversity to the “ballet on water”, men’s artistic swimmers have dived deep into the once female-only aquatic discipline, with stereotypes shattered and Olympic dreams renewed.

Despite everyone elegantly and precisely performing to the same beat, Shi Haoyu on China’s artistic swimming team easily stood out in the pool, with his swimming costume accentuating his bare chest and angular physique, as the home team danced to rousing cheers from the partisan crowd at Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Aquatic Sports Arena on Friday.

Shi, one of only two male artistic swimmers who featured at the 19th Asian Games, has grown used to the “oohs” and “aahs”, and even, at times, the snickers, from members of the crowd at every major meet he’s competed in since the former junior swimmer joined the synchronized program in 2015.

“I don’t think we need to care too much about people’s opinions, as long as we stay true to ourselves and stay confident about what we are doing and what we are passionate about,” Shi said after performing with his seven female teammates to earn the host a leading score of 235.7534 points in the team acrobatic routine on Friday.

“Traditionally, the public perception is that



Joining Shi Haoyu in the female-dominated event in Hangzhou is Thailand’s Kantinan Adisaisiributr. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

artistic swimming is only for women. Men, however, can bring some different elements to the sport, adding more diversity and creating different chemistry with the female athletes.

“For boys interested in this sport, I hope they will just keep chasing their dreams and I hope more will join in,” said Shi, who won China’s first world championship title in mixed duet, alongside his partner Cheng Wentao, in July in Fukuoka, Japan.

With grace, flexibility, synchronization and artistic expression measured heavily, historically, only women had been considered to compete in artistic swimming. That is until 2015, when aquatic sports’ global governing body, FINA, allowed men to compete at the worlds for the first time in Russia.

Since then, the water ballet has drastically evolved, partially due to rule changes encouraging more difficult maneuvers and combinations

that lean toward more rigorous tests of physicality, strength and explosiveness.

Men’s involvement is expected to suit the higher physical and technical demands that now prevail on the elite stage.

“The main contribution (of men) is the power and strength,” Team China’s Spanish coach Anna Tarres said in Hangzhou.

“But it is the techniques and the flexibility that the girls have that is where he needs to further improve,” the legendary coach and former Olympian said of Shi’s potential.

Having made their presence felt at the worlds and FINA World Cup series for years, male artistic swimmers will take to the Olympic stage at next year’s Paris Games for the first time since artistic swimming made its Olympic debut in 1984.

The high-profile exposure at the multisport extravaganza is expected to help redefine the character of artistic swimming, while motivating more male aspirants to dip their toes into the proverbial pool.

“I am really looking forward to the Olympic stage, a platform never before seen by male artistic swimmers,” said Shi, a 22-year-old four-time world championships competitor in mixed duet.

“A lot of people still don’t understand the sport, but I think more will learn it, accept it and appreciate it when we show how competitive and inspiring it can be at the Olympics,” Shi said.

“Whether people approve of it or not, at least they will begin to pay attention to it.”

Joining Shi in the female-dominated event in Hangzhou is Thailand’s Kantinan Adisaisiributr, a teen prospect who followed his elder sister Jinnipha into the discipline and has been a key member of the Thai squad since he switched from swimming in 2019.

As fun as it might seem, the underwater regime of artistic swimming gave Adisaisiributr a hard time during his first serious training session, when the heavy physical toll of treading water to stay afloat quickly wore him out.

“Men are stronger with more muscle in general. It’s harder for us to float. The flexibility is also another challenging part,” said the 17-year-old, who finished eighth in mixed duet with his partner Voranan Toomchay at the 2023 worlds in Japan.

With only women’s duet and team competitions, in which each squad is allowed two males at most, now featuring at the Olympics, Team Thailand head coach Claudia Tapparelli expects the Games’ program to include more mixed events in the future to open the doors wider.

“We hope the mixed duet will join the Olympics program as early as Los Angeles 2028,” said Tapparelli, a veteran Italian coach. “So more countries can qualify.”

“Men can bring more variety in the duet because the interaction between men and women creates more emotional storytelling than the women-only team does.

“Men’s participation can also help balance the dynamics with girls on a team, because they are easier to discipline,” said Tapparelli, who helped Italian Giorgio Minisini develop into one of the male icons of the sport.

Minisini became the first Italian male artistic swimmer to win a solo title at the national championships in 2021, when he beat 13 female artistic swimmers to take gold.

The message Tapparelli expects Minisini and Shi to send in Paris next year is simple: “You can do anything you want. Everything you put your mind to, you can achieve it in artistic swimming,” she said.



The heroes helping the stars shine

Unsung frontline workers share their Asian Games experiences

By XU HAOYU in Hangzhou
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Saturday afternoon at the Main Media Centre, six frontline workers of the Hangzhou Asian Games were invited to talk about their work experience during the event.

The spotlight may not shine as brightly on them as it does on the competitors in the arena, but most of them have been offering support and help to the 12,000 athletes, nearly 5,000 technical officials and thousands of media personnel, making their own extraordinary contributions to the Games.

At the conference, Asiad Daily's very own Shi Futian, a sports reporter and new media personality at English-language newspaper China Daily, shared the inspiration he has drawn from people he has interviewed, including Uzbekistan's artistic gymnast Oksana Chusovitina and Chinese swimmer Wang Shun.

"I feel very lucky to participate in such a huge event as a journalist," he said. "I also hope that through our media coverage, more people will get to know the athletes and understand their stories."

Lyu Shuyi, a security staff member at Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport, has been responsible for the protection of rifle and pistol ammunition for events such as shooting and modern pentathlon. As of Friday, the security team had ensured the safety of ammunition in 139 batches, not a single piece was lost or damaged.

"Due to the varied gun control policies in different countries, we worried that athletes might not understand the local rules. However, those concerns were alleviated when everyone showed understanding and cooperation."

Hu Chuangang is the catering manager of the dining hall that serves meals to athletes and officials.

"I have collected over 30 pins

from different countries and regions, most of which I received as gifts from athletes and officials in acknowledgement of our catering services," Hu proudly said.

As a waste disposal and cleaning operative, Yu Dingding checks the sanitation and cleanliness of the sports venue, including the stands, seats, restrooms, aisles and peripheral roads.

"Our job is to prepare a clean venue before the audience arrives," he said.

Lu Baolin has been driving the shuttle bus from the Athletes Village to the golf venue since Sept. 22.

"I wake up every day at 2:00 am, set off at 4:30 am, drive more than 30 kilometers to take athletes to the competition venue, and then return to the Asian Games Village. Each round trip takes almost two hours, and on each competition day, I make the journey three times," Lu said.

His son is also involved in the Games, providing security services in the Linping district of Hangzhou. Due to their work commitments, they hardly see each other these days. On the Mid-Autumn Festival, the family spent over an hour chatting via video call, celebrating the festival together online.

Li Guanlin is a volunteer at the Basketball Arena in Shaoxing Olympic Sports Centre Gymnasium, and his job is to ensure that the court is free from debris, sweat stains and watermarks, and to ensure the smooth progress of the matches by helping prevent athletes from slipping and avoiding any unnecessary injuries.

"Upon learning the importance of our job, we conducted a lot of training and practice sessions. We are surprised and very honored that people pay attention to, and show an interest in, our work," Li said.

"When I am on duty at the court, my family will look for me during the live broadcast. They told me that seeing me busily working makes them realize how much I've grown up."



From volunteers, match officials, cheerleaders, community workers and cleaners, to ball retrievers and medics, the 19th Asian Games, which come to a close on Sunday, have witnessed the great contribution of people from all walks of life and across various sectors. Their hard work and effort have helped ensure the Games' success.

ANDY CHONG, ZHANG WEI, WEI XIAOHAO AND GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY, LIAO ZUPING / FOR CHINA DAILY AND YIN LIQIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE





Historic win a good pitch for baseball

Despite a bronze-medal bask, Team China's first-ever victory over Japan is a home run for the game's domestic profile, **Sun Xiaochen** reports

Still a niche event aspiring to join the country's sporting mainstream, Chinese baseball is embracing the exposure at the Asian Games, seeing the event as a major boost for the sport's profile in the host nation.

Despite finishing without a medal again, the Chinese baseball team has taken pride from its gutsy performances against the continent's baseball powerhouses at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, with the young squad motivated to keep maturing and playing itself into medal contention in the near future.

After losing to Chinese Taipei and the Republic of Korea in two super-round games, then Japan in the bronze-medal match, Team China completed its Hangzhou campaign with a 3-3 win-loss record to secure a fourth-place finish for an eighth straight time since the sport's Asiad debut in 1994.

Batting against the "Big Three" on the continental stage, though, has been a much-needed learning curve, according to head coach Wang Wei.

"I think the overall experience so far at the Asian Games has been nothing but positive for our young players," Wang said after Team China's 4-1 defeat to Chinese Taipei in its first super-round game on Thursday at Shaoxing Baseball and Softball Sports Centre.

"I am particularly happy with the quality of our pitchers and our overall defensive play, which prevented opponents from getting hits and runs.

"Our batters, however, still need more high-level games at this level and beyond to get used to the power, velocity and finesse from pitches of a quality they don't normally face."

Team China's overall score of five runs from 19 hits across 27 innings, compared to the total 16 from 28 scored by opponents in the final three games — including an 8-1 rout by the

ROK on Friday and Saturday's narrow 4-3 defeat to Japan — has underlined that the lack of consistent quality competition has taken a toll on the young squad's progression over the past four years.

Also coached by Wang, with almost the same roster, Team China registered its best result at continental level in almost two decades by winning a bronze at the 2019 Asian Championships, beating the ROK twice on its way to the podium.

The pandemic-induced break from international training programs and overseas trips, however, abruptly hit the brakes on Team China's progression, resulting in a widening gap between its young hopefuls and the best in Asia.

In its first super-round loss to Chinese Taipei, Team China was struck out 15 times at bat, versus only three dismissals by its own pitchers, while walking its opponent 11 times, compared to two instances of base on balls itself.

With the majority of Korean and Japanese A-list stars skipping the Asian Games to focus on their pro league commitments, Chinese Taipei presented arguably the highest benchmark in Hangzhou for Team China to measure against.

"Physically, our batters need to get stronger so they can hit more aggressively. Our batting has to step up a gear to be competitive at this level. You cannot win a baseball game by just pitching and fielding well. You have to score," said Wang.

Team China's undoubted tournament highlight was Tuesday's historic 1-0 win against Japan in its final group game, marking a first-ever victory over its neighbor and Asian baseball powerhouse at any level.

China's star lead-off batter Liang Pei rose to the big occasion again as the 25-year-old, with the bases loaded, cracked an RBI single off the bat in



From top: Zheng Chaoqun winds up a pitch during a super-round game against the Republic of Korea on Friday; China's first baseman Cao Jie competes during the bronze-medal match against Japan on Saturday; Crowds enjoy the action at Shaoxing Baseball and Softball Sports Centre. PHOTOS BY HAGPP AND AGENCIES

the second inning, helping Cao Jie to home plate to score the only run of the game.

Liang also shone during the high-profile World Baseball Classic in

March by delivering a home run against host Japan, which was led by MLB and Los Angeles Angels superstar Shohei Ohtani.

The remarkable win over Japan,

despite its lack of roster depth, made the Hangzhou Asiad a tournament to remember for Chinese baseball fans, inspiring the national governing body to invest more in youth training and overseas exchange programs, which hints at a brighter future for the Chinese game.

"Our consistent effort in youth development over the years has paid dividends. This shall encourage us to keep pushing and working hard to make continuous improvements," the Chinese Baseball Association said in a statement.

Among 24 players on Team China's Asiad squad, 11 are younger than 23, with 19-year-old pitcher Wang Xiang standing out as the youngest player among all the teams in the final four.

"Chinese baseball has improved a lot. The team has good pitchers and batters who are already competitive at this level. We have to do our best and put up a good performance when facing them," ROK manager Ryu Joong-il said before Friday's game against China.

Supported by the CBA, the business expansion of MLB into the Asia-Pacific has also provided a helping hand in promoting the game in China, maintaining the domestic talent supply through its three development centers in East China's Jiangsu province.

Since the first development center opened in Wuxi in 2009, a total of seven Chinese prospects have graduated through the system to sign tryout or minor-league contracts with MLB clubs, including first baseman "Itchy" Xu Guiyuan (MLB's first contracted Chinese player who signed with the Baltimore Orioles in 2015) and pitcher "Sea" Gong Haicheng (who joined the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2017).

While none of them have seen action in "the Big Show," their experience in navigating the pro pipeline has helped bolster China's future hopes in the sport.

A brush with the countryside

Exhibition showcases works from a remarkable Zhejiang village where painting has become a way of life

By XING WEN in Hangzhou
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To celebrate the success of the 19th Asiad, an exhibition showcasing the works of rural artists from Zhejiang province is being staged in Hangzhou's Xiaoshan district.

The exhibition boasts a vast array of 216 scroll paintings, comprising 78 paintings by farmers, 36 traditional Chinese artworks and 102 calligraphy pieces.

The scrolls are distinguished by their vibrant hues, innovative aesthetics and a profound expression of unadulterated, rustic emotions. These artworks celebrate the local landscape and convey heartfelt blessings for the Asian Games.

The affection for painting in Zhejiang has blossomed into a cultural phenomenon — exemplified by the village of Yudong in Gouxu township of Quzhou city in western Zhejiang's mountains.

In Yudong, a village with a population of around 800, more than 300 villagers have nurtured a remarkable talent for painting, earning them the moniker "rural Picassos".

Yu Xiaoqin, the Party chief of Yudong, reminisced about the village's history when rice and citrus fruit farming and crafting lanterns were the main sources of income. However, in the 1960s and '70s, the local cultural center initiated painting training programs, allowing villagers to refine their artistic skills over the years.

In June 2003, Zhejiang province launched the Green Rural Revival Program, and Yudong has ridden the wave of the program's success.

In recent years, painting has not only augmented the income of Yudong's farmers but has also enriched their spiritual lives.

As Yu Yunmei, a farmer-artist from Yudong, said, "Painting has transformed our village and my life. The paintbrush has imbued me with a sense of anticipation for the future."

Beyond her annual earnings of over 100,000 yuan (around \$14,000) from painting and mural work, Yu also receives fees for her artwork and a share of the village's collective income.

Within Yudong, unused farmhouses have undergone a metamorphosis, being converted into eco-friendly cultural and creative shops, cafes, guesthouses and bars.

In 2020, a rural art museum was opened in Yudong.

Besides exhibiting exquisite paintings, the museum showcases an



Visitors to an exhibition in Hangzhou peruse the works of artists from rural areas of Zhejiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



assortment of cultural and craft products, such as scarves, umbrellas and gift packaging adorned with the locals' colorful artwork.

Over the past two decades, a multitude of villages in Zhejiang have harnessed the power of art to propel their development.

Inside the cultural hall of Luojiakeng village, nestled in the heart of Ninghai city, a group of tourists embarked on an artistic journey under the guidance of a local resident named Shu Meili. Collectively they crafted pressed flower fans, each imbued with a unique style.

Shu's transformation from an ordinary farmer into a rural artist serves as a testament to the village's innovative approach to rural vitalization.

At the age of 43, Shu dedicated a year of her life to learning the intricacies of flower arranging, fan-making and various other artistic skills. Today, not only does she enjoy a stable monthly income, but her business continues to thrive.

Shu's success story provides a glimpse into the development model embraced by Luojiakeng, one that leverages the power of art to invigorate rural life.

Luojiakeng was once a dirty and disorderly backwater area, but has witnessed a profound transformation with the arrival of resident artists, whose works have complemented the rural vitalization movement.

Inspired by these artists, locals embarked on a mission to revamp their homes and gardens using raw materials such as stones, twigs and cob bricks. They adorned their walls with captivating paintings, drawing thousands of tourists to the village.

"Culture infuses vitality, allure and a distinctive heritage," said Gu Yikang, the chief expert of the Zhejiang Zhijiang Rural Vitalization Research Institute. He added that the countryside, illuminated by the creations of these rural artists, represents the direction for China's future rural development.

Spiking things up

Vietnam's Tran Thi Thanh Thuy unleashes a spike during the women's volleyball bronze-medal match against Thailand at Hangzhou Normal University Cangqian Gymnasium on Saturday. Thailand won 3-0. ANN WANG / REUTERS



Building on tradition

Village's maintenance compound is constructed according to ancient aesthetics

By LI YINGXUE in Hangzhou
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The cluster of buildings appears like the real-life rendering of a hamlet from a Chinese ink painting, with white exterior walls and swooping dark eaves, hedged in among the Hangzhou Asian Games Village's thicket of modern high rises.

Its ancient aesthetic, however, almost seems to conceal its contemporary functionality, as it serves the very practical purpose of maintenance of the village's equipment, amenities and facilities.

After the Asiad, the complex will be repurposed as a kindergarten.

The project's lead architect, Liao Xiaohua, described designing the compound as a career highlight.

He said his goal was to craft a solution to achieve a "triple win": adhering to design regulations and functional requirements, using the Asian Games to showcase China to international visitors, and creating a distinctive space for children's development that reflects elements of the Jiangnan region, south of the Yangtze River.

The complex is strategically positioned within the Athletes' Village and serves as a prominent entrance to the compound. It's intended to visually stand out from its surroundings, Liao explained.

"The Asian Games are a global showcase for



The maintenance compound is seen at the Asian Games Village. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China and Hangzhou. It leaves an impression on athletes who encounter these traditional-style structures while strolling through the Games Village," he said.

Liao summarized the design concept as "strolling through a Jiangnan village".

"Through the buildings' purposeful arrangement, we sought to emulate the natural growth seen in Jiangnan villages that have sprung up organically. While the layout may seem haphazard, it is, in fact, underpinned by a precise intentional logic."

And this concept likewise extends to its subse-

quent use as a kindergarten, he said.

"We want children to experience traditional life as they grow and learn in the future ... Our aim is for the kids to absorb the richness of traditional culture."

The international zone is centrally located amid the athletes' technical officials' and media villages, and is the hub of public activities in the Games Village. After the Asiad, it will become a cultural, education and sports center.

The exteriors of some buildings in the international zone depict interpretations of the celebrated ancient scroll painting, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*.

The lead designer of the Qianjiang Century City management committee's Asian Games Village international zone project, Gao Pan, adopted a design principle rooted in Chinese tradition, inspired by Hangzhou's unique "half mountains, half city" layout and guided by the theme of sports to craft a true "city of vitality".

An elevated running track seamlessly threads for two kilometers along the ground, buildings and rooftops to offer views and experiences that epitomize a fitness-and-leisure park.

"We want the entire space to be very open, which emphasizes the importance of public participation," Gao said.

"Our design strategy connects different parts to create a cohesive and unified whole."

Asiad digest

Basketball

Chinese Basketball Association president Yao Ming admitted there is a "huge gap" between Team China and the world's top teams after the host nation finished the Asian Games with a bronze medal.

China defeated Chinese Taipei 101-73 in the men's basketball bronze-medal game at Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Gymnasium on Friday but was upset by the Philippines in the semifinals, 77-76, despite leading throughout the match until the final buzzer. It was the second time in a month that China was beaten by the Philippines following its loss at the 2023 World Cup.

"We have already observed the gap between Team China and the top teams in other parts of the world," Yao said. "The pain comes from the huge gap between China's basketball and world basketball."

Yao said Team Japan has been making rapid progress in both men's and women's basketball.

"This might be bad news for us, but on the other hand, it might be a good thing, because if they can do that, we can also do that," said the former Houston Rockets center.

"World basketball is progressing very fast. It's like the change of era from the cold weapons to the hot weapons. But how can we make the change within our team? We still need to study. We still need to sum up with our own experience."

Bridge

Married couple Fan Kang-wei and Tsai Po-ya formed the perfect union on Friday, helping Chinese Taipei to win gold in the bridge mixed team.

It was a sweet moment for the couple, who missed out on gold at the 2018 Jakarta Games, when they lost the final in the now-discontinued mixed pairs event.

Fan, who started playing full-time with his wife about six years ago, admitted that being a married couple is not always the ideal foundation for partners in the high-pressure atmosphere of contract bridge games. Arguments between the pair are common, even during competition.

"This morning, after the first round, we went to our room and had an argument," Tsai confessed. "We pulled the curtains and told other people not to come near us. But since we're husband and wife, things calm down after an hour. Our teammates are used to it."

Fan remains uncertain whether it is an advantage in bridge to be a married couple but is proud of their achievements, no matter what.

"We never give up," he said. "After all the arguments, we always find a way and a mutually agreeable solution. That's why we got this result."