

Sports

From disaster to Paralympics gold: China's 'Flying Fish'

Sixteen-year-old says win 'beginning of next chapter' of life

TOKYO: Playing in the street as a three-year-old, Jiang Yuyan's life almost ended when she was run over by a dump truck. Just 13 years later, she is rewriting swimming's record books and yesterday won her first Paralympics gold.

The injuries to the fun-loving toddler were so severe her right arm and leg were amputated, leaving her mother distraught. "My good little girl was left disabled," Wang Zhifang told local media. "I thought the sky was falling. How would she spend her life?"

But by the age of 14 it had become clear. Her daughter, now nicknamed "Flying Fish", was breaking world records and gaining global notoriety in the pool. And yesterday, at the tender age of 16 and the youngest member of China's powerful 256-strong team at Tokyo 2020, she fulfilled a dream by winning her first Paralympics gold medal in the S6 50m butterfly.

The sensation from Shaoxing smashed her own world record in the heats at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre before storming to gold later in the final. "This is my first Paralympic experience and in terms of my personal goals, it's a self-confidence boost," the teenager told AFP straight after her winning swim. "Of course, it's very exciting. But most of all, I think it's the beginning of the next chapter of my life."

Unable to swim competitively for two years because of the COVID pandemic, Jiang admitted she had to shake off some rust after arriving in Tokyo before she could win gold. "Today was like the first day I felt on form," said Jiang. "I needed five days here to get used to it, to train, to get proper sleep and get my old condition."

She finished outside the medals in her first two S6

events over the weekend — the 50m freestyle and 4x100m freestyle relay. But she was in unstoppable shape yesterday as she cruised to gold in 34.69 seconds, the second fastest S6 50m butterfly swim of all time. It was just outside her own world mark of 34.56 set earlier in the heats and she finished a huge 1.61sec ahead of silver medalist Nicole Turner of Ireland.

More than many

Remarkably, Jiang has only been swimming for eight years but has achieved more than many athletes manage in a lifetime. Jiang first made a splash domestically when she won her first national titles at the age of 11. But it was when she won three gold medals as a 13-year-old at the Asian Para Games in Jakarta in 2018

You don't need a crutch in the water

that people outside of China began to believe she could be something special.

A year later global swimming really took notice when, as a 14-year-old, she dominated the World Championships in London. Jiang announced herself with three golds and two bronze medals, setting a new world record in the S6 50m butterfly of 34.86, which she has now obliterated in Tokyo.

In the S6 category she also won the 400m freestyle, in another world record time, and the 100m freestyle. Her bronzes were in the 50m freestyle and 100m backstroke. Her efficiency with only two functioning limbs in the butterfly is such that her 50m time is just 10 seconds slower than the full-bodied world record.

Jiang was encouraged by her mother to try swimming five years after her horror accident in Shaoxing, a city 160 kilometers (100 miles) southwest of Shanghai, and she soon discovered that the pool set her free from her



TOKYO: China's Jiang Yuyan competes in the women's 50m butterfly S6 swimming final during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

impairments. "You don't need a crutch or prostheses in the water," she said. "You can determine where you go based on your own strength."

She cites her biggest influences for her success as her coach, Feng Jie, and her family, but Jiang has been fiercely competitive from a tender age. Teachers at her primary school recalled in local media that she often scored 100

percent in maths tests and was rated as a "five-star student" every year.

Asked how she has achieved so much just eight years after taking up para swimming, Jiang, who pounds through the water for five hours and 10 kilometers a day in training, is philosophical. "To you it seems a short time, but to me it seems forever." —AFP

Brazil target fifth five-a-side gold with 'Paralympic Pele'

TOKYO: With flicks and tricks aplenty, Brazil's five-a-side football team are bringing a touch of samba magic to the Paralympics as they target a fifth straight gold in Tokyo. The nation that gave the world the "jogo bonito" beautiful game has just as much panache in five-a-side, which is played by athletes with visual impairments.

Brazil have won gold at every Paralympics since the sport debuted in 2004, and boast arguably its greatest player in Jefinho — known as the "Paralympic Pele". They started their campaign in Tokyo with a 3-0 win over China on Sunday, before beating Japan 4-0 a day later.

"Football is in the blood of Brazilians — this is a big pressure, because the Brazilian people always expect to win," captain Ricardinho told AFP. "The Brazilian people expect results because we have the potential to be champions. If no one expected anything of us, it would be very bad."

Paralympic five-a-side is played with teams of four visually impaired outfield players, who wear blackout eyeshades, and a fully or partially sighted goalkeeper, who cannot leave his penalty area. The ball contains a rattle so the players can hear where it is, and teams have two fully sighted coaches who give directions from beside the goal and behind the boards that surround the pitch. Goalkeepers also offer full-throated guidance to their outfield teammates.

Brazil's Luan says his role is about more than just keeping the ball out of the net. "About 50 percent of the goalkeeper's job is organizing the defense," he said. "We have to do this well so that the players can feel confident about their goalkeeper." The players' close-control skills are immediately apparent, shuffling the ball from one foot to the other as they make their way around the 40-by-20-metre pitch.

'Great responsibility'

Jefinho, who was born with glaucoma, began playing with a ball when he was young but lost his sight at the



TOKYO: Brazil's Jeferson Goncalves (right) and Japan's Yuzuki Sonobe look for the ball during the preliminary round group A football 5-a-side match between Japan and Brazil during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Aomi Urban Sports Park in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

age of six. He continued to play with his friends, wrapping the ball in a plastic bag so he could hear it rustling. Now he is looking to win his fourth Paralympic gold in Tokyo, and he breaks into a wide grin when his name is mentioned in the same breath as Brazilian legend Pele.

"It's sensational to be compared to the greatest footballer ever," said the 31-year-old. "He's our reference — we always try to learn from him, on the pitch and off it. Being compared to Pele is a great feeling. I'm very happy about it."

Brazil's first goal of the tournament came from a direct free kick. First, the team's attacking coach provided some orientation by tapping both posts and the crossbar with a metal rod, and shouting from behind the center of the goal.

Nonato then blasted the ball past the Chinese goal-

keeper, before running back screaming to celebrate with his teammates. "We're very happy with the result," Brazil's Cassio said after the match. "From the first second of the game, we knew what we wanted to do. China are one of the contenders for the gold medal — a very fast team — but we did a very good job today."

But Brazil's mission in Tokyo is far from finished. Nothing less than gold will suffice for the world's most successful team, and Cassio is aware of the expectations that come with representing his football-mad nation. "It's a great responsibility because of our history, and we're conscious that our history is built on a lot of hard work and dedication," he said. "We're just carrying on the legacy of everyone who played at the previous Paralympics. The results come when you do a good job." —AFP

Stars press Australia on climate change

SYDNEY: Hundreds of Aussie sporting heroes — from rugby captain Michael Hooper, to pace bowler Pat Cummins and world champion surfer Mick Fanning — teamed up yesterday to demand the government do more to tackle climate change. In an online petition dubbed "The Cool Down" a raft of Australian sports stars demanded the country's conservative leaders step up their game and adopt more ambitious carbon targets.

"Like so many Australians, we've experienced the impacts of climate change first hand," the group of around three hundred athletes said. "But at the moment, if climate action was the Olympics, Australia isn't winning gold, we're not making the finals, in fact, we don't even qualify."

Sports-mad Australia has been at the sharp end of climate change in recent years, with intense droughts, bushfires, floods and Great Barrier Reef coral bleaching all made worse by atmospheric warming. But the country's conservative ruling coalition has slow-peddled efforts to address the problem, instead vowing to build new coal mines and refusing allies' demands to set a deadline for net-zero carbon emissions.

After a landmark UN climate report last month warned catastrophic global warming is occurring far more quickly than previously forecast, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he would not follow other advanced economies in adopting a net-zero target. Australia is one of the world's largest fossil fuel exporters, sending vast quantities of gas and coal overseas which piles cash into the coffers of a mining sector with close ties to the government and Labor opposition. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adalya	22517144

Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
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NOTICE
August 25, 2021

Mr. Edvin Anto, Indian national, son of Mr. Anto Moolamkadan Varghese, resident of Moolamkadan House, Anchangady, East Fort PO, Thrissur, Kerala-680005 and Ms. Girile Manlapaz Santos, Philippines national, daughter of Mr. Genaro Santos Junior, resident of 129 Torres Street, Calantipay, Baliuag, Bulacan, Philippines both presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

K. Rathore
(K.S Rathore) First Secretary (CA) and Marriage Officer, Embassy of India, Kuwait