

CHINA

PLA aeronautical team aiming high at games

Chinese delegation on top of medals table after first two days of competition

By ZHANG YANGFEI in Wuhan
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The People's Liberation Army's Bayi aeronautical pentathlon team, which was established in 2015, is aiming for more good results at the 7th Military World Games underway in Wuhan, Hubei province.

Team member Liao Weihua won gold in the flying contest — officially called low-altitude triangular navigation — on Saturday, beating contestants from eight other countries, including Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Lithuania.

Team leader Wang Haichen said he hoped the team could achieve more good results in its military games debut, and he was expecting the athletes to “stand on the podium in their military uniforms and watch the national flag rise”.

The flying contest was the first event in the aeronautical pentathlon, a discipline born in France in 1947 that, despite its name, also includes six other sports: shooting, swimming, fencing, basketball, an obstacle race and orienteering.

Five male athletes and four female athletes from the team were selected to compete in this year's games, which kicked off on Friday and will last 10 days.

Established in September 2015 in Changchun, Jilin province, Wang said the young Chinese team lacked experience in competing in formal international competition.

He said it took the team half a year to welcome its first batch of members, and it went through an initial period of “bumpy exploration” regarding the selection of members, coaches and training venues and facilities.

“The coaches were drawn from other teams, and the selected athletes were not professional,” Wang said, adding that despite its lack of experience he was committed to leading the team to fruitful results.

They started training from almost zero, with gold medalist Liao saying the athletes, at different levels and with no comprehensive training plan in place, had to explore training methods from scratch.

Wang said, “Aeronautical pentathlon is a very comprehensive program and requires a very high level of overall quality from each athlete, including physical, mental, intellectual and technical skills.”

The variety and high requirements of the program were obstacles for the new athletes, many of whom were new graduates or specialized in other areas.

He Haoqin, for example, joined the team in 2016 at age 19. She was a boxer and was nearly eliminated from the team because she did not know how to swim.

She did not give in and started learning the basics of swimming, continuously challenging herself to go from 10 meters at first to hundreds of meters.

Ye Bangwu, the oldest member of the team and the only one not previously engaged in professional sports, was 23 when he joined the team in 2016.

“At the age of 23, many other athletes are already world champions, and I just started,” he said.

After going through three years of intense training, Wang said all members were fully prepared for the games, but since the team members had no experience in Military

World Games, they were not clear about their opponents' strength.

“We can only make up for it by improving our own capabilities,” Wang said, adding that he hoped the games could help athletes learn from foreign counterparts how to improve their weaknesses and also promote friendship between countries.

He said the initial goal of forming the team was to improve the overall quality of pilot training.

“We want to gradually develop this team and spread batches of talent to the troops,” he said.

“This was our initial intention but it will need to be planned from the upper level later.”

The Chinese delegation won 12 of the 22 gold medals on offer on the first day of competition on Saturday. It also won four silvers and six bronzes to top the medal tally after the first day.

China's shooting team took the first gold in the 25 meter military rapid fire pistol men's team event. In the swimming contest, China collected another six golds and broke games' records in four events.

China remained on top of the medals table at publishing time on Sunday, with 26 golds, nine silvers



Liao Weihua won the gold medal in low-altitude triangular navigation, part of the aeronautical pentathlon, at the 7th Military World Games in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Saturday.

JIN LIANGKUI / XINHUA

and nine bronzes. Russia was second with 10 golds, followed by France and Uzbekistan.

In the road cycling races, China's Zhao Xisha was crowned women's individual champion, while the Chi-

nese team won the gold of women's team competition on Sunday.

In the swimming events on Sunday night, Chinese swimmers claimed six of the eight golds on offer.

Open house amusement

A student at PLA Air Force Aviation University interacts with children during an open house event in Changchun, Jilin province, on Sunday. Visitors were able to get a taste of what daily life is like for the students.

ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



Sport's contribution to mankind's shared future hailed at event

By YANG CHENG in Tianjin
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China has made great efforts to build a community with a shared future for mankind through the universal language of sports, Irina Bokova, former director-general of UNESCO, said after a high-profile dialogue in Tianjin on Saturday.

“I was very much impressed by the diversity of Chinese methods in sports, which are vital to peace because they aim for social fair play and respect human dignity in competition,” she said. “It's a shared value in the international community.”

The dialogue was held to memorialize former International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch, who died in 2010. The theme was “the spirit of sports and the building of a shared future for mankind”.

Held at the Samaranch Memorial Museum in Tianjin's southwestern Jinghai district, the event was initiated by David Gosset, founder of the Europe-China Forum.

Bokova and Wu Ching-kuo, a member of the IOC's executive board, shared their memories of Samaranch and some key moments in his life.

Samaranch was committed to strengthening connections between the Olympics and the UN and was involved in efforts to promote peace, including the joint presence of both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Bokova said China's diverse methods and cultural values in sports were “fascinating,

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Irina Bokova, former director-general of UNESCO

impressive and inspiring”.

Yang Xiangquan, a professor in Tianjin Sports University's martial arts department, said: “China-born sport activities such as martial arts are pursued for inner peace and harmony. ... That also explains why Chinese people are good at settling problems through negotiation and taking the middle road.”

Wu, who designed and founded the Samaranch museum, said it displays 16,000 items from the former IOC president's personal collection, which Samaranch had given to him.

“I have set up four museums in China to promote the Olympic spirit. This one is the third and the largest,” he said, noting that it covers 144,000 square meters.

Next year, to mark the 100th anniversary of Samaranch's birth, the museum will stage more memorial events including high-profile dialogues, Wu said.

AVIC strives to promote surveillance, strike drones

By ZHAO LEI and LIU MINGTAI in Changchun

Aviation Industry Corp of China, a State-owned aircraft conglomerate, is renowned for the variety of unmanned military aircraft it produces.

The company's Wing Loong family is a popular brand of armed drone in the international arms market. At least 100 Wing Loong I units have been delivered to foreign users, with Serbia reported to be the newest buyer of the lethal weapon. The Wing Loong II has also garnered at least one foreign contract, which AVIC described as being “very big”.

Now the industry giant is striving to promote its Harrier- and Cloud Shadow-series reconnaissance/strike drones in the domestic and international markets.

AVIC brought scale models of the Harrier I, II and III as well as Cloud Shadow drones to a five-day open house event, hosted by the People's Liberation Army Air Force in Changchun, Jilin province, which began on Thursday.

The event celebrates the Air Force's 70th birthday, which will fall on Nov 11.

Developed and built by AVIC's Guizhou Aircraft Corp, the Harrier I is ready for mass production and sale, while the Harrier II and III are still undergoing testing at Guizhou Aircraft.

AVIC said the Harrier I has a maximum takeoff weight of 700 kilograms and can carry up to 100 kg of reconnaissance devices to reconnoiter battlefield situations or assess airstrike outcomes. It can stay airborne for 16 hours.

The Harrier II, which made its maiden flight in July last year, has a maximum takeoff weight of 1.28 metric tons, including 400 kg of missiles, bombs or reconnaissance equipment. It can operate as long as 32 hours in a single flight.

The latest and largest model in the series, Harrier III, features a delta-wing structure with a maximum takeoff weight of 2 tons. The aircraft is capable of carrying 700 kg of weapons and instruments and undertaking a 24-hour operation. It can also be modified to be deployed on ships.

AVIC said all the Harrier models can be adapted to execute civilian operations such as geological surveys, monitoring forest fires and smuggling surveillance.

The Cloud Shadow, developed by AVIC's Chengdu Aircraft Industry

for overseas markets, has a maximum takeoff weight of 3 tons and a top speed of 620 kilometers per hour. It can carry more than 400 kg of missiles, rockets and bombs, according to information published by AVIC.

Wang Yanan, editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, said AVIC seems eager to offer more options to potential buyers seeking multipurpose drones at affordable prices.

“Chinese military drones have gained a good reputation in overseas markets thanks to their reliable capabilities and combat-proven performance, and this will definitely help AVIC promote those new types to its target clients,” he said.

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Bayi aerobatic group has world-class aspirations

By ZHAO LEI and LIU MINGTAI in Changchun

The PLA Bayi Air Demonstration Team, China's best-known aerobatic team, is striving to become a world-class air display group as it keeps learning from those that preceded it, a team leader said.

Colonel Wei Guoyi, chief of staff of the team, said on Friday in Changchun, Jilin province, that his team, which belongs to the People's Liberation Army Air Force, has grown a lot over the past decade as a result of the rapid development of the force, citing team members' gains from their six overseas performance missions during this period.

“Through these overseas missions, we have witnessed the air force become stronger, and we also got the chance to expand our horizons and develop new ideas,” he said

at a news conference on the sidelines of an ongoing open house at an air base in Changchun to mark the Air Force's 70th birthday.

“Attending foreign air shows enables us to understand the gaps between us and top-tier aerobatic teams in the world and to contemplate how we can catch up,” he said, noting the Chinese team has taken specific measures in this regard.

“We encourage innovation and creative ideas from our members. We work out two to three new aerobatic maneuvers each year,” Wei said. “For instance, we improved our performance plan before coming to this open house to make our maneuvers more intense and more beautiful. We also devised a new method to perfect the effect of color smoke.”

The Bayi team is performing 22 sets of solo and formation display maneuvers each day during the five-

day open house, which concludes on Monday.

Senior Colonel Shen Jinke, the Air Force's spokesman, said at the news conference that the Bayi team is not only a display group but also a combat-ready unit.

“Their flight maneuvers are connected with their combat tasks and are close to fighting tactics,” She said. “In addition to display drills, they also train to fly above complex terrains, such as mountain valleys, and they train at night to strengthen their combat skills.”

The Bayi team was founded in 1962 as the Chinese military's first air display team and was named after the PLA's founding date, Aug 1. The elite unit has performed more than 660 aerobatic shows at home and abroad.

In another development, Shen announced at another news confer-

ence last week in Changchun that the PLA Air Force now has several young pilots capable of operating all of its J-20, J-16 and J-10C fighter jets.

Shen said that thanks to the expansion and innovation in the recruitment of new aviators, more flying talent has been emerging, and there will be more young air force pilots who can fight in multiple combat aircraft.

The J-20 is China's first and the world's third operational stealth fighter jet, as well as the country's most powerful combat plane. The J-16 and J-10C are also top air force fighter jets.

Experts said a pilot needs to have experience and outstanding skills to be able to fly such cutting-edge aircraft.

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Happy 70th birthday



Central University of Finance and Economics alumni pose for a selfie before a ceremony in Beijing on Saturday celebrating its 70th anniversary. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY