

# Too much weight on lifter's shoulders

Zhou's failure was no surprise — so why was she even on team?

By CHEN XIANGFENG in London  
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A senior International Weightlifting Federation official wondered why China didn't send its best athletes after a 17-year-old Chinese fledgling did not succeed in a single lift and had no result in the women's 53kg competition on Sunday.



Zhou Jun, from Hunan province, participated in the low-ranked group "B" — a first for Chinese weightlifters, who are considered top medal contenders on the Olympic stage. Still, Zhou failed to hoist 95kg in her three attempts. It was seen as an embarrassment for the Chinese squad that has dominated the sport for many years.

"It's wrong not to send the best athletes to the Olympic Games," IWF director Aniko Nemeth Mora said.

Zhou was a surprising pick for Team China because she didn't have any major titles to

her name. Pre-Games favorite and national champion Ji Jing was omitted.

Ji won China's national Olympic qualifiers.

Mora, also the chief editor of the IWF's official magazine World Weightlifting, has been involved in the sport since 1976. She said she never saw a Chinese compete in the "B" group and fail in the first three attempts at an Olympics.

"For us, we hope to see the best athletes in the world in the Games, to make the Games exciting, to keep the highest standard," she said.

In China, national and provincial sports governing bodies have the final say on the Olympic rosters although highly competitive and lengthy Olympic qualifiers are held.

But Mora said the IWF will never try to influence or comment on a national organizing committee's selection.

"We will not influence or have mixed judgment on that. It's not our business," she said.

Zhou was simply crushed by the pressure of her disputed Olympic debut.

"The basic move went totally wrong," the teenager said after the competition.

"I don't know what happened on the platform. I just couldn't find how to relax my body. My condition was bad."

Domestic media have sympathized with



China's Zhou Jun reacts during the women's 53kg weightlifting competition on Saturday. Zhou, a surprise member of the team, failed in all three of her snatch attempts.

MIKE GROLL / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Zhou and instead criticized the closed-door selection.

"Zhou is the sacrifice behind the scenes," China Youth Daily commented.

People's Daily said: "Zhou is the one who was hurt most because she has no right to

decide. You can rebound after losing a gold medal. But how can a young and promising teen rebound after her confidence crashes?"

Ma Wenguang, director of the nation's sport's governing body, said it is a decision made by local sport bureaus.

"It was not the national team's original intention to pick Zhou Jun," Ma told Xinhua News Agency in July after Zhou's sudden call-up.

"Ji Jing was the champion in the 53kg qualifying, and we give the Olympic berth to Hubei province (which Ji represents in national competitions). So, we have to respect Hubei's decision (in picking Zhou). I'm not quite confident Zhou can take the gold."

Zhou's inclusion was not the only dispute in the Olympic roster this Games.

The absence of the reigning women's world champion Tian Yuan also drew much attention.

Tian set a world record at last year's Worlds, but she was replaced by veteran Wang Mingjuan for the 2012 Games. Wang won the gold on Saturday.

Ma explained a waist injury attributed to Tian's last-minute replacement.

In China, an athlete's performance at the Olympic Games is not only related to individual career and fortune but also to the cities and provinces the athletes represent.

An athlete's gold medal at the Olympics is also counted toward his or her home province's gold tally of the following Chinese National Games, which takes place every four years.

## Wieber forced to refocus for team final

By ASSOCIATED PRESS  
in London

The US women's gymnastics team has stressed for months its depth is the key to its dominance.

Now it has to make sure that depth doesn't accidentally lead to its downfall.

Sure, the Americans rolled to victory in Olympic team qualifying on Sunday, posting a score of 181.863 that only Russia came even



remotely close to threatening.

But the image of world champion Jordyn Wieber leaving the floor in tears after failing to advance to the individual all-around final will be hard to shake. Beaten out by teammates Aly Raisman and Gabby Douglas, the ever-composed Wieber crumbled when she realized her dreams of joining the likes of Olympic gold medalists Nastia Liukin, Mary Lou Retton and Carly Patterson evaporated in a series of uncharacteristic miscues.

Now, Wieber has to find a way to regroup in time to help the US capture its first team title since the "Magnificent Seven" in Atlanta 16 years ago.

"This is the beauty of our program," USA Gymnastics president Steve Penny said. "On any given day, one of the girls on our team can do it."

True, except for the last three years, that one girl has almost always been Wieber. She's only lost twice in competition since 2009, both times to fellow Americans. And she's never finished behind two teammates in the same meet.

Not until Sunday at least. How she'll respond is anybody's guess.

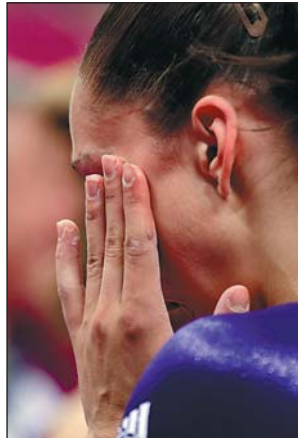
"She's a strong gymnast," teammate McKayla Maroney said. "She can turn it around in two seconds."

Wieber will get two days. She might need every minute of it.

The 17-year-old is the star the US program has orbited around during the last three years, leading the Americans to a world title in Tokyo last fall.

She kept it going this spring and summer, with Douglas' emergence giving the US a one-two punch few teams can match.

An all-around showdown in London between Wieber and Douglas has been looming for months. They've taken turns gracing the covers of national magazines trying to duplicate



Jordyn Wieber in tears.



**She's a strong gymnast. She can turn it around in two seconds."**

McKAYLA MARONEY, US GYMNAST AND TEAMMATE OF WORLD CHAMPION JORDYN WIEBER (ABOVE), WHO FAILED TO ADVANCE TO THE INDIVIDUAL ALL-AROUND FINAL

the showdown between Liukin and Shawn Johnson in Beijing four years ago.

Consider Douglas the winner by technical knockout.

The rules allow just two gymnasts per country to compete in the individual all-around finals. Raisman's rock-solid floor exercise on the heels of sloppy routines by both Douglas and Wieber allowed the US captain to leapfrog her more heralded teammates and into the finals.

Wieber, her eyes blotchy from crying, declined to speak to reporters afterward but seemed to recover a few hours later, thanking fans for their support and insisting she can't wait for team finals.

The rest of the world can.

The Russians came closest, with Victoria Komova posting the highest all-around score of the day (60.632) to nudge Raisman out of the top spot. Former world champion Aliya Mustafina put up a steady if not spectacular 59.966 to place fifth, but the Russians will be hard-pressed to close the 1.4-point gap with the US.

China came in third, more than five points back. Romania, Britain, Japan, Italy and Canada will also head to the finals. If Wieber recovers in time, the rest of the field knows they're likely fighting for second and third.



DAVE MARTIN / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Xue Chen of China digs out a ball during the team's win over Switzerland at the London Olympics on Monday. Xue and partner Zhang Xi are the second-seeded pair in the women's draw, and they defeated Simone Kuhn and Nadine Zumkehr in three sets, 21-18, 16-21, 15-8. On Wednesday, the Chinese will face a Greek duo.

## Much-needed day at the beach for Chinese duo

By REUTERS  
in London

China's Beijing bronze medalists Zhang Xi and Xue Chen put a nightmare start to the Olympic women's beach volleyball tournament behind them on Monday with a win against Switzerland's Simone



Kuhn and Nadine Zumkehr.

"This game was very important to us because we lost the first game and we needed confidence. We needed to find ourselves and we did great," Zhang told reporters.

"Usually, the first game is not as horrible," her teammate Xue added.

The Chinese pair, second in the Olympic rankings, defeated

their 11th-ranked opponents 2-1 (21-18, 16-21, 15-8), as the sun returned to Horse Guards Parade after Sunday's downpours.

The bulk of the crowd initially got behind the Swiss pairing, who had a convincing win in their opening encounter, and Xue and Zhang made an error-prone start to the first set and quickly fell behind 7-3.

The Chinese pair called a time out and returned much more aggressively. The crowd also warmed to them as they fought their way back into the match.

"They played great blocking defense and took all their chances and used the time out well," Kuhn told reporters.

"On paper, they were for sure the favorites, but we could see

we got good chances and now we have to continue our work," she said.

Zhang and Xue lost to Russian outsiders Anastasia Vasina and Anna Vozakova on Saturday in the biggest upset so far in the women's tournament.

The Chinese pair face Greeks Vasiliki Arvaniti and Maria Tsiartsiani in their final pool B match on Wednesday.

## Even advertisers are competing hard in London

By LI XIANG in London  
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While Chinese athletes are grabbing medals at the Olympic Games, another image of China is floating through the streets of London.

Chinese companies and tourism agencies from major cities such as Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang province, are stepping up their advertising campaigns in an effort to appeal to consumers and visitors from around the world.

The ads are ubiquitous on London's double-decker buses and taxis. Posters of major Chinese banks and airlines are also on display in the busiest stations of the London subway.

The one that has caught the most attention is an ad by Chinese dairy company Yili, which shows Chinese men and women smiling with the brand's logo and a slogan that reads "ordinary people's extraordinary stories"

While the ad may be hard for locals to

decipher, it is symbolic of the company's ambition to increase its presence in the European market and promote a healthy image after the domestic milk scandal.

Meanwhile, Chinese cities, such as Hangzhou, are eyeing the Games as an opportunity to increase global exposure of its sites, such as the West Lake, and woo more international tourists.

Still, Chinese companies are understandably showing less interest in the London Olympics than they did the Beijing Olympics.

Digital media company Crystal CG and computer manufacturer Acer are the only two Chinese sponsors of the London Games.

Industry experts said uncertain domestic and global economic conditions are another reason for the drop in interest.

Also, the cost of Olympic sponsorship has been increasing for global companies, which eye the event as a major marketing platform. Sometimes the cost



LI XIANG / CHINA DAILY

A shuttle bus with a Chinese advertisement.

outweighs the benefits.

The threshold for top-tier Olympic sponsors at the London Games is rough-

ly \$80 million, a big increase over the \$60 million price tag in Beijing, according to media reports.