



CHRISTOPHE SIMON / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

China's Zhang Lin celebrates after winning the men's 800m freestyle final in a world record time of 7:32.12 on July 29, 2009 at the FINA World Swimming Championships in Rome.

# A deep pool of talent

BY THE NUMBERS  
>> DOHA GAMES



16  
gold

21  
silver

6  
bronze



10  
gold

6  
silver

## CHINESE TO GO HEAD TO HEAD WITH JAPAN AND REPUBLIC OF KOREA FOR SWIMMING GLORY

By LEI LEI  
CHINA DAILY

**GUANGZHOU** — One of the greatest rivalries at the Guangzhou Asian Games will be on display in the swimming pool.

The Chinese team will face a strong challenge from neighboring Japan, while China's leading swimmer, world champion Zhang Lin, will meet archrival Park Tae-hwan of the Republic of Korea (ROK).

The home team's head coach is already feeling the pressure.

"On one hand, we have to beat the Japanese, while on the other, we have to test the young swimmers for the 2012 London Olympic Games. There will be big challenge for us (in Guangzhou)," said Yao Zhengjie.

At the Doha Asian Games four years ago, China and Japan shared the same number of gold medals in the pool. The head coach expects to beat Japan in the home pool this time.

"Although the Japanese team is strong, we have the favorable climate and geographical position

and support of the people. We must beat them, and all of us are confident we can," Yao said.

"We hope the men's team will make a breakthrough and that the women don't make mistakes. Let's wait and see how the two teams perform at the competition."

The Chinese team comprises a mixture of veterans and young talent.

Besides Zhang, the men's side includes Chen Zuo, the defending champion in the 100m freestyle, and Wu Peng, the 2006 Short Course World Championships 200m butterfly champion and also an Asian Games champion.

Competing at his third Asian Games, Wu, who trained in the United States for seven months this year, will tackle Japan's Takeshi Matsuda, the silver medalist at the Beijing Olympic Games, in the men's 200m butterfly.

"Actually, Matsuda is stronger than me right now ... but the result will depend on how we perform at the time," said Wu. "I have a good chance to defend the title."

Another challenge will come from Beijing Olympic 400m freestyle gold medalist, ROK's Park. Zhang will meet Park — who beat him in the 400m by 0.58 seconds to win the Olympic gold medal in Beijing — in the 200m, 400m, 1,500m and 4x200m relay.

On the women's side, world champion Liu Zige will be absent, but her teammate, Jiao Liuyang, the Beijing Olympic silver medalist in the women's 200m butterfly, will lead a team that also includes rising stars Zhao Jing and Li Zhesi.

Competing in women's 50m, 100m and 200m butterfly, Jiao is ready to win a hat-trick of gold medals.

Meanwhile the Chinese diving team is out to continue its Asian Games domination.

Although the team will be without diving queen Guo Jingjing, it still boasts Olympic champion Wu Minxia, who will compete in the women's 1m springboard.

"No matter at the Asian Games or Olympics, the only rival for the

Chinese team is ourselves," said team leader Zhou Jihong. "We hope our athletes will do their best. If they perform at their best, no matter if they win or not, it will be good."

Since first taking part in the diving events at the 1974 Asian Games, the Chinese team has swept all the gold medals in the sport.

They bagged 10 gold medals during the 2006 Asiad and dominated the podium at the Beijing Olympics.

Amid its gold rush in Doha four years ago, China also took six silver, giving it 16 medals overall.

Proving its global stranglehold on the sport, China went on to take seven out of eight gold on home soil at the 2008 Olympics, missing out only on the men's 10m platform, where it took silver.

Chinese divers also bagged seven golds at last year's world championships in Rome and another seven at the World Cup on home soil in Changzhou earlier this year, where again it fell one place short in the men's 10m platform.