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COMPUTERS

The Greatest Ritual of Sports

Zhan going great guns

SYDNEY, Sept 22: China's Zhan Xugang completed a golden double on Friday by winning his second straight Olympic weightlifting title against a field weakened by the mysterious late withdrawals of three top lifters, reports AFP.

Zhan, winner in the 69kg class in Atlanta four years ago, stepped up to the 77kg division and blew away a vastly reduced field with a world record equaling 207.5kg lift in the clean and jerk.

He joined compatriot Ding Melyuan atop the winner's podium on a golden day for China. Earlier the imposing Ding, current world champion, won the women's superheavyweight division in record breaking style to add a fourth gold to China's collection in the Olympic debut of female weightlifting.

Ding was dubbed the "strongest woman in the world" after beating teenaged Pole Agata Wrobel in a fascinating display of power lifting from the female heavies.

Zhan claimed top spot with a total of 367.5kg (160kg-207.5kg) beating Viktor Mitrou of Greece on lower body weight. Mitrou also totalled 367.5kg (165kg-202.5kg) with Arsen Melikyan of Armenia in third spot on 365kg (165kg-197.5kg). "I am very happy I got a gold medal today," said Zhan, who was only fourth at the 1999 World Championships.



BADMINTON BUNCH: Indonesian fans sporting shuttlecock hats, cheering on their men's Olympic badminton team yesterday. —AFP photo

SYDNEY SIDELINES

SYDNEY, Sept 22: Anthony Ervin and Gary Hall shared the gold medal after dead heating in the men's 50m freestyle — and they also share some unusual dietary habits.

Their coach Mike Bottom claims he feeds the pair with nutritional supplements fed to Kentucky Derby winner, Fusaichi Pegasus.

11-MINUTE REIGN

Andy Warhol famously said that everyone has 15 minutes of fame and Mexican road walker Bernardo Segura found out what it was like to be an Olympic champion for just 11 minutes.

That was how long after he crossed the line first in the 20km walk that it took officials to inform him that he had been disqualified.

Segura had just said on Mexican television to his mother: "Mama, I have won!" But officials cut short the interview and promptly told him that Poland's Robert Korzeniowski was the new champion.

His Mexican teammate Noe Fernandez therefore had his bronze upgraded to silver but sympathised with his teammate, saying: "The bronze was fine. I am not happy to receive this (silver) medal."

CHELSEA TREAT FOR SISTERS

Chelsea Clinton was in the crowd to see Venus Williams reach the quarterfinals of the Olympic tennis tournament then hooked up with her and younger sister Serena after the match.

Chelsea, representing her father at the Games, praised Venus on her win and Serena on her ability to get to nearly as many hot-ticket Olympic events as she has, according to one witness.

NEW-LOOK PM

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has never been renowned for his dress sense — predictably, he's a white shirt and dark suit kind of fellow.

But it seems the PM, who dubbed himself Australia's "chief cheerleader" in the leadup to the Olympics, has undergone a makeover of sorts for the Sydney Games.

He's been seen donning the dark green blazer, pale green shirt and "greeny-gold tie" that make up the official Australian team uniform several times in the past week. The Sydney Morning Herald reported Friday.

"We all feel like he's never looked better," the Herald quoted someone close to Howard as saying. "The colours suit him and he's feeling very comfortable."

Howard isn't alone in undergoing a makeover — his normally staid wife, Janette, has been seen around town wearing pieces from the team uniform. Among them: a scarf by Melbourne label "Vixen".

BURGER BET

France's women's basketball coach Alain Jardel is ruing a wager he made before the start of the Olympic tournament.

He told his charges that he would eat only burgers from a famous multinational company if they reached the quarterfinals.

Queen Sofia of Spain is the latest arrival, joining her son Crown Prince Felipe and her daughter Princess Cristina, the Infanta.

For someone from the Perigord — a region that enjoys a reputation for gastronomy and where fast food is seen as a

cultural abomination — that was no idle bet.

One more victory will mean Jardel will have to fulfil his bet.

RIGHT ON ROYAL SHOW

Dawn Fraser may be the First Lady of the Games and Chelsea Clinton the First Daughter but there is little doubt as to who is the First Royal Family.

With Australia's head-of-state Queen Elizabeth II absent, a large contingent of Spanish royals have caught the eye.

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