

Making History in Chinese Athletics with Keiser

When the recent World athletics championships had concluded in Beijing one of the more stirring successes was by the Chinese in the men's Long Jump.

For the first time since 1991 a Chinese athlete reached the long jump final at the World Championships. Unlike the final twenty-four years earlier where one Chinese competitor advanced to the final, however, three did it in 2015. The three Chinese entrants finished third, fourth and fifth. Besting the trio was young, rising standout Jianan Wang. Four days shy of his nineteenth birthday, Wang became China's first ever World Championship medalist in the event. He earned the bronze medal with a mark of 8.18 (26' 10") and was also the first Asian to ever medal in the event in that meet.



The startling emergency of China on the world long jump scene can be traced to November 2013 when renowned jumps coach Randy Huntington was hired by the Chinese Federation. After three weeks of evaluations and corrections, the athletes began a velocity based training program centered on Keiser pneumatic resistance equipment. "This was a completely different way of doing things," Huntington said.

What was new for the Chinese was not new for Huntington who followed a philosophy steeled through thirty-eight years of coaching that involved guiding world record holders Mike Powell and Willie Banks and American record holder Sheila Hudson.

Utilizing the potential that pneumatic resistance affords to be able to move the highest resistance possible as fast as the athlete can, Huntington set out to build powerful jumpers. Wang, Jinzhe Li, Xinglong Gao and Changzhou Huang began a more explosive lifting program with the emphasis placed on the amount of wattage generated rather than weight lifted. "They got after it," Huntington explained. "When you see a number it makes lifting competitive."

It wasn't long before many of the athletes' watts-per-kilo ratio skyrocketed. Wang improved from 38.9 to 49.1 watts per kilogram, Gao from 45.46 to 55.07 and Huang made an impressive jump from generating 37.4 watts

per kilogram in his lifts to 53.11. “This relates to how well they create power per their specific body weight,” Huntington explained. “The measure is about them rather than some absolute number.”

The lifting program Huntington implemented utilized four pieces of Keiser equipment. The Keiser Air 250 Standing Hip is used “for force application to the ground, thigh drive forward in sprinting and knee drive in the long jump.” Huntington advocates the Keiser Air 300 Seated Calf because it “works the soleus which leads to a stiffer ankle joint and better elasticity which leads to better reaction times in acceleration, jumping and sprinting.” The Keiser Air 300 Squat is used “for acceleration,” and the Keiser Air 300 Leg Curl because “we’ve had to address hamstring issues and this helped us a great deal.”

Keiser offers a number of benefits to Huntington’s program. One of the biggest is transference. “When you determine a program you also have to identify the mechanism that will get you to a higher transfer rate,” Huntington explained referring to the research of Anatoliy Bondarchuk. “Does the lift transfer to the event? Does it correlate to the event? When we look at the Olympic lifts for instance, does the snatch correlate to the long jump? No.”

With their techniques tweaked and refined by their coach, specific movements and skills made more powerful from work in the weight room and confidence heightened through drills on the track, the Chinese long jumpers attacked the summer schedule. Li had giving an inkling of what was happening in China when he closed out the 2014 outdoor season by winning the long jump at the prestigious Herculis meet in Monaco, the first Asian to win an IAAF Diamond League event. In February 2015 Gao finished second in the Birmingham Grand Prix in England. It was Jianan Wang, however, who vaulted onto the World stage.

A decathlete as a teen, Wang made the long jump his exclusive event in 2013. After eight months under Huntington’s guidance he won the gold medal at the World Junior championships. During a Diamond League meet nine months later, in May of 2015, Wang sailed 8.25 to finish third and set a new Asian junior record in the long jump. “There’s nobody in the world that’s faster on the runway,” exclaimed his coach.

Having the recent World Athletics Championships in their home country placed a great amount of pressure to perform and also a tremendous spotlight on Huntington’s jumpers. Thanks to their performance in that event the skills of Wang, Gao, Huang and Li as well as the work of Huntington are no longer a well-kept secret. Much will now be expected as they move into the biggest year in the sports’ quadrennial calendar.

After a brief break for recovery, Huntington’s jumpers resume work toward an even bigger prize: an Olympic medal. The Olympic Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro are less than twelve months away and the weight room,

running track and long jump pits await. They leave little doubt that their coaching and work with Keiser has them ready for the challenge.