

## Feature: China's "pommel horse king" crowned

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After claiming his first Olympic pommel horse title, 23-year-old Chinese gymnast Xiao Qin said his No. 1 must-do is "taking a vacation".

"My longest holiday in the past few years was three days due to training. Now I can finally take a rest," he said.

Xiao may have other reasons for taking the vacation. After four years, he eventually can come into terms with his failure in Athens and prove that he is the world's No. 1 on pommel horse.

Despite a lowered difficulty score and separated legs during his routine, the three-time world pommel champion still dominated Sunday's pommel horse final and won his first Olympic individual title.

But he was not so excited. "I intended to do this (winning the gold) in the Athens Olympics but I didn't have the chance. Today I was able to do it."

He said he was even more excited when he and his teammates won the team gold days ago. After winning the team title, they "finally released the pressure that had built up for so many years," he said.

The victory at the Beijing Olympics is somewhat like a revenge for Xiao and his teammates after the Chinese male gymnasts' unexpected defeat in Athens.

In Athens, Xiao, a 19-year-old making his Olympic debut, fell during qualifications and failed to make the final. His flaw on his speciality also pulled the Chinese men's team down in the team title contest.

"After Athens, I came to realize that Olympics can bring pain as well as fun. I know that being higher, faster and stronger do not necessarily mean you are the real hero. I can be the real hero so long as I do my best," Xiao said.

"For Olympics, athletes are not only expected to show the difficulty of their routines, but also the beauty of their minds," Xiao said.

"After my failure in Athens, I had a period of sadness and pessimism. But now I am quite confident about myself," he said.

"The competition is not only about technics but also mentality. You need a fairly long time to build up your confidence."

The home crowd's support is motivating, Xiao said. "I feel like I am in the battlefield. The only thing I can do is to win glory for my country. "

Xiao said he got inspiration from China's gymnastics legend Li Ning.

"He (Li Ning) won so many gold medals and is admired by all of us. Other gymnasts, such as Li Xiaopeng, Yang Wei and Russia's Alexei Nemov are also my idols."

Starting gymnastics at the age of five, Xiao joined the gymnastics team of the Chinese People's Liberation Army at the age of 9 and was awarded military rank when he was 22. On the top of the podium, he gave a military salute to the cheering audience.

Like other Chinese youths, Xiao said he likes hanging out on weekend, surfing the internet, watching movies and sleeping.

He will go to college to pursue a MBA program once he retires from gymnastics, he said.

"Source:Xinhua"