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## Liu Xiang (CHN): “I really like the direct-final format”

Zhou Xin, FINA Media Committee Member

As a sprinter and world record holder in the women's 50 backstroke, Liu Xiang enjoys the FINA Champions Swim Series with direct finals and believes she was born for this new type of competition format.

After winning her pet event with 27.36 on the first day of the competition in Shenzhen, Liu said she was happy with her first race of the new year. "I did not expect to win though I have the world record. I train freestyle most of the time, since there is no 50m back race in the Olympic Games. For that reason, I competed in the 50m back at the FINA World Championships in Gwangju. I am glad that my backstroke performance is still in good shape. It is a good start of the year."

"The reason I like the one-final competition format is because it is full of surprise and breathtaking excitement. For us, the 50m races only allow one or two breaths. Everything must be done perfectly, without any error, and we have to give it all. We have to be 100 percent concentrate on that."



Liu tied for the bronze medal in 50m back at the 2015 Kazan Worlds, smashed the Asian record in the women's 50m freestyle in 2017 and the best global mark in 50m back at the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games. She was the first female swimmer to break the 27 second barrier in the event.

"As I am not so strong physically, my coach always tries to improve my physical strength, especially on my core and legs. I was weak in the leg section and always the slowest one in my team, both in running or kicking sessions in the water. Starting from this winter, I have made some progress on the dryland training. I hope it can improve my speed in the water."

Liu will clash with two Dutch top swimmers, Ranomi Kromowidjojo and Femke Heemskerk, and Michelle Coleman of Sweden in the 50m free during the second session of the meet in Shenzhen.

"I hope I can reach the standard time and qualify for the Olympic Games. There are always many strong contenders in the 50m free, such as Sarah Sjöström, the Campbell sisters and so on. I just need to do my best," said the 23-year-old.

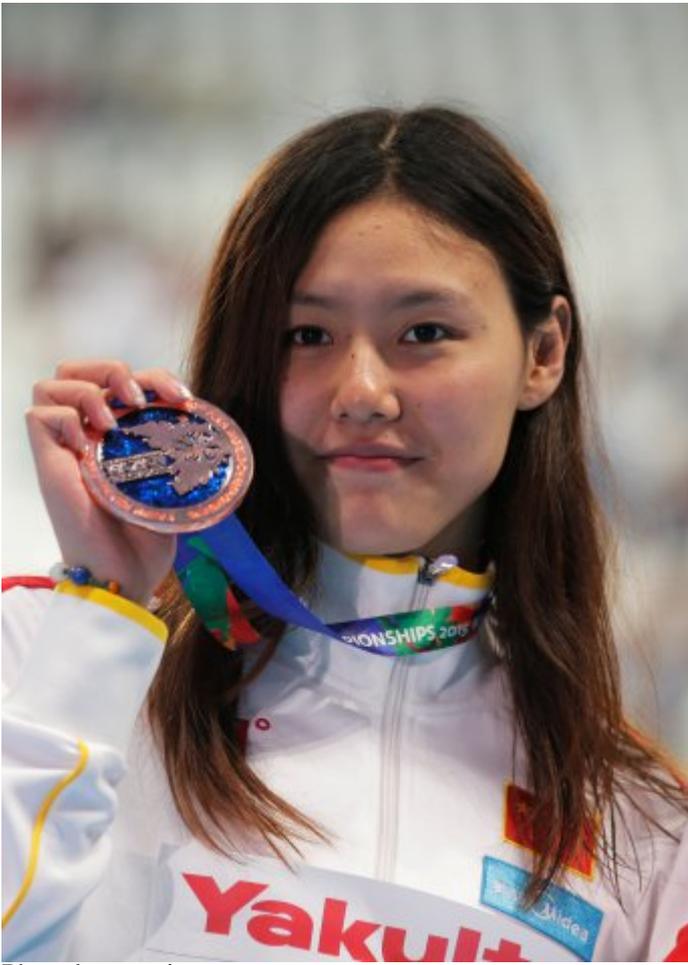


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