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COACH CLASS: 'I HOPE TO SET A GOAL FOR ATHLETES TO SURPASS MY ACHIEVEMENTS'

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*In the second part of a new series, **Zhongrong Cao (CHN)** talks about his coaching career and his role as head coach of China's senior Modern Pentathlon team.*

In the historic annals of Modern Pentathlon, he stands alone. The only Asian pentathlete to have scaled the pinnacle of the sport and stood on the Olympic podium.

There are few in the sport, especially with an Olympics in Asia on the horizon and so many athletes (especially the Korean men) operating at the sharp end of the world rankings, who believe it will be long before Zhongrong Cao of China has company in this exclusive club.

Indeed, the London 2012 silver medallist himself is working hard to make sure that he doesn't remain the only Asian Olympic medallist, or at least the only Chinese Olympic medallist. As national coach of China he has a number of young athletes showing the potential to achieve great

things in the world's most demanding multi-discipline sport.

It should be reinforced that Cao (CHN) was by no means a one-hit wonder in his elite career. He won his first two Pentathlon World Cup medals in 2006, including gold in Cairo (EGY), came 4th in the UIPM 2010 Pentathlon World Championships in Chengdu (CHN) and returned to that city two years later to win bronze in the UIPM Pentathlon World Cup Final.

Even as a veteran he was a serious performer, finishing 16th in his farewell Olympic appearance in Rio in 2016. Now Cao (CHN) is passing on everything he has learned over the years in the hope he can help another Chinese pentathlete savour the sweet taste of success.

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Q: As a pentathlete, how many different coaches did you work with? And what did you learn from them?

A: There are three modern pentathlon coaches I've worked with. From them I learned professionalism and perseverance.

Q: When did you decide that you wanted to become a coach, and who did you ask for advice?

A: After participating in the Olympics several times, I made up my mind to work as a coach when I retired. I also consulted my own coach at that time.

Q: What steps have you taken to gain coaching qualifications?

A: After retiring, I attended the authoritative professional coaching training in China, and obtained the professional title of coach. I also successfully got the master's degree in sports training from Shanghai University of Sport.

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Q: What was the first thing you achieved as a coach that made you proud?

A: Under my own guidance, athletes achieved impressive results in the world competitions.

Q: And what is your proudest achievement to date?

A: I will soon be stepping on the Olympic stage as an Olympic coach.

Q: In what ways does your own experience as a pentathlete help you to be a better coach?

A: Some of my experience in participating in world competitions can be shared with my athletes, so that they can get more competition experience.

Q: How does your status as an individual Olympic medallist impact your coaching management?

A: I will set up a higher goal for athletes to surpass my previous achievements.

Q: What do you think are the three most important characteristics in a coach?

A: Professionalism, dedication and perseverance.

Q: How has the role of the coach in Modern Pentathlon changed over the years?

A: Coaches should not only establish cooperative relationships with athletes in training and competition, but also cultivate deep friendship with them in daily life. Both sides should trust and support each other.

Q: What would you say to recommend coaching to a pentathlete who is considering it?

A: The premise is that you must really love modern pentathlon, which is hard to do actually. And if you love this sport from your heart, you can continue to challenge yourself and experience its charm in a different way as a coach.

Q: If you could have a perfect day as a pentathlon coach, what would it be like?

A: I think it would be a perfect day for me to work well with the team to complete the Olympics with outstanding results and realize my dreams.

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