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YOG 2014 – CHINA TAKES THE GOLD IN THE GIRLS INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION

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AT THE end of two thrilling days of competition, 14-year-old ZHONG XIUTING was crowned champion of the Girls's Individual Modern Pentathlon at the 2nd Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing.

Zhong had started the Combined Event just outside the medals in fifth place, but she held her nerve to overtake the leaders and claim the gold medal, to the delight of the home crowd at the NJ OSC Modern Pentathlon Venue and in the presence of the President of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, also in the Combined Event audience.

The competition for all three podium places was incredibly close, with the three highest-ranked athletes with a small difference between them. Zhong came out on top, with Great Britain's FRANCESCA SUMMERS claiming silver and ANNA MATTHES keeping the Bronze Medal.

Zhong (CHN) was one of three 14-year-olds taking part in an event where a high proportion of the 24 contenders were aged 18, at the higher end of the junior age spectrum.

At such a young age, the way she handled the pressure of performing in front of a home crowd - one that has become accustomed to Chinese success at these Games - marked her out as an

athlete of incredible potential.

After receiving her gold medal, Zhong attended the official Press Conference, where she said she was “very excited” to have won and thanked the Chinese Government, her friends, her coaches and the “fantastic audience” who helped propel her to victory.

Although Zhong performed strongly in qualifying yesterday, emerging in second place after the Fencing round-robin, she lost ground in the Swimming event this morning, where her 200m freestyle time of 2:24.41 saw her ranked 17th.

The 24 athletes were split into four heats at the NJ OSC Natatorium and the fastest swimmer was AROA FREIJE TORNEIRO from Spain (2:14.67).

Over to the NJ International Expo Centre and the athletes who had been most prominent during qualifying once again dominated the Fencing final.

KALI FRANCES SAYERS of Canada was the last woman standing, defeating Summers (GBR) in the last bout. But Zhong (CHN) was also very strong, with a score of 295 that allowed her to go into the running/shooting event with a medal in her sights, placed fifth overall.

Zhong started with a handicap of 23 seconds against the leader, Sayers (CAN), but the two athletes’ fortunes flipped dramatically when the podium was in sight.

One by one, Zhong crept past the other athletes who had started before her - Matthes (GER), ANNA ZS.TOTH (Hungary) and finally Summers (GBR), who was second to start the combined event. She is another competitor who has proved beyond doubt that she has the temperament to meet Modern Pentathlon’s unique variety of mental and physical challenges.

“It is an amazing feeling to win silver, I am so happy,” said 18 year-old Summers. “It was the hottest conditions I have ever run in but well worth it obviously.

“My fencing was really good and it went really well. I had loads of confidence from the first fence and that helped me the second time again.

“Winning the medal has given me loads of experience for the future and who knows, maybe Rio next, we will see.”

Dr Klaus Schormann, President of the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne, attended the official Press Conference after the event and commented: “I would like to thank all the athletes and coaches and to China for hosting such a fantastic event. This was a huge competition. Modern Pentathlon is a fantastic sport, safe, and one that is always trying to innovate.

“This competition has shown that participation in Modern Pentathlon is continually growing across the world and points to a bright future for not just for our sport, but for sport in general.”

Tomorrow, the Boys’s Individual final proceeds on the following timetable (all local times): Swimming 14:30; Fencing 16:00; Combined Event (running/shooting) 18:25. Monday is a rest day and then the Mixed Relay ends the Modern Pentathlon competition on Tuesday.

Nanjing is the second host city to stage the Youth Olympic Games, which was inaugurated in Singapore in 2010.