Beijing action

Nadeeka Lakmali of Sri Lanka competing during the women's javelin throw qualification round at the "Bird's Nest" National Stadium during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. *AFP*

Russia's Elena Isinbaeva clears the bar and sets a new world record in the women's pole vault final. *AFP*

Susanthika Jayasinghe of Sri Lanka competing in the women's 200m heat of the athletics competition at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games in the National Stadium. *REUTERS*

(From L) Kerron Clement, Bershawn Jackson and Angelo Taylor of the US celebrating following the men's 400m hurdles final at the "Bird's Nest" National Stadium. Taylor won the men's 400m hurdles gold medal at the Olympics within 47.25 seconds. The 29-year-old led an American cleansweep as world champion Clement took silver in 47.98 and 2005 world champion Jackson filled bronze. *AFP*

Elena Isinbaeva (L) celebrates winning the gold medal in the women's pole vault final at the "Bird's Nest" National Stadium. The reigning double Olympic and world champion bettered her own world record in the women's pole vault. The 26-year-old Russian vaulted 5.05m, 1cm higher than her previous record set in Monaco last month. Jennifer Stuczynski of the US won silver with 4.80m and Russia's Svetlana Feofanova took bronze with a best of 4.75m. *AFP*

Angelo Taylor of the United States celebrating as he wins the men's 400 metres. *AFP*

Chen Yibing, China's new legend in rings

SONG YING, CHEN YU

A new gold medal, a new gymnastic record. After China's Chen Yibing nailed a solid landing under the rings, he powered to top spot in the event before ecstatic home fans on Monday at the Beijing Olympics.

Chen closed his eyes for a while and then thrust his hand into the air to greet the ovation of audience.

It is the sixth gold claimed by the Chinese gymnastic team at the Beijing Olympics, enabling China to improve its Olympic best result in gymnastics once again after Chen's teammates Xiao Qin contributed the fifth gold with superb work on pommel horse. China reaped four gymnastic golds in the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984.

Chen's female counterpart He Kexin raised the record to seven less than one hour later by marvelous performance in uneven bars.

Chen, who made his Olympic debut, remained quite calm in the final despite chants of "Come on" from the crowd. Showing no slight sign of shivers, he moved easily from one position to another and put every maneuver in tight control. Between the two rings Chen's body stretched as a bright red line.

The next-to-perfect performance won the hearts of judges and secured Chen's leading position with a score of 16.600, leaving a margin of 0.175 with his teammate Yang Wei who settled the silver.

Yang also gave a nod to Chen's performance by saying, "I think I have done a good job, but Chen's level is higher than mine in rings."

After the final, Chen told reporters in the mixed zone,"I was nervous but I have prepared psychologically. I believed I had the ability to win because I have claimed two gold medals in the last two world championships. I have a difficulty value of 7.4 but I didn't use it, because it was unnecessary to use it after the qualification."

When asked about whether he ever imaged winning two golds at the Beijing Olympics, Chen said,"Yes, I have imagined it, but I know it is very hard. But in order to achieve something, you must imagine it first. I have made lots of efforts for it."

China's dominance in rings was surely not an easy feat.

The dream to reclaim an Olympic title in rings has been held for more than two decades after the sport's legend Li Ning brought the first gold in the event at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984. Li Jing and Li Xiaoshuang kicked off their rush to the title in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, but only finished as the silver and bronze medalists.

The winter came thereafter for China's rings event as no Chinese gymnast had stood on the Olympic rings podium since then.

Few people would have noticed Chen when he appeared in the 2005 World Championships in Melbourne. An injury in the shoulder forced him to stay far away from the podium and only brought a ranking of the eighth.

After honing his skills for one year, Chen began to shine in the 2006 World Championships. Relying on his consistency in execution, he defeated Jordan Jovtchev, the silver medalist in the Athens Olympics Games, and won the gold in rings. In 2007, Chen crowned again the Stuttgart World Championships, heralding another era of Chinese gymnasts in the event.

The experience endowed Chen confidence and mental strength. He became the first gymnast to compete in the team final of the Beijing Olympics and contributed 16.575 points, the highest score in rings, for China's final victory.

In addition, Chen has made preparation for his another dazzling performance in men's all-around in the future. He gained no medal after a wrist wound forced him to put an abrupt end to his routine in horizontal bar in the all-around final. The 23-year-old leading gymnast reaped precious experience at the Olympic arena.

Huang Yubin, head coach of the Chinese gymnastic team, told reporters that Chen's performance in the all-around was satisfactory as he came to accumulate experience and prepare for the future.

BEIJING, Tuesday (Xinhua)