



Teenage diver Quan Hongchan (left) receives media interview after winning the women's 10-meter platform gold medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games. — IC

It's not sports! Overzealous fans should respect their idols

Wan Lixin

Quan Hongchan is certainly a legendary platform diver. Born in 2007, of rustic parents, Quan was catapulted into stardom after clinching a spate of titles in platform diving, including a record-breaking gold medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

Then Quan became an Internet sensation with a considerable following, and her rustic home became a mecca of sorts, once drawing over 2,000 visitors, glorifying, but also causing severe disturbances for fellow villagers.

In early October, at the Hangzhou Asian Games, Quan outclassed teammate Chen Yuxi in a thrilling battle to win the women's 10-meter platform gold medal.

During a recent national diving championship Quan settled for silver, with Chen pocketing the gold.

Like all shining athletes, Quan was not invincible and she acknowledged that her performance was unsatisfactory.

Then someone cried foul, letting off a torrent of abuse against the judges for allegedly giving Quan low marks.

When such accusations went viral on

social media, the broadsides widened, targeting Chen, and her family.

This was so facetious yet disturbing that on its official Weibo account, the Chinese Olympic Committee issued a scathing statement condemning this unethical and harmful fan response.

It claimed these acts on the part of fans, ostentatiously driven out of love for their idols, "are actually irrational behavior that disrupt the normal order of games and the accepted ethics and code of conduct, and are definitely detrimental to true sportsmanship."

It excoriated those who pretended to be enthused fans, though "their antics were driven by well calculated personal interests and profits."

Thus the committee issued an appeal that fans should chase their sports icons in a rational manner, showing proper respect for the legitimate rights of all athletes, and refraining from improper words and conduct that might contaminate the sports arena.

This diving incident was certainly not an isolated phenomenon.

Not long ago, Wang Chuqin, a national tennis player, confronted a paparazzi-style influencer pestering him at an

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airport: "Would you please keep some distance from me?"

Yang Shuyu, a woman basketball player, also said on one occasion: "Don't meet me at the airport. I do not like it. Meet me at the stadium, thanks."

Yang hit the nail there, by deflecting fans from prying into an athlete's life other than in the professional context.

Minimizing distractions from their professional applications would mean

that athletes are able to concentrate more on excelling in their sport, and this is a true testimonial to fans' love for sports.

In a recent commentary, Xinhua news agency condemned this irrational exuberance on the part of some fans, asserting that "one of the more charming things about sports is the nail-biting expectation of the results, which are unpredictable, hence the cherished sports ideal of never-say-die until the last moment. As spectators, we individuals have the right to show our support and love for some athletes, though this support and love should be rational, with well-defined limits, so that performance and the outcome of a game should be viewed rationally."

The Xinhua commentary reiterated the need for online platforms to take proper measures to prevent some misleading trolls from going viral, at a time when rumors and sensational conspiracy theories are all grist for the platforms' mills.

As fans are easily manipulated in this process, profit-seeking platforms should be made to pay the full measure for hosting such misleading content.