

Shanghai to hold inaugural Olympic Qualifier Series at Urban Park in May

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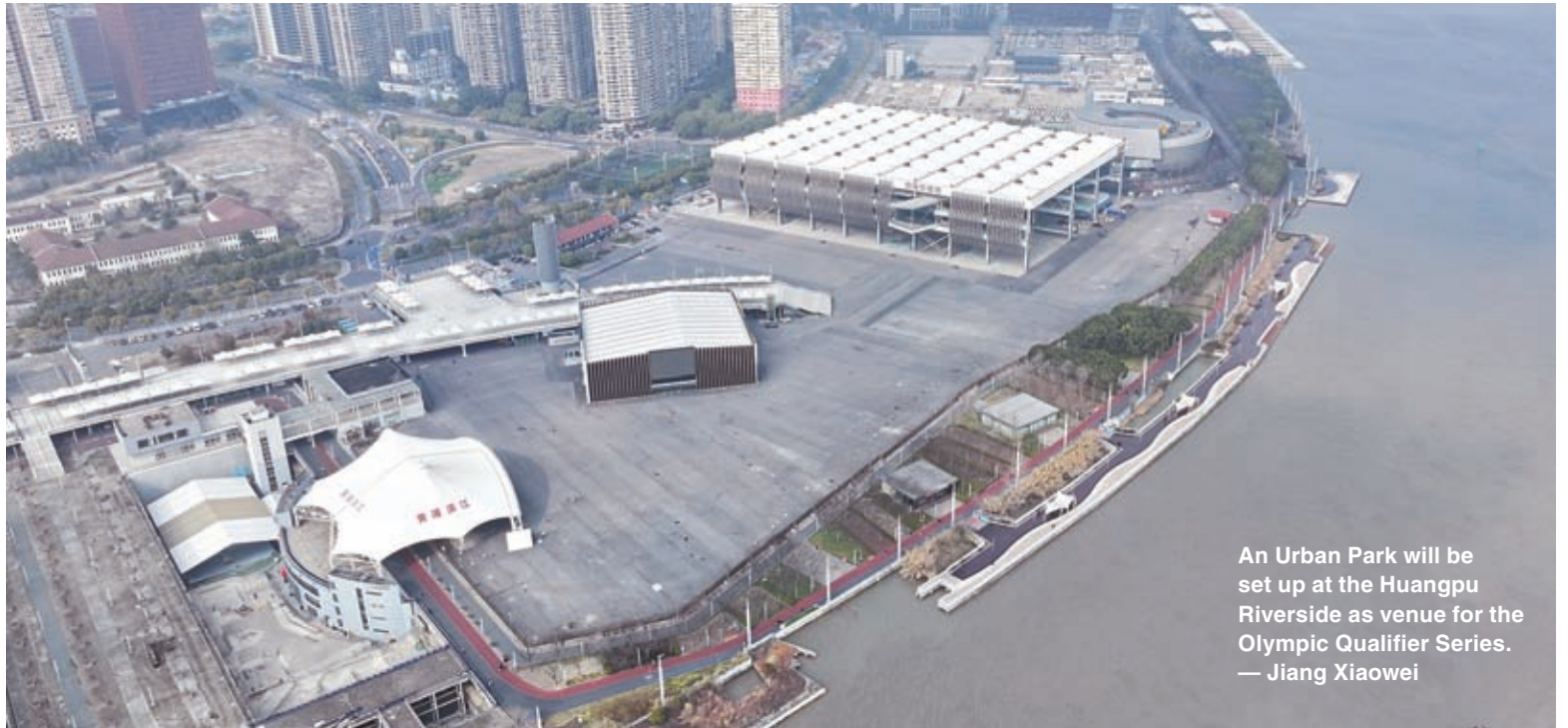
The inaugural Olympic Qualifier Series will be held in Shanghai in May, presenting the popular urban sports of breaking, BMX freestyle, sport climbing and skateboarding.

As a new festival-style event launched by the International Olympic Committee that blends sports with culture, the series will be held in Shanghai from May 16 to 19 and then in Hungarian capital Budapest in June, gathering the world's top athletes to compete for places in Paris.

A brand-new Urban Park will be put up at the Huangpu Riverside as the competition venue. According to Shanghai sports authorities, the four-day competition will be built into a sports carnival for spectators with interactive activities and entertainment.

A total of 464 athletes are expected to compete in Shanghai, with 288 confirming their participation in BMX freestyle, sport climbing and breaking so far. Skateboarding participants will be confirmed by World Skate this week.

The list includes a number of Olympic champions and world champions. Among them Tokyo Olympic champions Logan Martin from Australia and Britain's Charlotte Worthington; Frenchman Anthony Jeanjean, winner of the 2024 UCI BMX Freestyle World Cup Enoshima; South Korean B-boy Wing, winner of the 2023 WDSF Asian Breaking Championships; Poland's Natalia Kalucka, silver medal winner in the women's speed competition at the 2023 IFSC Climbing World Cup Wujiang Station; and French climber Mejdi Schalck, champion of the 2023 NEOM IFSC Masters in men's boulder.



An Urban Park will be set up at the Huangpu Riverside as venue for the Olympic Qualifier Series. — Jiang Xiaowei



Breaking, BMX freestyle, sport climbing and skateboarding are popular with young people. — Ti Gong

Chinese athletes include Shanghai B-boy Shang Xiaoyu, BMX Freestyle Park world champion Deng Yawen, as well as climbers Pan Yufei, Luo Zhilu, Long Mingguo, Wu Peng and Niu Di.

"I'm so excited and look forward to competing in front of the home crowd," said Shang, a 2018 Youth Olympic quarter-finalist. He's been training in

Beijing with the national team. To win a quota for the Paris Olympic Games, he needs a top 7 ranking out of 40 athletes after the two series stops in Shanghai and Budapest.

"The name of my sport 'breaking' represents the spirit of achieving breakthroughs. I want to show my best form in Shanghai," said Shang.

Most of the facilities at the

new Urban Park need to be built, including the competition area, audience seats, and performance stage. Construction, to start soon, will be completed by April 30.

"This is a temporary venue, and the challenge is to complete it in a short time and meet professional requirements," said designer Li Xingqiao.

"Unlike traditional venues, Urban Park emphasizes the interaction between spectators and athletes."

Li said skateboarding and breaking will be indoor competitions, with sport climbing and BMX freestyle held outdoors.

As a warm-up for the series, an Urban Festival will be held a month in advance. Luo Wenhua, Shanghai Sports Bureau deputy director, said there will be roadshows and promotional activities during the festival in schools, commercial areas and public spaces to introduce the four sports to the public and invite people to experience the sports themselves.

"On competition days, Urban

Park will be built into a carnival," said Luo. "Apart from enjoying the games, spectators can interact with athletes and celebrities. They can learn more about each sport in an exploration zone and take fun quizzes. There will also be various delicacies, souvenirs, and gifts offered on site."

Pierre Fratter-Bardy, associate director of Olympic Games Strategy and Development of the International Olympic Committee, said he was fully confident that Shanghai would deliver an outstanding event. "Shanghai is a vibrant city and we know there are a lot of urban sports lovers and followers here," he said. "This is the inaugural edition of the Olympic Qualifier Series, the last step on the athletes' road to the Olympics, so the expectation is high."

Tickets for the Olympic Qualifier Series are expected to go on sale in early April. There will be discounts for students, early birds as well as family and group spectators.