



BMX freestyle cyclist prepares for the race in Shanghai on Wednesday. — CFP

Grand city welcome for Olympic Qualifiers

Ma Yue

The inaugural Olympic Qualifier Series in Shanghai welcomed some of the world's top athletes in the sports of breaking, BMX freestyle, sport climbing and skateboarding on Wednesday, with a performance at the Huangpu Riverside Urban Park.

Running from May 16 to 19 in Shanghai and Budapest from June 20 to 23, the inaugural OQS will host 464 athletes in BMX freestyle cycling, breaking, skateboarding, and sport climbing, with over 150 quota places up for grabs at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

Pierre Fratter-Bardy, associate director of the Olympic Games Strategy and Development of the International Olympic Committee, hoped that all athletes and spectators will enjoy "a celebration of youth sports" in the next few days.



A view of the 2024 Olympic Qualifier Series Shanghai on Wednesday. — CFP

"Shanghai is a global sports hub, having tremendous experience in hosting major events," Fratter-Bardy told the pre-event press conference.

"I have had full confidence from Day 1 for Shanghai to deliver such a new event," he added. "We share the same

vision, and here we have an incredible venue. It's more than a sports event, but a lifestyle. We celebrate what these sports stand for — life, music and fashion."

Fratter-Bardy believes the Olympic Qualifier Series can help these four young and energetic sports to grow and develop. "We see an incredible level of competition in these four sports. When spectators come, they will watch the competition, and then try the sports themselves, especially the kids," he said.

Prior to and during the OQS, sports initiation activities will also be held at the Huangpu Riverside Skateboard Park to promote the four sports among youth, along with mini competitions as warm-ups.

"The capacity of the urban park is 15,000. We expect the park to be full every day and buzzing. The beauty of this concept is that with one ticket, you



Skateboarder gets ready for competition. — CFP

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can spend the entire day," Fratter-Bardy introduced.

"When you talk to the athletes, federations, and stakeholders in these sports, they are all telling us we are more than a sport. We are a lifestyle. What defines us is not only what happens on the field of play, but the way we dress, the music we listen to and so on."

Athletes have started to adapt and become familiar with the venues. The welcome party gathered some youth icons like actor Wang Yibo and singer Zhang Jie.

Wang, a break dance fan, came on stage for the finale and sang the theme song of the event.

The preliminary rounds of competitions for BMX freestyle, sport climbing and skateboarding are set for Thursday and Friday, while the semifinals and finals will be held on Friday and on Sunday. Breaking competitions are tomorrow and on Sunday.