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Yueling Chen



Sport: Track & Field

Event: 20k walk

Born: February 4, 1973

Birthplace: Tieling, China

Residence: San Diego, California

Height: 5-foot-1

Weight: 100 lbs.



USA

Olympic champion

Competing for China at the 1992 Olympics, Yueling Chen won the gold medal in the women's 10-kilometer walk. This time around, Chen will compete for the U.S. in the 20-kilometer walk, an event that will make its Olympic debut in Sydney, replacing the 10K event. Chen first moved to the U.S. in 1993 and became a citizen April 12, 2000. A few months later, Yueling Chen finished second to Michele Rohl at the Olympic Trials to earn a spot on the U.S. team.

Chinese hero

At the Barcelona Games, Chen was awarded the 10K walk title after the Unified Team's Alina Ivanova, who crossed the finish line first, was disqualified for running. Chen learned of her victory 15 minutes later in the interview area. With the victory, Chen became China's first Olympic champion in track and field and also the first Asian woman to win a gold medal in



track and field. After winning Olympic gold, a life-size bronze statue was built in her honor in Tieling in northeastern China. So many people tried to touch it that authorities reportedly had to build a fence to protect it. Because of the victory, the Chinese government told her she could have whatever she wanted. What she wanted was to live in the U.S. Chen had heard good things about America and it was her childhood dream to move there. In late 1993, she left her fame and family in China and moved to California.

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Yueling Chen

Comeback

The day after she won the Olympic gold medal in 1992, Chen announced her retirement. It was not until 1998, when she heard the Olympic race had doubled in length from 10 kilometers to 20 kilometers, that she decided to return. "Endurance is better than speed for me," she says.

Olden days

While in China, Chen was not allowed to wear anything besides a track suit. Her coach, Wang Kui, did not permit dresses, long hair, or boyfriends. In China, she trained with 20 people, Now she trains with one: Wei Wang, her younger sister's husband. Chen is the second-youngest of eight children and her family still lives in China.

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