

# Those shiny gold medals really do look good on TV

Maybe it is good that the U.S. isn't at the top of the gold medal count for this year's Olympics being held in Beijing, China.

Evidently, having lead-laced toys wasn't enough of a slap in the face for the country, as new revelations have indicated that with there having been a crack-down earlier this year on finding lead in toys, they evidently had to find a new home for it.

Unfortunately, those standing on top of the medal podium probably shouldn't do what many athletes have been seen to do in previous Games: mockingly taking a bite into it.

That would be considered solid advice, considering that the medals evidently consist of 99 percent lead alloy. And the other 1 percent? You'd think that at least it would be covered in gold? Not exactly. The medals are alleged to be coated with a gold-colored lead-based paint.

In just another example of needing to look beyond the book's cover for this year's Olympics — such as when during the opening ceremonies, the girl "singing" the song "Ode to the Motherland," was in fact lip-synching — as the company who was to have manufactured these medals is Wuhan One Hundred Percent Gold Medal Corp. A spokesman for the company even went as far to state, "Until we do

(determine the problem) we are urging all first-place athletes not to lick, taste or suck on their medals."

## ON THE SUBJECT OF SPORTS



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That's at least if the story were true, as the story gained some steam on some corners of the Web, but was clarified later in other places as being a hoax. With the recent news of China having been mired with lead-laced toys, it just didn't seem that far of a stretch for why the story gained traction.

In reality, that responsibility went to Shanghai Mint, which created 1,000 medals for each of the three medal categories, including using 13 kilograms worth of gold for the medals awarded to event winners.

And for the first time in Olympic history, the medals have blended metal and gemstone, with a jade ring included on the back of each.

For the U.S. though, getting

their hands on "golds" this year has proven to be harder than expected.

While leading in the overall medal count, with 93 to China's 83, the host country is well ahead in the gold column, with 46 to the United States' 28.

In the last three Summer Olympics, the U.S. has averaged a gold haul of nearly 39 for each Games.

It shouldn't be too surprising, though, in that the host country has had some history of being showered with medals — almost as a way of thanks for their hospitality. For example, Japan, which hosted the 1998 Winter Games, garnered zero medals in the previous Winter Games to Nagano, and only two in the one following 1998 — while collecting 10 for the Games they hosted. Then there was Greece, which hosted the Summer Games in 2004, having collected 16 medals then, but has only earned three thus far in Beijing.

With still a couple of days remaining for this year's Games, China has won 83 medals thus far, a significant jump from the 63 in 2004 and 59 in 2000.

When seeing how enraged former U.S. gymnastics coach Bela Karolyi was over the Aug. 14 schenanigans that took place on the floor where the event finals were being held, it's hard to argue about the possibility of a

little bump to the Chinese scores by judges this year.

While the U.S. did finish with gymnasts Nastia Liukin and Shawn Johnson ending with gold and silver respectively in the individual all-around, some of the scores handed out on the vault were certainly eye-opening.

For Liukin and Johnson, their virtually clean vaults ended with underwhelming scores in the individual all-around.

That was just a precursor to the ugliness that spectators were about to witness, though, even if the enthusiastic cheering in these Olympics that has understandably been heard for each Chinese athlete tried to hide the reality of what transpired with gymnast Jian Yuyuan.

When Yuyuan fell to her knees on her vault, only to receive a score that was a mere .200 behind Liukin and .300 behind Johnson, the real sting came when the Russia's Anna Pavlova completed a solid vault, only to score below Yuyuan, part of what helped the Chinese edge the U.S. team for the all-around team gold by just 2.375 points.

When looking at the gold medal count in these Olympics, and looking at the breakdown of the golds in the respective sports that require judges to determine the winners — and those that do not — the discrepancy between

the Chinese haul of 46 golds and the U.S.' 29 is astounding.

For anyone who has spent a few hours watching the gymnastics and diving competitions wondering what they are not seeing — that the judges are — or the other way around, it is clear that the Olympic officials' efforts to try to eliminate any controversy over judges scoring after the skating scandal of the 2002 Games have proved to be minimally effective at best.

Of China's 46 golds, half of them have been earned in the sports involving judging: diving (seven), gymnastics (nine), judo (three), trampoline (two), fencing (one), and taekwondo (one). By comparison, those not involving judges: sailing, shooting, swimming, table tennis, weightlifting, badminton, wrestling, rowing and archery have amounted to 23 golds for the Chinese. For the U.S., only four of their golds have been attained in sports involving judges, two in gymnastics and one each in fencing and equestrian.

And that's not as if the Yuyuan-Pavlova controversy is the only one being bandied about. For those familiar with Olympic rules, the requirement is that all gymnasts are supposed to be 16 during the year of the Games. Looking at the gymnasts that made up the majority of the

Chinese "women's" team, one had to wonder how many of them had graduated elementary school.

While the Chinese have been adamant that the girls on the team are within the age requirements, a number of official registration documents issued by China's General Administration of Sport have reportedly resurfaced for some of the members of the team are actually two years younger than legally allowable. Among them is He Kexin, whom a computer hacker was able to determine through searching through the Internet that Chinese documents list her birth date as 1994.

For Olympic officials, though, a passport issued to Kexin this year listing her birth date as Jan. 1, 1992 is deemed acceptable. In trying to be taken seriously with the age requirements for the Olympics, especially when there are alleged documents from her home country that claim a different age, it should at least cause those officials to not discount them out of hand.

Especially when the Chinese government has since removed said documents from the government Web site since the rumors began to spread.

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