

World Games end in spectacular style

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The Kaohsiung World Games arena is bathed in light during yesterday's closing ceremony.
PHOTO: CHANG CHUNG-YI, TAIPEI TIMES

Kaohsiung rounded off a successful World Games yesterday evening with a carnival-like closing ceremony that brought down the curtain on 10 days of exciting sporting competition.

The ceremony got underway at 7.30pm with spectators creating a sparkling "river of stars," as the lights were dimmed before the 40,000-strong crowd simultaneously switched on LEDs.

The United Armed Forces Orchestra then entered to perform three marching tunes before the athletes took center stage with a parade.

As with the opening ceremony, China's athletes failed to show in line with their announcement earlier this week that they would return home following the end of their competitions.

But nobody in the crowd seemed to care as they were too busy enjoying themselves.

Singer Bobby Chen, then entertained the crowd with a couple of numbers before the main show got underway.

The show featured 10 colorful themed dance and visual performances with titles such as "Sound of the Sea," "Dreams of the Butterfly Fish" and "Kaohsiung in Style" designed to showcase the history, culture, development and maritime roots of the host city.

Then, more than 100 traditional sky lanterns were released into the air to wish the athletes good fortune before International World Games Association president Ron Froehlich and Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu addressed the crowd.

Froehlich called the Games the "best ever" before Chen Chu, speaking in Mandarin and Hoklo, said the World Games would "be engraved into the hearts of Kaohsiung residents."

Chen Chu also paid tribute to the thousands of volunteers who had "helped make the Games

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such a success,” before calling for Taiwanese to “fight in unity for the dignity of our country.”

She finished off by asking everyone to help make September’s Deaflympics in Taipei a success and “polish the brilliance of Taiwan in the international arena.”

The handover of the World Games flags came next as triple-gold-medal-winning speed roller skater Huang Yu-ting, Chen and Froehlich passed the flag to a representative of the city that will host the next games in four years time, Cali, Colombia.

Chen Chu then announced that the games were closed before local rocker Wu Bai (伍佰) and his band entertained the packed stadium with a medley of his best-known hits.

The evening and the Games then ended as they had begun, with a spectacular display of fireworks.

Earlier in the day, Taiwan’s athletes had added the icing to the cake on a successful final day as they picked up two golds, three silvers and a bronze.

The medals meant that Taiwan finished seventh in the final medal table with eight golds, nine silvers and seven bronze medals.

The 10 days of competition saw more than 4,000 athletes from 105 countries and territories compete for 186 gold medals.

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