Yao Ming joins Liu at basketball game

2017-09-26

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 China Daily USA |  
 Updated: 2017-09-26 11:29

Vice-Premier Liu Yandong watched a China-US middle school boys basketball friendship game accompanied by basketball Hall of Famer Yao Ming at Nike New York headquarters on Monday.   
"Basketball's a favorite sport for both Chinese and American people," said Liu. "And it's also an important vehicle for people-to-people exchanges."   
"US is a sports power, and more importantly a basketball power," said Liu. "So this kind of basketball exchange between China and the US can also help students become good friends, improve their basketball skills and deepen the understanding between the two nations.   
"Health is the foundation of our life," said Liu. She also encouraged the students to form the habit of doing exercises to build up their bodies from a young age.   
"When I was in middle school, I run for 3,000 or 5,000 meters every day," Liu said. "And when I was in Tsinghua University, I swam during the summer and skied during the winter, and I even I have competed in pentathlon - sprint hurdling, high jump, shot put, long jump and flat race."   
Liu said she hopes young people from both China and US can promote their friendship through such sports exchanges, deepen mutual understanding, play an active role promoting people-to-people exchange and contribute to the China-US friendship.   
"We believe in the power of sports to connect us," said Sean O'Hollaren, senior-vice president of Nike. "What basketball can do is to bring us together - two great teams from around the world, and also develop international understanding and foster people-to-people exchanges."   
Prior to the start of the game, the two teams presented their gift to the vice-premier - a special basketball jersey with Liu's last name; Liu signed two basketballs for them in return. Then Liu and Yao, now the president of the Chinese Basketball Association, took a selfie with the Chinese team - 13 students from High School Affiliated to Shanghai Jiao Tong University.   
"I was a student of Shanghai Nanyang Model Private High School - a rival of your team, so I really have a mixed feeling of your team," Yao told the Chinese students. "But I have to say I don't want to see you defeated by your American counterparts, and I wish the best team to win the game."   
"The US team are all very good players, including top 10 players from New Jersey and Connecticut," said Tasheed Carr, who is the coach of two students from the US team and played in the Northeast Tigers of the CBA for about five months in 2010.   
"Such an event can allow kids to learn from different people and a different culture. Young American and Chinese people can get to know each other, get connected and interact with each other, and we will never know where such relationship can take them to in their life."

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