

= Li Jiawei =

Li Jiawei (Chinese : 李娇娜 ; pinyin : Lǐ Jiāowēi ; born 9 August 1981) is a Chinese @-@ born Singaporean table tennis player who is ranked among the top ten athletes in her sport . Spotted by Singapore talent scouts in Beijing in 1995 , she moved to Singapore and commenced her international career in competitive table tennis in 1996 . She became a Singapore citizen at the age of 18 years under the Foreign Sports Talent Scheme .

As a singles player , Li was ranked sixth in the world as of August 2008 . Her highest ranking was in December 2005 , when she was third . Li is also a key player for women 's team and doubles , and mixed doubles events . She finished in fourth place in singles at both the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens and the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing . On 15 August , the Singapore women 's team composed of Li and her teammates Feng Tianwei and Wang Yuegu defeated South Korea 3 ? 2 in the semifinals . However , in the finals on 17 August , the team lost to China and earned a silver medal , marking the first time that Singapore had won an Olympic medal since the nation 's independence in 1965 . The medal came 48 years after Tan Howe Liang won the country 's first medal , a silver in weightlifting at the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome . Li ended 2008 on a high , winning gold in the women 's team event with Feng and Wang at the ITTF Pro Tour ERKE German Open in Berlin in November , and in the doubles with Sun Beibei at the ITTF Volkswagen Pro Tour Grand Finals in Macau in December 2008 .

Li won the women 's team bronze medal with Feng and Wang at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London . She announced her retirement from competitive sports on 27 December 2012 .

= = Early years = =

Li Jiawei , the only daughter of a government official and a housewife , was born on 9 August 1981 in Beijing , People 's Republic of China . In 1990 , Li was a student at the Beijing Shichahai Sports School . She then entered the Beijing provincial team in 1994 . Her skill in table tennis was recognized by Singaporean talent scouts and she was invited to train in Singapore under the Foreign Sports Talent Scheme in 1996 , returning to China once a year to visit her parents . She began representing Singapore internationally in competitive table tennis the following year . At 18 , she became a Singapore citizen .

= = Professional career = =

Ranked 18th in the world in 2000 , Li achieved gold medals in the women 's team , women 's doubles and mixed doubles events at the XVII Commonwealth Games held between 25 July and 4 August 2002 in Manchester , and was ranked eighth in November 2002 . The following year , in December 2003 , Li was a member of the Singapore team which swept the top awards at the 23rd Southeast Asian Games in the women 's team , women 's singles , women 's doubles and mixed doubles .

On 3 July 2004 , Li took gold in the women 's singles at the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Pro Tour US Open in Chicago . Subsequently , at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens , she defeated the second @-@ seeded China player Wang Nan but eventually finished in fourth place . In 2005 , she was second in the ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals , and gained silver medals for the women 's singles and mixed doubles at the 23rd Southeast Asian (SEA) Games held between 28 November and 4 December 2005 in Manila . She was also the key player in the gold @-@ winning women 's team and women 's doubles events . In December 2005 , she was ranked third in the world as a singles player . She won an individual Singapore Youth Award in 2005 and was Her World magazine 's Young Woman Achiever of 2005 .

At the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne , Li won gold for the women 's team and women 's doubles , and the silver medal for the women 's singles and mixed doubles events . Subsequently , she won the women 's singles at the ITTF Pro Tour Russia Open . She also achieved third place in the ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals and the Women 's World Cup , which are two of the most

prestigious and difficult competitions in the table tennis arena . At the 15th Asian Games held from 29 November to 7 December 2006 in Doha , Qatar , she achieved three medals : a silver for the women 's team event and two bronzes for the women 's singles and mixed doubles . The next year , she won gold in the singles at the ITTF Pro Tour Chinese Taipei Open in Taipei , and helped Singapore to the top spots in the women 's team and mixed doubles events at the 2007 SEA Games in Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat) , Thailand .

As at August 2008 , Li was ranked sixth in the world . She won the accolade of Sportswoman of the Year from the Singapore National Olympic Council five times in a row between 2002 and 2006 , and received a Meritorious Award in 2007 .

At the club competition level , Li plays in the Chinese Table Tennis Super League . In 2008 , she represented Peking University club , and in 2010 , she played for Beijing Holdings which consists of world champion Ding Ning as well .

= = = 2008 Summer Olympics = = =

Li represented Singapore for the third time in the Olympic Games at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing . She was the flag bearer for Team Singapore at the opening ceremony of the Games on 8 August , having requested the honour . She explained : " There has been so much debate over the foreign talent scheme . This is my way of showing everyone that everything I 've ever achieved is because of Singapore . "

At the Beijing Olympics , table tennis team events are played in a best @-@ of @-@ five @-@ matches format . Teams play two single matches followed by a doubles match . If there is no winner after these matches , the teams play a fourth singles match , and if necessary a rubber match to determine the winning team . On 13 August , the Singapore women 's table tennis team coached by Liu Guodong , comprising Li as the team captain and her teammates Feng Tianwei and Wang Yuegu , beat teams from the United States and Nigeria with comfortable 3 ? 0 wins . On 14 August , the Singapore team also defeated the Netherlands 3 ? 0 to reach the semifinals , but not before a gruelling five @-@ game doubles match against the Dutch players Li Jie and Elena Timina which Li Jiawei and Wang Yuegu eventually won 3 ? 2 . The next day , 15 August , the Singapore team defeated the South Korean team of Dang Ye @-@ Seo , Kim Kyung @-@ Ah and Park Mi @-@ Young 3 ? 2 in the semifinals , which went to five matches . Li lost her singles match to Korea 's Kim , but beat Kim and Park in the doubles with her partner Wang . Singapore 's Feng won both her singles matches against Dang and Park .

On 17 August , Li and her teammates gained Singapore a silver medal in women 's table tennis after losing to China in three matches . Li won the first game of her singles match , but was then defeated by her former Beijing Sports School teammate Zhang Yining . In the doubles match , China 's Zhang and Guo Yue bested Singapore 's Li and Wang Yuegu . This marked the first time that Singapore had won an Olympic medal since the nation 's independence in 1965 . The medal came 48 years after Tan Howe Liang won the country 's first medal , a silver in weightlifting in the lightweight category at the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome . Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong requested that the live English @-@ language broadcast of his National Day Rally speech , which coincided with the table tennis finals , be postponed by a day . He also provided the audience with updates on the score , and made a conference call to Tan Eng Liang , Team Singapore 's chef de mission , to congratulate the team .

Li and her teammates received byes into the third round of the singles tournament . Asked if she stood a chance of winning any more medals , she said : " I will try my best in every match . I definitely hope to win one more medal for Singapore . " She beat Croatia 's Tamara Boro? in the third round , Hong Kong 's Lin Ling in the fourth round , and the USA 's Wang Chen in the quarter @-@ finals . However , on 22 August she was defeated in the semifinals 4 ? 1 by Zhang Yining of China , ranked number one in the world , and lost the bronze medal 4 ? 2 to China 's Guo Yue . Thus placed fourth in the singles tournament , she equalled her performance in the 2004 Athens Olympics but again failed in her quest for an individual Olympic medal . After the bronze medal match , a tearful Li told reporters this would be her final Olympics . At a victory celebration in

Singapore on 25 August , Vivian Balakrishnan , the Minister for Community Development , Youth and Sports , announced that Li , Feng and Wang would be presented with the Pingat Jasa Gemilang (Meritorious Service Medal) . This is only the third time the medal will be awarded to athletes , the two previous recipients being weightlifter Tan Howe Liang (1962) and swimmer Joscelin Yeo (2006) .

Li has expressed interest in pursuing a communications degree at Peking University . In October 2008 the Singapore Table Tennis Association said the Association and the Singapore Sports Council were prepared to offer her a scholarship to do so . Nevertheless , Li said that she wished to continue her career and to compete in the 2012 Summer Olympics .

In May 2009 , the national table tennis women 's team , composed of Li and her teammates Feng , Wang and Sun Beibei , were awarded the Team of the Year (Event) prize at the Singapore Sports Awards .

= = = Events between 2008 and 2012 = = =

On 22 November 2008 , despite crashing out of the singles event earlier , Li and her teammates Feng and Wang won the top title and US \$ 8 @ , @ 000 at the ITTF Pro Tour ERKE German Open in Berlin . Li ended the year as top seed with Sun Beibei , achieving gold in the women 's doubles at the ITTF Volkswagen Pro Tour Grand Finals in Macau on 14 December 2008 , the first time that Singapore had won this event . They beat South Koreans Kim Kyung Ah and Park Mi @ - @ Young 11 ? 5 , 6 ? 11 , 11 ? 9 , 11 ? 8 , 11 ? 4 . Li was named Today newspaper 's Singapore Athlete of the Year 2008 .

Li returned to the international stage in February 2010 after taking a year off from competitive table tennis to give birth to a child . Her first major competition ? the World Team Table Tennis Championships in Moscow ? saw her and her teammates beating China in the finals to clinch gold . Li also had a series of good performances after her return . She guided the women 's team to gold at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi and went on to win the women 's doubles title with Sun Beibei . She ended 2010 with a bang by winning the silver medal in the women 's team event of the 16th Asian Games .

= = = 2012 Summer Olympics = = =

Li represented Singapore at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London . She participated in the women 's team competition with Feng Tianwei and Wang Yuegu . They were beaten 0 ? 3 by Japan in the semifinals , but took the bronze medal on 7 August 2012 by edging South Korea out 3 ? 0 . Feng defeated Kim Kyung Ah 11 ? 9 , 11 ? 8 , 4 ? 11 , 13 ? 11 ; and Li also successfully fended off Seok Ha Jung 11 ? 5 , 11 ? 8 , 6 ? 11 , 11 ? 8 . Li and Wang then succeeded in the doubles game against Seok and Dang Ye Seo 11 ? 9 , 11 ? 6 , 6 ? 11 , 11 ? 5 . This marked the first time Singapore had won more than one medal at an Olympic Games . Li , who was said to have been instrumental to the team 's win , called the achievement " the perfect birthday present " and commented : " It 's been a really significant and meaningful Olympics for me I managed to be very focused today and I would say this is one of my best performances . " Asked whether she would compete at the 2016 Summer Olympics , she said that she had not given serious thought to retirement but would need to take a break to allow her long @ - @ standing knee injury to recover . " [W] e 'll have to see how the situation is closer to the date . "

= = Retirement = =

Li announced her retirement from competitive sports on 27 December 2012 . Although she planned to relocate to Beijing with her husband and son , she said she hoped to continue her involvement with table tennis in Singapore . The Singapore Table Tennis Association was said to be helping Li find employment in a Singapore company with operations based in China .

= = Medals = =

= = Personal life = =

Li first met Singaporean badminton player and fellow Olympian Ronald Susilo in 2002 at a sports meet . They began dating after participating together in the Athens Olympics , and the " golden sports couple " , as they were dubbed by the media , announced their engagement in September 2004 . About two years later there were rumours that they were breaking up , but these were denied by them at the time . On 15 January 2008 , when queried by a journalist , Susilo confirmed that he and Li had broken up amicably the previous week . Following a report in The Sunday Times that Susilo was contemplating legal action against her to recover money he claimed to have spent in buying their condominium apartment and car , Li disagreed that Susilo had a share in the apartment and implied he was trying to affect her mood and thus her chances of winning a medal at the Beijing Olympics . Susilo declined to discuss the matter with the press , saying it was a private matter between Li and himself ; he wished her all the best for the Olympics . In October 2008 it was announced that Li and Susilo had settled their property dispute amicably . The terms of the settlement were confidential .

On 26 September 2008 , Li registered a marriage in Beijing with Li Chao , a businessman based in that city ; they were introduced by a mutual friend in March 2008 . Sources quoted by The Straits Times said Li had long wanted her children to bear her surname . A lavish wedding banquet was held at the Beijing Hotel on 25 April 2009 . In November 2008 Li said she wished to have two to three children before turning 35 , though this would not affect her table tennis career . On 13 October 2009 , she and her husband had their first child , a boy weighing 3 @.@ 575 kilograms (7 @.@ 88 lb) . Her husband confirmed that they were " hoping for at least three kids , the more the merrier " , and it was reported that Li would try for more children following the 2012 Summer Olympics . Li started training again in February 2010 and competed in the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games .