

# Patriotic Song and Sweat

PLAYERS OF THE Democratic People's Republic of Korea shed tears when they stand on the dais of honour at international tournaments. They sing the *Patriotic Song* to the playing of the music as the national flag rises. Koreans fondly call them proud sons and daughters of their nation. Among them is Kim Kuk Hyang, woman weightlifter.

## Sustenance

Kuk Hyang who was to leave her country to participate in an international tournament could not give up looking at an old letter. "The whole country is watching you. I hope you will make our *Patriotic Song* ring aloud across the world by winning a gold medal..." It was the last letter her mother had sent to her a few years before.

Kuk Hyang, born in Jangyon County, South Hwanghae Province, became interested in weightlifting in her childhood influenced by two of her mother's sisters who had been weightlifters. In those days her mother and aunts enjoyed singing *Patriotic Song*. Singing the song the child learned weightlifting skills.

When she won honour in a provincial juvenile sports school weightlifting contest, she was carried away by excitement. She idled in happiness and played with friends all day. Her mother scolded her saying that if she would be self-complacent she could not make a successful career, and that she had to be determined to glorify the country by winning international games. Now she took her to the training ground.

Her training continued, and Kim moved to a central sports club in Pyongyang to develop her talent fully. She found Pyongyang beautiful, indeed. The appearance

of the capital she saw out of the car window came to her as the image of her beautiful country.

In the words of her new coach on her first day of training and in the voices of gold medalists she felt anew the significance of *Patriotic Song* her mother and aunts had enjoyed singing.

She always worked hard in training with a resolution to be a weightlifting champion by winning gold medals in international contests.

Kuk Hyang grew up like this, and won three gold medals in the first World Junior Weightlifting Championships where she made a debut. When she was standing on the platform, the DPRK flag rose high, and the *Patriotic Song* was played aloud in the stadium. She felt that she became a world-famous weightlifter as she lived in the country that valued her dream and honed her talent.

## Sweat

During the days when Kuk Hyang trained herself hard to attain the higher goals she set herself, she keenly felt how difficult it was to glorify the *Patriotic Song* though it was easy to sing. Her coach Kim Myong Ho says, "The total weight of the sweat Kuk Hyang worked up in training would be as heavy as her mind to have the *Patriotic Song* played at international tournaments."

Kuk Hyang once collapsed in high-intensity exercises. At the moment what reached the perspiring girl was far from her coach



**Kim Kuk Hyang, one of the ten DPRK players of the year 2016.**

Kim Myong Ho's order to stand up. It was the sound of a song from a music player her coach was holding in the hand. That was the *Patriotic Song* which she used to sing with her mother and aunts, the song which she had sung in tears on the dais of honour at international contests. She resolutely got to her feet. Mastering up courage she took the barbell and overcame ordeals one by one.

Having steeled herself like this singing the song by heart, she won gold medals in a number of international competitions, and sang it again and again in happy tears. She became a Merited Athlete in April 2016. At the Asian Weightlifting Championships 2016 she came first in jerk and second in snatch in women's 75 kg category, thus taking first place in total with two gold and one silver medals. A foreign weightlifting expert highly appreciated her, saying that he saw the DPRK's spirit and image in Kim's performance.

The country designated her as one of the ten DPRK players of the year 2016. At present she is redoubling her effort in the training with a burning desire to glorify her country.

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