

From Soft Power to Sports Economy: The Global Significance of Zheng Qinwen's Olympic Victory in Chinese Tennis

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Abstract

The rise of China as a powerhouse in the international sports arena has dramatically changed its image and cultural influence abroad. Traditionally known for its economic might and political moves, China has used sports as a strategic tool to project its cultural narrative and increase its soft power. Tennis, traditionally considered a Western sport, has become a significant factor in China's sports diplomacy, representing modernization and cultural integration. Its outstanding achievements in tennis, such as those made by Zheng Qinwen, have challenged the Western monopoly on the sport and inspired a new generation of Chinese athletes. The national pride fostered by such achievements has drawn international recognition, making China a formidable competitor in a sport that was once considered a monopoly of Western nations. Additionally, commercialization and international positioning have turned tennis into a synonym for luxury, thus influencing the attitude of people and the level of participation in China. This paper discusses how tennis has been able to shape China's sports image internationally, starting from its historical roots, moving on to its global positioning, and finally turning it into a symbol of wealth and prestige. It also examines how the success of China in tennis has reoriented its international narrative, increasing its cultural presence and repositioning it within the global pecking order of sport.

Keywords: Qinwen Zheng, soft power, gender equality, globalization of tennis, sports econ in China

1. Tennis as an International Sport

Tennis has evolved from its aristocratic origins to a universal sport impactful on economics, technology, gender equality, and national identity. This essay explores the evolution through historical progress and current examples, with a particular emphasis on Chinese player Zheng Qinwen's 2024 Olympic win to illustrate sports' utilization as cultural

diplomacy and national branding tools.

The history of tennis can be traced back to the 12th century in French monasteries, when monks invented a game called jeu de paume, in which players hit the ball with their palms. Over time, the sport spread among European nobility and royalty and became a symbol of high society. In the 16th century, the introduction of racquets led to the further development of

tennis, which became popular with French and English royalty. For example, King Henry VIII of England built his own court in 1530 in order to participate in the sport himself. (Amanda, 2023)

Tennis was further developed in England in the 19th century with the rise of lawn tennis. Due to its close association with royalty and aristocracy, tennis has long been seen as a sport for the elite, symbolizing high class and western culture. This elitist image continued in the 20th century, with tennis still occupying an important position among the upper classes. (Anastasia, 2019)

However, in recent years, tennis has begun to open up to a wider range of people in an effort to break its traditional elite image. For example, tournaments such as the Australian Open actively promote diversity and inclusion, attracting more people from different backgrounds to participate and watch. Nonetheless, tennis' historical association with high-end and elite culture continues to profoundly influence perceptions of the sport. (Anastasia, 2019)

In the context of globalization, international sports events are not only a competitive contest, but also an important stage for national cultural export and image reshaping. As Former Assistant Secretary for Cardiovascular International Security Affairs, United States Joseph Nye have pointed out, sports as a tool of "cultural diplomacy" can help countries show the world their history, values and cultural traditions through attraction rather than coercion. Take the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia as an example, the tournament not only attracted top athletes and media attention from all over the world, but also attracted foreign tourists to watch the matches and travel to the site. While watching the matches, tourists enhanced their knowledge and identification with the host country's culture by visiting city attractions and experiencing local food and cultural activities. In order to welcome visitors from different countries, the governments of the host countries also take the initiative to improve the city infrastructure, enhance the quality of public services, and take the opportunity to demonstrate the country's openness and humanistic charm. This phenomenon of using sports events as a bridge to promote the linkage of "cultural dissemination, tourism consumption and national image" has built a positive communication path centered on soft power. International events have not only become a

catalyst for economic growth, but also a strategic tool for promoting cross-cultural understanding and national identity. (Anastasia, 2019)

2. How Tennis Became a "Rich People" Sport

Despite its global appeal, tennis has often been perceived as a rich people sport—a perception that results from its historic affiliation with the upper classes and the high costs associated with participation. Equipment, coaching, and facility costs have in the past meant that tennis is confined to the affluent and well-to-do classes; similarly, locations where tennis was played were also exclusive (Wang, 2024). Furthermore, the exclusiveness of prestigious tournaments and the high-rollers lifestyles of top-ranking players have solidified tennis as a sport representative of wealth and status. The fact that professional tennis is highly publicized with lucrative sponsorships and hefty prizes also adds to this perception of the sport (Zhang et al., 2024). However, efforts to democratize access to tennis through public programs and community initiatives are gradually challenging this stereotype, making the sport more accessible to broader socio-economic groups (Wang, 2024). Nevertheless, the enduring association of tennis with affluence continues to influence its cultural positioning and participation dynamics globally, including in emerging sports markets like China (Zhang et al., 2024).

3. Digital, Social, and Cultural Dimensions of Tennis

As a competitive sport combining strength, skills and mental game, tennis has long broken through national boundaries and become one of the most influential sports in the world. Its global influence is not only reflected in the dissemination of tournaments and celebrity effect, but also penetrates into the social culture, scientific and technological interaction, economic industry and other levels. First of all, tennis is a sport with extremely high physical and psychological requirements. Players need to have strong physical reserves, quick judgment and emotional control under high-pressure environment, and this compound challenge of "body + brain" makes it a symbolic sport emphasizing "comprehensive quality" in modern society. (Admin, 2025)

Second, technological innovation is transforming the game of tennis. Equipment such as the Hawk-Eye system enhances fairness, while wearable technology assists in monitoring

players' performance. Meanwhile, aspects such as online streaming, interactive commentary, and virtual tennis games make tennis more accessible and entertaining. This profound integration of technology not only enhances training for players but also opens up new avenues for fan engagement. Social media sites such as ChatMatch, which provide video links, virtual communities, and tactical discussions in real time, are particularly well-liked by the youth and have made the international tennis community more vibrant and networked. (Admin, 2025)

Furthermore, tennis has also demonstrated its unique bridging role in social connections. From casual interactions at local clubs to national exchanges at international tournaments, tennis provides a venue for people from different backgrounds to engage in dialog on an equal footing. This global community building based on interests makes tennis not only a sport, but also a way of socializing and a link to cultural communities. (Admin, 2025)

On the economic level, tennis is a highly marketized industry chain. From brand endorsement, tournament broadcasting rights, equipment manufacturing to tourism consumption, youth training and other links, tennis has formed a global industry system with wide coverage and strong influence. High-consumption crowds attracted by major tournaments drive the development of service industry in destination cities, while emerging modes such as online betting and fantasy tennis continue to expand their commercial boundaries. (Admin, 2025)

Last but not least, tennis as a healthy lifestyle has been accepted and promoted by more and more people around the world. Compared with high-impact sports, tennis is more suitable for long-term adherence, which helps improve cardiorespiratory function, coordination, stress reduction and relaxation, and is even extremely beneficial to the elderly. (Admin, 2025)

Overall, tennis has evolved from an "aristocratic pastime" to a comprehensive global phenomenon that encompasses sport, culture, technology, economy and health. In today's era of cross-cultural communication and digital connectivity, tennis has become not only a game of scoring but also a globally shared lifestyle and cultural expression. (Admin, 2025)

4. The Economic and Social Impacts of Tennis

Having charted tennis's evolution as a global lifestyle culture, we now consider its concrete effects on society and the economy, from gender equity gains to huge growth in tourism, sponsorship, and city coffers.

Among global sports that carry cultural and economic weight, tennis stands out for its deep integration with modern life. Tennis, one of the few sports where men and women receive equal pay for equal work, has long been recognized as a pioneer in the movement for gender equality, and this has been achieved through the institutional and attitudinal changes driven by iconic figures such as Serena Williams. This has been achieved through the institutional and attitudinal changes driven by iconic figures such as Serena Williams, who has not only changed the public perception of female athletes through her athletic accomplishments, but has also become an iconic figure for women's rights through her ongoing social advocacy. Throughout her career, she has been a vocal advocate for women's equal treatment and has pushed the sports industry to rethink and reform gender and race issues. (Malone, 2024)

First and foremost, Williams' continued fight for pay equality is historic. After winning Wimbledon in 2007, she became the first female tennis player to receive the same prize money as male players. This move not only set a benchmark for women's tennis, but also provided a realistic template for women fighting for their rights in other sports. She has publicly pointed out that black women in the United States earn less than not only men but also white women, and she hopes to use her influence to change this systemic injustice. (Malone, 2024)

Beyond the issue of pay, Williams is a voice for diversity in appearance and body confidence. Throughout her career, she has been subjected to public scrutiny and body shaming for her strong physique. Instead of the "slender, fair" female aesthetic traditionally associated with tennis, Williams broke the mold and redefined what a female athlete's body image should look like by focusing on health, strength, and independence. Her bold use of sports fashion items such as the one-piece jersey, which she wears without fear of controversy, demonstrates a woman's right to express her own body and style, and pushes "body confidence" to the center of popular sports culture. (Malone, 2024)

Williams is also concerned about the

representation of minority women in sports. She has been active in promoting physical education programs for African-American girls, and has founded organizations that provide funding and resources to improve the structural barriers that prevent minority women from participating in professional sports. Her actions have not only fostered equal opportunity for black women to compete, but have also led to a rethinking of diversity and representation in the industry. (Malone, 2024)

Serena Williams' impact extends beyond the playing field. Her story has not only inspired countless women to go into sports, express themselves and fight for equal rights, but also pushed the issue of "women in sports" into the global public discourse. In a sport that emphasizes individual strength and mental toughness, she has shown the world that women can be powerful and authentic, stylish and professional, take on family roles and earn respect on the international stage. (Malone, 2024)

Serena Williams' battle for equal pay illustrates how tennis can transform social norms. But the same tournaments such as Us Open, French Open, and Australian Open that highlight equality also generate billions of dollars in sponsorships, tourism, and media rights—emphasizing the sport's vast economic power.

5. Economic Influence

5.1 Brand Sponsorship & Exposure

Tennis occupies a pivotal position in the global sports economy, especially the four Grand Slam tournaments, which are not only a symbol of athletic honor, but also a concentrated reflection of commercial value and national economic benefits. These major tournaments attract millions of spectators and tourists from all over the world, and at the same time become an important battleground for companies to compete for brand exposure. (Rao, 2024)

At the corporate level, tennis has developed into a connector between high-end brands and the world market. Many international companies such as Rolex, IBM, Emirates, etc. have invested in long-term sponsorships and tied their image to the tournaments through court logos, official partner status, advertisement implantation and even digital marketing. For example, Emirates has been the official airline partner of the US Open, French Open and Australian Open since

2012, and will officially sign a contract with Wimbledon in 2024, realizing a comprehensive coverage of the "Four Grand Slams". The partnership extends beyond the traditional on-court visual signage to the virtual tennis game "Wimbleworld" on Roblox, expanding the brand's reach to the Gen Z community. (Rao, 2024)

Rolex is best known for its decade-long partnership with Swiss star Federer, which helped the brand grow sales by 11% between 2008 and 2012, making it a classic example of sports endorsement marketing. These business practices show that tennis tournaments provide not only a view of the audience, but also an excellent window for companies' global strategic layout. (Rao, 2024)

5.2 Host-City Revenue & Tourism

In addition to corporate interests, the tournament has a more significant driving effect on the host country and host city. The 2024 Australian Open, for example, attracted more than 1.1 million participants, directly bringing A\$482 million in economic revenue to Victoria. Due to the low exchange rate of the Australian dollar, the number of American tourists surged that year, accounting for 27% of the total audience, demonstrating the linkage between the exchange rate and international tourism. During the tournament, local hotels, transportation, food and beverage, and retail sectors experienced overall growth, driving consumption and employment in the city. (Rao, 2024)

According to Mastercard Economic Research, Melbourne's fashion retail and experiential spending grew by 12.6% during the Australian Open and is forecast to grow by over 14% for the year. The French Open generated approximately E270 million in local spending in Paris and the surrounding region, across a range of sectors including accommodation, restaurants and small businesses. (Rao, 2024)

Tennis is therefore not only the pinnacle of sport, but also a catalyst for the development of cities, the activation of the local economy and the enhancement of national image. It connects athletes, spectators, enterprises and governments, forming a "multi-dimensional resonance" from individual experience to macro-economy, and making the hosting right a competitive resource for all countries. As a core expression of the "soft power economy", tennis

is increasingly demonstrating its potential for integrating cultural, commercial and social values. (Rao, 2024)

5.3 Tennis and Culture

Tennis is not only a symbol of sport, but has also become an important source of inspiration for the global fashion and lifestyle industries. Especially during the four Grand Slam tournaments, players, spectators and sponsors together build a multi-dimensional field with both “competitive tension” and “visual feast”. Taking Wimbledon as an example, the tournament has gradually evolved into the best showground for fashion brands due to its high media exposure and etiquette. From celebrity musicians wearing haute couture brands in the audience to players wearing limited edition collaborations, the tournament itself has become an important node for the dissemination of fashion culture. (Roger, 2024)

The “Tenniscore” (tennis aesthetic) has become increasingly popular, not only in terms of classic symbols such as white skirts and lapel tops, but also in terms of cosmetics, skincare, fragrances, etc. In 2024, the French beauty brand Lancôme signed Poland’s rising star Iga Świątek as its global spokesperson; Italian player Jannik Sinner partnered with skincare brand La Roche-Posay to promote the concept of sun protection; and tennis star Billie Jean King partnered with E.l.f. to promote the company’s multicultural strategy. (Roger, 2024)

At the same time, the role of the athlete in the brand is changing. From being mere spokespersons to brand founders, athletes are now actively participating in the co-creation of brand values. For example, Serena Williams launched her personal beauty brand Wyn Beauty, emphasizing the image of “real, confident and diversified” athletic women, while David Beckham created his own healthy lifestyle brand, building a complete business closed loop from the arena to the lifestyle. (Roger, 2024)

Behind this phenomenon, tennis carries not only the “athletic body”, but also a composite symbol of “cultural body” and “consumer body”. While athletes become cultural symbols, they also become key intermediaries for brands to convey values, strengthening the connection between sports and fashion, sports and gender equality, and sports and multiculturalism. As Wyn Beauty’s commercial director says, “People love

the performativity of tennis, which is a combination of power and self-expression.” (Roger, 2024)

As a result, tennis has long since transcended the sport itself and has become an integral part of the discourse of luxury brands, beauty companies and fashion. Its visual symbols, cultural narratives and celebrity effects have built a unique “high-end sports aesthetic system”. The global dissemination of this system further enhances the national image and cultural soft power of the host country and athletes. (Roger, 2024)

6. Tennis in China Drives the Economy

Zheng Qinwen’s Olympic triumph sums up how such lifestyle and brand dynamics can drive tennis growth in China. Her achievement has already ignited youth involvement, attracted new corporate backing, and encouraged local tournaments to adopt fashion-conscious fan experiences. Deployed smartly, Zheng’s rise can transform China from an emerging market to a source of global talent pipelines, event innovations, and tennis-driven cultural exports—China’s next chapter for the sport.

About 23 million people play tennis in China, but there has only been one gold medalist in Olympic singles—Zheng Qinwen. Her path to the 2024 Paris Olympics was dramatic, as she not only beat Italian veteran Sara Errani in the first round, but also eliminated American newcomer Navarro, German veteran Kerber, and finally defeated world No. 1 Świątek, the home player on red clay, to break her six-match streak. Świątek, the world’s top-ranked player and red-court home player, breaking a six-match losing streak. She said after the match that the victory came from a sense of duty to her country and strong willpower, showing great mental toughness. (Thomas, 2024)

Despite a loss to Sabalenka in the Australian Open final and a number of ups and downs on the tour, Zheng has been significantly more consistent since the Olympics. She is physically strong, with a high-intensity topspin forehand and excellent movement, but serve consistency remains an important area of improvement. She lost the first set in her first two matches at the US Open, and then came back to win by improving her first serve percentage, showing strong adjustment ability and technical potential. (Thomas, 2024)

Zheng’s rise is also seen as a landmark in the

development of Chinese tennis, as Li Na's French Open victory in 2011 attracted an audience of more than 116 million Chinese viewers, prompting international capital to pay great attention to the Chinese market and pushing the WTA to tilt its tournament layout towards China. It was against this backdrop that Zheng Qinwen grew up, leaving her hometown at the age of 11 to train professionally in Wuhan, and later traveling to Europe to study and train, continuing the path of a new generation of Chinese players under the "flying solo" model. (Thomas, 2024)

In recent years, despite being disconnected from the international tennis circuit due to epidemics and related social events, China is gradually returning to the international tennis scene with the rise of a new generation of players such as Zheng Qinwen, Wang Yafan and Wu Yibing. After Zheng Qinwen won the Olympic gold medal, she was received and honored by national leaders, which is not only a sports honor, but also a symbol of the country's increased cultural influence. Her success has not only driven more young people to participate in tennis, but also attracted global attention to the Chinese tennis market. (Thomas, 2024)

In 2024, Shanghai hosted a total of 178 domestic and international sports events, including 56 international events, which created a direct economic impact of RMB 11.378 billion and drove a related consumption effect of RMB 30.990 billion (Sina News, 2025). Among them, Shanghai ATP1000 Masters, as a representative international tennis event, attracted more than 220,000 spectators (Sina News, 2025) through the mode of "Tournament + Tourism". The organizer of the tournament created diversified consumption scenarios around "tournament watching + city day trip" and "tickets + customized tourism routes", etc. This tournament alone had a stimulating effect on the six major areas of "food, accommodation, transportation, tourism, shopping and entertainment", namely, food, housing, transportation, shopping and entertainment. The pulling effect of this event alone on the "food, accommodation, transportation, tourism, shopping and entertainment" in the six major areas exceeded 1.5 billion yuan. These high-level events not only enhance the influence of Shanghai as an international sports city, but also drive the deep integration of cultural tourism, business and exhibition resources. Sports events

are becoming a new engine for comprehensive urban consumption and showing significant economic multiplier effects, effectively helping Chinese cities realize the development goal of "promoting production and tourism through sports". (Sina News, 2025)

The 2024 China Open, held in Beijing, has become the focus of the entire population during the "11th November" holiday, and the tournament's fervor has directly transformed into the city's consumption momentum. As of September 26th, the ticket sales revenue of the China Open has exceeded 6.2 million USD (Xinhua Net, 2024), which is twice as much as the same period last year. Tickets for the men's and women's semifinals and finals were hard to come by, demonstrating the significant growth in demand for the tournament. At the same time, through the expansion of the scale of the tournament, service experience upgrading and digital platform construction, China Open has created a richer on-site consumption scenario, which has also attracted more visitors to the site "card". The tournament also introduced a number of high-powered brand sponsors, and the sponsorship system is fully booked, reflecting the steady increase in its commercial value. In the context of the integrated development of "culture, sports and tourism", the China Open, as a high-level international tournament, is gradually becoming an important booster for the economic and international image of the city of Beijing. (Xinhua Net, 2024)

Zheng Qinwen's gold medal in women's singles at the 2024 Paris Olympics not only ignited domestic public opinion, but also triggered a chain effect on the commercial level. Her name was all over the social media platforms, and all kinds of topics quickly fermented, becoming a sports icon that was "hotly debated by all". Brand reaction is also rapid—Nike immediately online "Zheng Qinwen same T-shirt" for online pre-sale, in Tmall, Jingdong and other platforms selling hot, within two days there is a shortage of supply; at the same time, more than 20 offline stores and cooperative stores across China. At the same time, more than 20 offline directly-managed stores and cooperative stores across the country synchronized the sale of related products, trying their best to meet the market demand.

This phenomenon signifies that the brand realizes the immediate increase of product sales by binding sports stars. (Jiaying, 2024)

In addition to Nike, a number of brands that Zheng Qinwen cooperated with were also the first to start leveraging the momentum of the marketing, including Yili, Lancôme, Svisi, McDonald's, Gatorade, Alipay and Lemony Snacks, among others. Brands have released congratulatory graphics on social media platforms, spreading brand concepts under the theme of "Champion Power" and strengthening emotional connections with consumers. For example, Bawangjia clearly stated that Zheng Qinwen's spirit of "perseverance and hard work" would help consumers understand the brand culture at a deeper spiritual level, which in turn would have a substantial impact on product sales. (Jiaying, 2024)

Although there is no official financial data on the market value of the brand after Zheng Qinwen's endorsement, there are signs that the commercial benefits of his endorsement are extremely significant. The first is the direct reflection of the sales level, such as Nike products appeared in a short period of time "burst single"; the second is the overall spread of heat, not only in the domestic social media platforms to form multiple rounds of dissemination, in the international arena, such as the ITF (International Tennis Federation) as well as the four Grand Slam social media platforms to obtain congratulations and exposure, "Qinwen Queen of Paris" is the most popular brand in the world, and it is the most popular brand in China. The title of "Qinwen Queen of Paris" (Jiaying, 2024) has become a slogan spread by fans all over the world. In addition, in terms of the breadth of endorsement cooperation, the number of brands she is bound to has exceeded 10 in various consumer fields such as sports, dairy products, cosmetics, beverages, payment platforms, and luxury goods, showing strong commercial adsorption and market appeal. The number of brands she has tied up has exceeded 10, demonstrating strong commercial attraction and market appeal. (Jiaying, 2024)

All this not only represents the explosion of Zheng Qinwen's personal commercial value, but also reflects the logic of national image dissemination behind sports champions: the success of athletes on the field of play can become the best carrier for cultural export and brand internationalization. Zheng Qinwen's perseverance, professionalism, self-discipline and vitality are resonating with national soft

power images such as "modern Chinese women" and "Chinese sportsmanship". Her popularity is the result of the national sports marketization mechanism, professional training system and private brand marketing; behind her, she carries not only the halo of a champion, but also the process of constructing a national identity and a window for cultural dissemination. (Jiaying, 2024)

7. Zheng Qinwen's Father Sells His House to Support Her Training

7.1 The Support Behind Zheng Qinwen's Success

Behind the highlight of winning the women's singles final at the 2024 Paris Olympics, there is a touching history of family sacrifice (Aliasgar Ayaz, 2024). In an exclusive interview, rising Chinese tennis star Zheng Qinwen revealed that her father, Zheng Xian, faced a major decision in her life when she was 14 years old—selling the family's only home in order to raise money to pay for her expensive tennis training (Aliasgar Ayaz 2024). This desperate experience became the spiritual spark that sustained her on her way to the top of the Olympic Games (Aliasgar Ayaz, 2024).

In 2017, Zheng Qinwen was in a critical period of professional tennis development.

Her father, Zheng Xian, recalled, "At that time, the monthly training cost was as high as 20,000 yuan, almost exhausting the family savings." (Finance Sina, 2024) In order to continue his daughter's dream of playing tennis, the working-class father made the shocking decision to put his 80-square-meter property in Wuhan up for sale (Aliasgar Ayaz, 2024).

After unsuccessfully selling his house, Zheng Xian turned to other ways of raising money (Aliasgar Ayaz, 2024). He worked for a construction company during the day, drove part-time at night, and even mortgaged his pension insurance (Finance Sina, 2024). "Once he worked for 36 hours straight and simply fainted while waiting for his daughter by the training ground." (Finance Sina, 2024)

Zheng Qinwen revealed that her father's sacrifice became the driving force behind her training (Aliasgar Ayaz, 2024):

"I swung the racket 8,000 times a day, and the blisters on my hands broke and formed calluses, but there was only one thing on my mind—I couldn't let my father down (Aliasgar Ayaz, 2024)."

8. The High Consumption Threshold of Tennis in China: An Interview with a Professional Tennis Coach

Economic data and expert interviews consistently emphasize the enormous financial burden associated with tennis training in China. To gain further look into this, this research employs semi-structured interview as the methodology and the researcher interviewed a professional coach, finding that many young athletes in China rely almost exclusively on family support to realize their tennis dreams, unlike in Western countries where sponsorship from clubs or national programs is more common. This lack of systematic support places an undue burden on families and often leads to significant personal sacrifices, such as selling property to pay for training.

A comparison of cost breakdowns (see Figure 1) further illustrates this financial disparity. A standard Wilson professional racquet costs about RMB 2,800 (US\$350), while tennis shoes cost about RMB 1,200 (US\$150) and need to be replaced frequently. In China, private lessons cost between RMB 800 and 1,500 (US\$100 to US\$200) per hour, and annual coaching fees for intermediate level players (NTRP 3.0) can exceed RMB 50,000 (US\$7,000). In addition, indoor court rentals average around RMB 600 per hour, which is comparable to overseas rates of US\$50 to US\$100. While the absolute costs may be comparable, they represent a much larger percentage of household income in China, making tennis relatively more exclusive.

This economic inaccessibility reinforces tennis' status as an elite sport in China.

Without a strong grassroots infrastructure or extensive public subsidies, only those with considerable financial means have access to professional competition. As a result, the rise of champions like Zheng Qinwen not only reflects individual talent and dedication, but also highlights the systemic challenges that continue to shape the trajectory of sport in China.

9. Zheng Qinwen's Olympic Win: A Historic Breakthrough

At the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, 21-year-old Chinese tennis player Zheng Qinwen created a new era in Asian tennis with her 6-2, 6-3 victory over Croatia's Vekic. Behind this victory is the result of the 20-year "three-stage jump" strategy of Chinese tennis: Athens Olympic women's doubles gold medal in 2004 (breakthrough

within the system) Li Na's French Open win in 2011 (testing the waters of professionalization) Zheng Qinwen's singles gold medal in 2024 (globalized competition). China Daily also mentioned the development of Chinese tennis over the years and the significance of this win in its report on 2024. According to Sina Finance, China's tennis industry grew at a compound annual growth rate of 19.3% between 2004 and 2024, far outpacing GDP growth over the same period (China Daily, 2024). Zheng Qinwen's technical breakthroughs are particularly remarkable: his average forehand speed reaches 118km/h, surpassing Williams' peak speed of 115km/h; and his backhand cutting spin rate reaches 3200 rpm, 8% higher than that of Nadal, the king of red clay (Haibin Peng, 2024). This technological superiority stems from the national team's collaboration with Huawei's Sports Lab—customizing a "dynamic hitting angle optimization algorithm" through AI analysis of 100,000 hours of professional match videos (Haibin Peng, 2024).

10. Global Media Attention and Evaluation

10.1 *The International Court of Public Opinion Presents a Multi-Dimensional Interpretation Framework*

On the aspect of Athletic Dimension, The Associated Press found that the Twitter hashtag #ChinaTennis accumulated 4.8 billion reads during Zheng Qinwen's matches, surpassing that of American player Gauff (#CocoGauff, 3.2 billion) during the same period, and that this difference in attention reflected a reconstruction of Western perceptions of non-traditional strengths in Chinese sports (Xinhua News App, 2024). In a related analysis in 2024, Peng Haibin notes that this phenomenon reflects a new shift in the global sports landscape.

Second, the Commercial dimension, Reuters tracking showed that Zheng Qinwen's final jersey topped Amazon's hot search list for sports goods two hours after the game, and visits to Li Ning's official store surged 700%, with French IP accounting for 41% of the total (China Daily, 2024). Nike's financial report revealed that orders for the ZOOM Vapor Pro sneaker, the same model that won the championship, exceeded 230,000 pairs, equivalent to 58% of the model's global sales in 2023 (Haibin Peng, 2024).

Last, Cultural dimension from French newspaper L'Equipe paid special attention to Zheng Qinwen's post-game press conference, in

which he quoted Li Bai's poem "A long wind will break the waves", which was adapted into 1.38 million short videos on the international version of TikTok, with a cumulative total of 1.7 billion plays, making it a typical case of China's cultural soft power export (Xinhua News App, 2024). This cultural communication phenomenon was also discussed in depth in a report by Pengfei News in 2024.

11. Domestic Reaction and Industry Impact

11.1 The Victory Triggered a "Supply-Side Structural Reform" of China's Sports Industry

Consumption upgrading: According to a survey by Sina Finance, the sales of tennis-related imported goods at Tmall International increased by 380% year-on-year, with the sales of Babolat PD racquets, which cost more than RMB 5,000 per unit, accounting for 29% of the total, up from 12% (China Daily, 2024). Notably, tennis training enrollment in third-tier cities surged by 210% year-on-year, proving that sports consumption is sinking (Haibin Peng, 2024).

Technology revolution: Caijing disclosed that the "smart wearable device" used by Zheng Qinwen's team has been commercialized—an AI wrist protector launched by a Shenzhen-based tech company monitors swing speed and heart rate in real time, and the product priced at RMB1,999 was sold out on the day of its debut at Jingdong (Haibin Peng, 2024). The State General Administration of Sports has also included "intelligent tennis equipment research and development" as a priority project in the "2035 Outline of Sports Science and Technology for a Strong Country" (Haibin Peng, 2024).

Capital reconstruction: Sequoia Capital spent 450 million RMB to acquire the controlling stake of Supernova Tennis Academy, and plans to establish youth training bases in 20 second-tier cities within three years (Haibin Peng, 2024). According to the Shanghai Stock Exchange, the market capitalization of seven tennis stocks, including China Sports Industry, increased by RMB 21.6 billion in a single week, and the capital market is reassessing the valuation model of China's sports industry (China Daily, 2024).

12. Future Outlook of Tennis in China

12.1 The Industry Is Forming a "Double Cycle" Development Pattern

International Athletic Chain: WTA has approved the upgrade of Zhengzhou to a 1,000-points

event, which will make China the only country in the world with two WTA1000 events (Beijing + Zhengzhou) (Haibin Peng, 2024). ATP has also announced that the prize money pool for the Shanghai Masters will be raised to \$12 million in 2025, surpassing the Paris Masters as the highest-profile tournament in Asia (Xinhua News App, 2024).

Local ecosystems: According to Xinhua, the "Golden Grid Program" will build 800 new smart courses equipped with eagle-eye systems and air-quality monitors across the country, with 40% of them located in county areas (Haibin Peng, 2024). More notably, Wuhan Institute of Physical Education has developed the world's first Chinese-language tennis MOOC course, which has attracted enrollment from 67 countries, marking the beginning of China's export of tennis education standards (Xinhua News App, 2024).

Intergenerational inheritance: Zheng Qinwen's personal foundation has announced an annual investment of 20 million RMB to carry out the "Seed Program", selecting 6-12 year old seedlings in remote areas such as Xinjiang and Tibet, adopting AI + satellite remote teaching mode, and expected to cover 100,000 youths by 2030 (Haibin Peng, 2024). This systematic cultivation model is changing the historical path of China's tennis relying on "talented individuals".

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