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(English Version)

## In Loving Memory of Ping Cao

### — A Legacy That Bridged Nations and Shaped Generations

Ping Cao was a beloved husband, father, volleyball coach, and Olympian. Ping was born on April 22, 1958, in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province and passed away on October 24, 2025 in Richardson, Texas, USA. Ping dedicated his life to growing and enriching the game of volleyball across two nations – from competing on the world stage with Chinese Men’s National Volleyball Team to developing world class athletes in the United States for over three decades.

Ping rose to prominence in the 1980s during the golden era of Chinese men’s volleyball, playing a key role in a defining moment for the sport and for the country. He helped lead the Chinese team to a stunning 3-2 comeback victory after starting two sets behind against South Korea. Following the win, students at Peking University poured out of their campus, chanting the rallying cry of the era – “Unite and Revitalize China!” The image of jubilant students lifting Ping high above the cheering crowd remains an enduring symbol of national pride and unity during a pivotal time in Chinese history.



Ping's volleyball journey began in 1974 when he was selected for the Jiangsu Youth Volleyball Team. Intelligent, disciplined, and technically gifted, he quickly stood out for his exceptional fundamentals, speed, and explosive athleticism. Just two years later, in 1976, he earned promotion to the Jiangsu Men's First Team and soon took over as middle blocker. Under his leadership and skillful play, Jiangsu captured back-to-back national league titles and a national championship – a golden era in which Ping played a pivotal role in establishing Jiangsu as one of China's volleyball powerhouses.

Recognized for his talent and composure, Ping was soon invited to join the Chinese Men's National Team by head coach Dai Tingbin in 1979. That same year, he helped Jiangsu secure the volleyball title at the 4th National Games of the People's Republic of China. His rise reflected not only his technical mastery but also his growing reputation as one of the most dependable players in Chinese volleyball.

In December 1979, Ping earned a starting role at the 2nd Asian Men's Volleyball Championship in Bahrain, where he helped China capture the championship title. The team also qualified for the 1980 Moscow Olympics but, due to China's boycott, did not compete — a bittersweet moment for a generation of athletes at their peak.

A defining highlight came on March 20, 1981, at Queen Elizabeth Stadium in Hong Kong. Facing South Korea for a berth at the FIVB Men's World Cup, the Chinese team fell behind 0–2 before mounting a spectacular comeback to win 3–2. The victory electrified the nation. Students from Peking University poured into the streets, chanting “Unite and Revitalize China!” as they celebrated a new symbol of national pride. As China's starting middle blocker, Ping's superb technique and fearless spirit were instrumental to that triumph — a moment forever etched in the memories of Chinese volleyball fans.

From 1981 to 1984, Ping represented China on the world stage, competing at the FIVB Men's World Cup in Japan (1981), the FIVB World Championship in Argentina (1982), the 9th Asian Games in India (1982), and the 3rd Asian Championship in Japan (1983), earning multiple top finishes and medals. During this period, he also transitioned from middle blocker to outside hitter — a change that showcased his adaptability, technical skill, and deep understanding of the game. In 1984, as team captain under head coach Zou Zhihua, he proudly represented China at the Los Angeles Olympic Games, where the team placed eighth, marking the culmination of his distinguished national team career.

During his years on the national team, Ping's career in China reflected both excellence and devotion. He helped lead Jiangsu to three national titles, represented China at the 1984 Olympic Games, and earned three major international medals — including gold at the 1979 Asian Championship. Yet beyond these achievements, he was admired most for his

humility, discipline, and steady dedication to his team. Those who played alongside him remember a calm, thoughtful competitor whose love of the game inspired everyone around him.

## **Ping Cao's Coaching Career**

After a distinguished playing career, Ping turned his passion for volleyball toward teaching and developing the next generation. From 1988 to 1989, he served as head coach of the Jiangsu Women's Volleyball Team, leading the Nanjing University women's squad to the championship at the 3rd National University Games of the People's Republic of China in 1988.

In 1990, Ping began coaching abroad, sharing his knowledge with national teams in countries such as Bahrain and Malaysia. His time overseas reflected his lifelong belief that volleyball could bridge cultures and bring people together through discipline, teamwork, and respect.

In 1997, Ping emigrated to the United States, where he would spend nearly three decades shaping the future of American junior volleyball. He first coached a professional women's team in Grand Rapids, Michigan, before devoting himself to girls' youth volleyball—where his influence would become legendary.

At **Sports Performance Volleyball** in Chicago, he guided teams to multiple national titles, including the USA 16 Open and several AAU championships. Later, at **Texas Advantage Volleyball (TAV)** in Dallas, where he coached from 2009 to 2021, his TAV 17 Black teams dominated the national stage—earning six USA Volleyball 17 Open national championships, along with numerous runner-up and third-place finishes. Known for his meticulous training and **commitment to excellence**, he was widely regarded as one of the most successful and respected coaches in the country.

Beginning in 2021, Ping joined **Drive Nation Volleyball Club** in Dallas, where he continued to lead elite-level 17s teams with characteristic precision and care. In 2023, he began coaching at **Dallas Skyline**, where—despite undergoing chemotherapy—he guided his team to an inspiring third-place finish at the USAV National Championship. Even while battling illness, he remained devoted to his players, planning the roster for the following season with his usual optimism and passion.

Across his coaching career, Ping trained and mentored countless athletes who went on to become Olympians, national team members, NCAA champions and professional standouts. Many returned to train with him in the offseasons, drawn back by his wisdom

and his belief in their potential. His instructional videos—*“Hitting Technique: Drills and Keys to Improve Consistency”* and *“Best Progression Strategies for Small-Group or Individual Training”*—remain foundational teaching tools for coaches and athletes alike.

During his years in Dallas, Ping became synonymous with the **17s age group**, the pivotal stage for college recruitment. Each year, he molded new teams of talented but unproven players into disciplined, cohesive units capable of thriving under immense pressure. His teams consistently ranked among the nation’s top four, capturing six USAV 17 Open titles and multiple AAU championships. More importantly, he helped secure hundreds of collegiate scholarships for his athletes, opening doors to education and opportunity that transformed their lives.

To his players, Ping was more than a coach—he was a mentor, a motivator, and a model of perseverance. Within the volleyball community, his community was affectionately known as **“PINGDOM,”** a nickname that became a symbol of excellence and unity. In 2016, he was named the **American Volleyball Coaches Association National 17s Club Coach of the Year**, and in 2019, he received **VolleyballMag’s National Coach of the Year**, recognizing his unparalleled impact on the sport.

Ping’s coaching career spanned continents and generations. From guiding champions in China to nurturing young athletes in America, he dedicated every season, every practice, and every ounce of himself to the game he loved. His legacy lives on in the thousands of players he inspired, the teams he built, and the spirit of resilience and passion he instilled wherever volleyball is played.

## **A Beloved Mentor and Enduring Spirit**

Within Dallas’s Chinese volleyball community, Ping was not only a respected coach but also a cherished friend. Wherever he went, the gym came alive – filled with laughter, energy, and the unmistakable warmth he brought to every interaction. Tirelessly, he corrected technique and posture, never above joining his players and friends in drills or playful matches. At gatherings, he was as generous off the court as on it, often arriving with his signature dishes – red bean soup and sweet-and-sour ribs – cooked with the same care and precision he brought to coaching. In group photos, his long arms seemed to embrace everyone; wherever he stood, the scene glowed with camaraderie and joy.

Illness struck while Ping was still at the height of his coaching career – a cruel interruption to a life of tireless purpose. His three-year battle with large B-cell lymphoma was the toughest match of all, yet he faced it with the same courage, optimism, and grit that had defined his playing days. His wife often said he never saw himself as a patient, and his

friends remember that same sunlit smile, undimmed by pain. The discipline and strength forged on the court carried him through each round of treatment. To his doctors, he was the model of grace under pressure: humble, kind, and unfailingly courteous, even in the hardest moments.

Even in his weakest days, when parents or former players reached out to ask for advice, he always replied – urging their children to keep working hard and believing in themselves. That unwavering generosity of spirit touched everyone who knew him.

Ping Cao was the finest kind of sportsman – a tireless cultivator of the game and a deeply loved friend. Those who knew him continue to share stories and photos, remembering his commanding presence on the court and his gentle, sincere smile in daily life. In our hearts, Ping has never gone far. The energy that defined him lives on – in his players, his community, and the countless moments of joy he created.

【中文版】

## 纪念曹平——一颗璀璨的排球之星划过中美静谧的秋夜

如果你还记得 80 年代初，北大学子冲出校园游行，率先喊出时代最强音——“团结起来，振兴中华”，那么你一定知道曹平，因为起因便是当时曹平担任主力的中国男排在香港连扳三局击败南韩。而曹平被激动的北大学生们高高托起在人群之上的黑白经典照片，是这个震撼人心历史时刻的最佳见证。



如果你关注北美排球生态和教练圈，那么你一定知道曹平，他曾在 2019 年被权威杂志《VolleyballMag》评选为 National Coach of the Year（年度国家级教练奖）。

曹平，1958 年 4 月 22 日出生于江苏省南京市；2025 年 10 月 24 日美国时间凌晨 1:40，北京时间下午 14:40 于美国德克萨斯州理查逊市（Richardson）与世长辞。他把一生毫无保留献给排球事业和挚爱亲友。他曾在中国男排最辉煌的年代脱颖而出，为当年振兴中华的浪潮添加了不朽功绩。

1974 年，初学排球的曹平因优异的身体素质被选入江苏青年排球队开始正规的排球训练。由于他聪明、刻苦、学技术扎实、本身速度快、爆发力强，迅速成为基本功和执行力突出的优秀青年选手。两年之后的 1976 年，曹平被晋升至江苏男子排球一队，凭借出色表现不久成为副攻。不久江苏男排又接连夺得两届全国联赛冠军及一届全国锦标赛冠军，曹平作为江苏男排黄金时期的主力成员之一，为江苏男排成为全国冠军立下了汗马功劳。曹平也从此在中国排坛崭露头角。

时任中国男排主教练的戴廷斌慧眼识人，欣喜发掘到表现卓越的曹平，1979 年将他选入中国国家男子排球队。同年 8 月，曹平还代表江苏队获得第四届全国运动会排球比赛冠军。

1979 年 12 月中国男排在巴林举行的第二届亚洲男排锦标赛上，曹平站上了主力阵容并夺得冠军。中国男排同时获得 1980 年第二十二届莫斯科奥运会参赛资格，后因中国抵制该届奥运会未参赛。中国男排巅峰期无缘冲刺奥运奖牌，是所有热爱中国排球的运动员和球迷的一大遗憾。

1981 年 3 月 20 日，中国男排在香港伊丽莎白体育馆同南朝鲜队争夺第三届世界杯男子排球赛参赛资格，中国男排在 0:2 落后的极端被动情况下，团结奋斗，顽强拼搏，连扳 3 局，最终以 3:2 战胜南朝鲜队。那日，全国沸腾，北大学子激动地冲出校园，上街游行庆祝中国男排的胜利，并带头喊出“团结起来，振兴中华”之时代最强音！曹平作为中国男排的主力副攻，他出色的技术水平，沉着勇猛的体育精神，为比赛胜利做出了突出贡献，同时为这振奋人心、青史留存的时刻留下了浓墨重彩的一笔。

1981 年：曹平代表中国男排参加在日本举行的第三届世界杯男子排球赛获得第五名（主力副攻，并开始兼打主攻）。

1982 年：曹平代表中国男排参加在阿根廷举行的第十届世界男子排球锦标赛获得第七名（主力主攻）。

1982 年 12 月：参加在印度举行的第九届亚运会获得亚军。

1983 年：祝嘉铭执教中国男排。曹平代表中国男排参加了在日本举行的第三届亚洲锦标赛获得亚军（主力主攻）。

1984 年：邹志华执教中国男排，曹平作为中国男排队长参加在洛杉矶举行的第二十三届奥运会并获第八名。



在国家队期间，曹平最初担任副攻至 1981 年，1982 年起改打主攻位置。曹平身体素质出色，弹跳力好，速度快，爆发力强，脚快、手快、节奏快是他的优势与特点。他基本技术扎实，球场意识清晰、连贯、流畅，战术意识强。副攻的快变进攻、主攻的平网攻和调整强攻，曹平都能够打出很高的技战术水平。他呈现了男排队员出色的全面技术和进攻能力。

## 曹平的执教生涯

1988–1989 年间，曹平担任江苏女子排球队主教练。期间曾率领南京大学女排参赛 1988 年第三届全国大学生运动会，获得冠军。

1990 年起远赴巴林、马来西亚等国援外执教，为中国排球的海外交流与发展作出贡献。

1997 年曹平移居美国，最初去了密歇根州大急流城（Grand Rapids）执教一支女子排球职业队，随后开启了长期的青少年俱乐部排球教练生涯，得到了无数全国冠军、亚军和季军以及竞争激烈的资格赛的冠军、亚军和季军，培养出一批又一批优秀排球运动员。

- 在 Sports Performance Volleyball（芝加哥）：早期加盟，率队获得美国青少年排球多项冠军，包括 16 Open 全国冠军及多项 AAU 冠军。
- 在 Texas Advantage Volleyball（TAV，达拉斯）：2009 年加入，执教约 12 年（至 2021 年），曹教练麾下的 TAV17 Black 球队，在竞争激烈，充满戏剧性的美国青少年排球赛场长期稳居霸主，在曹教练执教期间共赢得 6 次 17 Open 全国冠军及一次亚军二次季军。他被誉为“超高成功率教练”（ultra-successful club coach）。
- 在 Drive Nation Volleyball Club（达拉斯）：2021 年起执教 Drive Nation 17 Red 等高年级队伍，在全国邀请赛与分组赛事中持续取得优异成绩。
- 在 Skyline（达拉斯）：2023 年起执教 Skyline 高年级队伍。离世之前他已经组好了下一赛季的球队，但遗憾的是没有来得及带领组好的球队参加下一季的训练。

曹平是中国男排黄金时代（1979–1983）的重要成员之一。从国家队司职主攻、副攻到接应二传，从男排队长到俱乐部传奇教练，他的职业生涯横跨中国、东南亚、中东与美国。他严谨、专业、坚持，把最好的年华献给排球。他对排球痴迷，永不言弃，不仅自身做到了极致和巅峰，还毕生播种对排球的热爱，传承体育精神。他培养了无数优秀的青少年运

动员，其中代表美国队征战巴黎奥运会的女排 23 号罗宾逊和 24 号奥格博古，以及代表法国出战奥运的头号选手恩迪亚耶都是曹教练的弟子。美国国家队队员奥尼尔，职业女排队员 Micaya White 休赛期间都回来找恩师打磨技术。曹教练还专门录制了两张排球技术 DVD：《扣球技术：提升稳定性的训练方法和要点》及《小组或单人训练中的最佳进展策略》，成为许多排球专业运动员和教练员的训练宝典。

在十几年达拉斯的俱乐部执教期间，曹平每年都带着最重要的 17 岁年龄组，冲击全国最强比赛。17 岁是决定队员被选入哪个大学队的最关键时刻，一年一度的全国锦标赛上，球员都是北美 3000 多俱乐部中选拔出来的佼佼者，精英云集，竞争激烈。曹教练的球队也是一群青春无敌，却缺乏稳定性的年轻队员每年临时组成的。曹教练凭借出神入化的指挥艺术，临场多变的战术，不负众望，稳定保持最高胜率。他的球队几乎年年入围前四强。USAV Open 全国冠军（累计约 6-7 次）多次亚军，多次季军，多项 AAU 全国冠军。他因材施教，善于发现人才，发掘每位队员的优势和特长。他培养出的优秀排球运动员，被许多大学授予全额奖学金，被斯坦福，哈佛，耶鲁，麻省理工，宾大，德州大学，内布拉斯加等名校争相录取。曹教练不仅为高校输送了顶尖体育人才，也为这些孩子改变了人生，让她们拥有更多的可能和更远大的前程。在队员，家长和排球界，曹教练是神一样的存在，被称为 PINGDOM。每届队员都会特别制作 PINGDOM 队服，以穿着赛前热身为荣。实至名归，曹平 2016 年获美国排球教练协会全国 17 岁组年度最佳教练（American Volleyball Coach Association National 17's Club Coach of the Year）；2019 年获《VolleyballMag》评选的 National Coach of the Year（年度国家级教练奖）最高荣誉。

曹平一生的排球生涯故事精彩无尽，他的青年时代创造了中国男排的辉煌，他退役之后，又接着创造了美国女子青少年排坛的不朽传奇，无人能及。他训练过的各个年龄段的队员，都终生受益。

在达拉斯当地华人排球社区，曹平也是排球爱好者们最爱戴的教练与朋友，哪里有曹教练，哪里就是最棒的体育中心。他总是不厌其烦地指导纠正大家打球的动作姿势，毫无架子地与排球爱好者们一起练球。与大家聚餐时，他总会带上自己拿手的菜肴，曹氏红豆汤，糖醋排骨都是大厨的水准；与大家合影时，他那双大长臂能轻松搂住四个人的肩膀，有他的地方，场面总是热闹而喜悦。

天妒英才，曹平仍在巅峰期的执教生涯因疾病而中断。长达三年的恶性淋巴瘤治疗，是作为运动员教练员经历无数大赛的曹平人生最艰难的比赛。太太心疼地说他从来没把自己当病人；朋友们每次见到的也仍是那个带着阳光般笑容的排球英雄。曹平与生俱来的积极乐观，他从球场上磨练的坚韧和必胜信念，支撑着他与病魔的每一场抗争。那份坚强与豁达，是常人难以做到的。在曹平的医生们眼里，他是模范病人。从不抱怨，再难受也保持

礼貌和风度，保持谦和与感恩。从不因为自己曾是万众瞩目的明星而对医务人员呼来喝去。他的人格魅力与坚强也深深感动了身边的医生们。在曹平最虚弱的日子里，不知情的家长和朋友也会通过微信向他咨询有关孩子训练的问题，他都一一作答，并且鼓励孩子们继续刻苦努力。

曹平是最优秀的体育人，最辛劳的排坛耕耘者，最令人怀念的挚友。许多朋友自发用文字图片集体缅怀他，怀念他球场上叱咤风云的帅气身影，怀念他平日温和可亲真诚温暖的笑容。在大家心里，曹平未曾远离，那些属于他的巨大能量连同他生命中无数个精彩瞬间，化成无尽的思念和温情的陪伴。

长夜恨晚，一颗明星划过夜空。他的光芒留在了天际，也照亮了人间的秋夜.....