

Chicken Sexers Set to Go For Gold in London

by Con Chapman

GREEN RIDGE, Mo. Eunice Holcomb has long been a valued employee at the Swift Poultry Processing plant in this idyllic town in central Missouri that features a horseshoe pit on the town square and not one but two full-time village idiots. “I have been employee of the month at least twice and sometimes three times every year going back to 2009,” she says proudly.

In two months, she hopes to be something else—an Olympic Gold Medal winner—as chicken sexing has been added to the Olympic Summer Games in London by the International Olympic Committee.

Chicken sexing

“That is something I’ve always dreamed of,” she says as looks out on State Road HH that runs alongside her family’s sorghum fields. “Other little girls wanted to be princesses or baton twirlers, but not me.”

As a chicken sexer, Eunice is trained to distinguish between male and female chicken hatchlings when they are young so that her employer can place them on the correct feeding program; males (roosters) are fattened for sale as meat while females (hens) are fed a diet that maximizes their egg-laying capacity. World-class chicken sexers average about ten chicks per minute.



The People's Republic of China has produced some of the world's greatest chicken sexers including Meng Xuenong, Ye Jianying, and Wu De, often referred to as the “Ed Ott of Chinese Chicken Sexing” because his name has one fewer letter than that of the catcher for the 1979 “We-Are-Fam-i-ly!” World Champion Pittsburgh Pirates. “When I saw Ott score on Manny Sanguillen's pinch-hit in the Game 2 win over the Baltimore Orioles, it inspired me to greatness, even though my family had only four letters to give me after my older brothers and sisters had been provided for,” Wu said.

There are two types of chicken sexing; “feather” sexing of chicks whose sexual characteristics are manifested by differences in their feathers, and the more difficult “vent” sexing in which competitors must identify chicks' sexual organs from one of fifteen basic external physiological patterns.

"People who say chicken sexing isn't a sport—I tell them to watch ice dancing, or maybe curling," said Lamar Gene Holcomb, Eunice's husband, who is hoping for a six-figure endorsement deal if his wife receives a medal in London. "She'd look good on a Wheaties box," he says with pride, "if they make one big enough."



"Chicken—chicken—chicken!"

Eunice will be in training for the next two months, enduring a Spartan regimen under which she will abstain from sex until after the games. Will that be difficult? this reporter asks her. "I don't think so," she says calmly. "I look at genitals eight hours every day and that's the last thing I want to think about when I get home."

