Construction of SIP Sports Center in Suzhou has started
Masterplan links three stadiums with park landscape and leisure facilities

Construction work on the SIP Sports Centre has started in the Chinese city of Suzhou. The multi-functional sports center in Suzhou Industrial Park, designed by architects von Gerkan, Marg and Partners, has been scheduled for completion in 2017. The complex combines sports facilities for large events, leisure and cultural facilities, as well as shopping and hotel functions in a generous, publicly accessible park landscape.

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Suzhou is famous in China for its landscape design, and the masterplan for this new sports park is based on this tradition. In a modern interpretation of the city's traditional gardens, an informally designed park landscape flows around the podiums that rise in straight lines from the surrounding streets and support the stadiums. The curved roofs of the stadiums give the impression of pavilions, marking the high points in this landscape. As visitors walk along the curved pathways, various vistas open up to water features, pavilion architecture, and the landscape. The site opens out to the Xietang River to the south, with various sports-grounds embedded in the landscape.

The sports park – which has been developed jointly by the City and District authorities – includes a 45,000-seat stadium, an indoor pool with 3,000 seats, and a sports hall with 15,000 seats, and is surrounded by numerous residential quarters and a lively ambience. With its wide range of functions, beyond pure sporting events, the park has been designed to ensure a permanent and sustainable flow of visitors.

All three stadiums are topped by conspicuous undulating roofs that make the ensemble into a landmark visible from afar. In addition, the succinct character of the ensemble is reinforced by a uniform façade design: the façades of both the stadiums and the podiums are structured by horizontal lines which follow the shape of the buildings in elegant curves.

Owing to its size and impressive clear span of 250 meters, the 45,000-seat stadium with its covered stands forms the focal point of the park. Its curved silhouette stands out from the urban environment, blending harmoniously with the landscape and the park at the Xietang River. The single-skin cable network roof construction with a membrane skin is not only remarkable for its resource-saving, economical design, but also has an almost suspended, gracious appearance reminiscent of floating curved silk.

Likewise, the indoor swimming pool with seating for 3,000 spectators and the marked undulation of its roof shape created with a single-skin cable network construction combines an elegant, floating appearance with great structural strength. In addition to the competition and training pools, the swimming hall includes a spa area, leisure pools, and sports shops.

The roof of the covered multi-purpose hall for 15,000 visitors located to the north-east of the site is supported by V-shaped columns. They provide a rhythm to the transparent glass façade of the hall, which is just as suitable for large international sports events as it is for concerts, exhibitions, etc.

In addition to the three sports stadiums there is a hotel and retail center that harmonizes with the undulating landscape in similar fashion. In its façades, it replicates the horizontal lines of the other buildings and thereby fits harmoniously into the ensemble. A special dynamism is created by the lines of the high-rise building façade, which are spaced at reducing intervals towards the top, thereby conveying a fine elegance to the large tower.

The facility is well connected to the Metro and offers the Suzhou citizens not only park, sports and leisure facilities but also various shops for day-to-day needs, thus creating an attractive center for the new part of the city.
Design Meinhard von Gerkan and Nikolaus Goetze with Magdalene Weiss
Project leader, competition Chen Ying, Sebastian Schmidt
Design team, competition Cai Xing, Feng Chenjie, Martin Friedrich, Alex Fu, Gao Shusan, Jin Zhan, Li Zhaoying, Song Mo, Wang Lin, Yan Luji, Zhang Zhen, Zhao Mengtong, Zhu Lingli, Li Mu, Christina Patt
Project leader, implementation Chen Ying, Sui Jingying, Yan Luji
Team implementation Nard Buijs, Cai Lei, Jessen Chen, Alex Fu, Huang Meng, Li Chen, Oliver Lõîser, Sebastian Schmidt, Su Wen, Wang Minyu, Yao Yao, Zeng Zi, Zhao Mengtong
Client Suzhou Industrial Park Sports Industry Development Co., Ltd.
Stadium 45,000 seats
Natatorium 3,000 seats
Sports and multi-purpose hall 15,000 seats
GFA above ground 263,310 m²
GFA below ground 157,730 m²
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01 Bird’s eye view ©Willmore
02 The stadiums topping podiums in the park ©Willmore
03 Complex with hotel and retail center ©Willmore
04 Façade design to enhance the uniform character of the ensemble ©Willmore
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05 Masterplan ©gmp
06 Bird's eye view at night ©Willmore
07 Photo of construction site, taken from a drone in August 2015 ©gmp