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## Tianhe astronauts watch table tennis and exercise

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Chinese astronauts on board the Tiangong space station have enjoyed watching matches from the Tokyo Olympic Games, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

"Technically, we can connect them to live broadcasts, but they've chosen to watch transmitted recordings during their time off, because there are so many tasks for them to complete," the agency said on its WeChat account on Friday. "So far, they have watched several table tennis matches and diving events."

Besides conducting scientific experiments, technological tests and engineering tasks, the three crew members of the Shenzhou XII mission — mission commander Major General Nie Haisheng and Major General Liu Boming and Senior Colonel Tang Hongbo — also spend a lot of time exercising, the agency noted.

The astronauts are using a set of specially designed machines, including a treadmill and an exercise bike, in accordance with personal exercise plans, the statement explained, adding that they have gradually increased their daily exercises since their

three-month space journey began in mid-June to reduce the negative effects of microgravity on their bodies.

As of Friday morning, the Shenzhou XII crew had spent 50 days in a low-Earth orbit at an altitude of about 400 kilometers in Tiangong's core module, which is named Tianhe, or Harmony of Heavens.

They are scheduled to remain in space until mid-September, when they will return to Earth.

They launched on June 17 aboard a Long March 2F carrier rocket that blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center

in northwestern China.

The astronauts entered Tianhe later that day, after the spacecraft docked with the module, becoming Tianhe's first inhabitants.

The largest and heaviest spacecraft China has ever built, Tianhe is the first and central component of the Chinese space station, which is called Tiangong, or Heavenly Palace.

The Shenzhou XII mission, China's seventh manned spaceflight, is the first crewed mission of the Tiangong program, which aims to finish construction of a three-component space station in low-Earth orbit before the end of 2022.