

## Young Olympian Daily

2010

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/80190>

WED  
25  
AUG  
2010

FROM 15TH TO  
THIRD

European pair surges  
forward

3

TOUGHER THAN THEY  
LOOK

Gymnasts rise from setbacks

4

BEYOND CULTURAL  
CONVENTION

Girls inspire peers with  
sporting passion

7

TWEET OF THE DAY

today a Ukraine dude gave me  
a big Ukraine flag when i asked  
him if he had pins!

@wangsimin

Wang Simin, Student Reporter

talk to us at facebook.com/youngolympiandaily



# Young Olympian Daily

The official Singapore  
2010 Youth Olympic Village  
newspaper



A publication by the  
Wee Kim Wee School of  
Communication and  
Information,  
NTU

## THE ORANJE STRIKE GOLD



### Penalty and extra time victory for Dutch girls hockey team

BY BHAVAN JAIPRAGAS

The Netherlands fitness and penalty corner expertise proved to be decisive as they clinched the gold medal in the girl's hockey competition last night.

They beat Argentina 2-1 through a golden goal.

The Dutch team's late surge was characteristic of their performance throughout the competition, with a second half resurgence pulling them through their games against Belgium and Argentina in the preliminary stage.

Both teams had met just five days ago, with Netherlands scoring at the death to finish 2-2 on that occasion.

Playing to a stadium packed to the rafters with athletes and fans from both countries, Argentina and Netherlands started the game with almost no intention of attacking.

Goal scoring opportunities were few and far between for both sides in the first 20 minutes as midfielders battled for possession.

Argentina, which started with top scorer Agustina Alvarez on the bench, capitalised on a penalty corner in the 25th minute. Forward Agustina Albertarrio stepped up to score a tap-in from close range after the initial shot rebounded off the Dutch goalkeeper.

Fans eager to see a greater display of attacking hockey in the second period were left disappointed; both teams reverted to their cagey style of play when play restarted.

Their efforts paid off in the 47th minute as drag flick expert Lieke Van Wijk converted a penalty corner with a sweet strike.

Dutch fans were left at the edge of their seats towards

the end of full time, as the Argentines were awarded a series of penalty corners in quick succession due to jittery Dutch defence. Goalkeeper Saskia Van Duivenboden kept her cool to make a crucial save from a point blank flick shot.

The newly invigorated Dutch attack needed little prodding in extra time, with Floor Ouwerling orchestrating fluid passes from the midfield.

The ever-reliable Lieke duly delivered again in the 78th minute, converting her fifth penalty corner goal of the tournament and clinching the winning goal.

Speaking to reporters after the match, Dutch coach Ageet Boomgaardt was full of praise for Lieke, whom she calls one of two "experts of the drag flick" in the team.

"Penalty corners can define a game and at her age to score two in such a crucial game is really something."

For forward Roos Broek, the superior fitness of the Dutch team was what clinched the

match for them as legs began to tire in extra time.

"We are the most fit team of the tournament and that helped us to continue running in extra time while Argentina looked tired," said Broek, who scored four field goals in the tournament.

Argentina's coach Gonzalez was upbeat, despite his team's loss. "These things happen in tight games like this and we cannot fault our defence which played excellently against New Zealand and Korea," he said, refusing to blame his team for conceding costly penalty corners.

For the Dutch, celebrations on the pitch were due to continue through the night. When asked about the team's post-match plans, Roos said: "McDonalds, definitely."

**"Penalty corners can define a game and at her age to score two in such a crucial game is really something."**

– Dutch coach Ageet Boomgaardt on Lieke's penalty goals

The Netherlands team pose for a photo after the gold medal match victory ceremony.

PHOTO: SPH-SYOGOC/  
TAN KOK PENG



MEDALS WON YESTERDAY

COUNTRY IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER			
Argentina	0	1	1
Brazil	0	1	0
Chile	1	0	0
China	1	1	0
Colombia	0	1	0
Egypt	0	0	1
Equatorial Guinea	0	1	0
Hungary	0	0	1
India	0	0	1
Korea	0	1	1
Lithuania	0	0	1
Mexico	0	0	1
Moldova	0	0	1
Netherlands	1	0	0
New Zealand	0	0	1
Poland	0	0	1
Russian Federation	1	0	1
Saudi Arabia	0	0	1
Turkey	0	0	2
Turkmenistan	0	0	1
Ukraine	2	1	0
Uruguay	1	0	0
Uzbekistan	0	0	2
Venezuela	0	0	1

“I’m so happy that no words can explain my thoughts now because I never thought I’d be an Olympic champion and the Youth Olympics have given me that opportunity.”  
– Uruguayan rider Marcelo Chirico

NEWS  
IN NUMBERS



PHOTO: INTERNET

490

The year (BC) Greek soldier Pheidippides ran from Marathon to Athens (about 25 miles) to inform Athenians the outcome of the battle with invading Persians. The first modern Olympic Games in 1896 introduced the marathon event to commemorate him.

7

The time, in hours, a Masters Championship fencing bout in New York in the 1930s lasted. Today, the time limit is 3 minutes for 5-touch bouts and 9 minutes for 15 touches.

55.92

The recorded time (in seconds) clocked by Americans Nancy Hogshead and Carrie Steinseifer, who registered the first official tie in Olympic history in the 100m freestyle at the 1984 Olympics.

COLUMN

Miracle Sunday

BY CHUANG BING HAN



On Sunday, the Jalan Besar stadium was packed to the rafters: all 6,000 tickets were sold out. The next day, local tabloid The New Paper reported that a group of fans, having missed out on the tickets to the Haiti-Singapore football match, resorted to watching the game from a nearby multi-storey carpark.

A few foolhardy teenagers even scaled up to the rooftop for a better view. It was a “directors’ box”, as they called it.

One of the few times Singapore fans came out in force was when English football mega-clubs Manchester United and Liverpool were in town.

The same cannot be said for the national team. Even the fiercely contested rivalry matches with Malaysia could not draw them out.

But in the last three matches the Cubs played — against

Zimbabwe, Montenegro and Haiti — the fans were there. And they were not just there as spectators. The crowd rose as one, to cheer and to jeer. Every foul against the Cubs was red card worthy. Every foul they conceded had to be play-acting on the opponents’ part. And it is not just football. In other games, whether tennis, swimming, or badminton, the venues were packed as well. The Games have often been derided as the Olympics’ younger, and poorer, cousin. “Chey, these are just kids,” naysayers said. “What can they do?” But these ‘kids’ did do something. Where other teams, athletes and competitions had failed, they succeeded. They brought us out from in front of the television sets, and into the stadiums. On Sunday, the scoreboard might have read 2-0 to Haiti, but in truth, the winners on that night were the young footballers, and all the athletes who competed in YOG. Thank you, for helping us cheer for our team again.


	<b>CHIEF EDITOR</b> Elizabeth Law	<b>COPY EDITORS</b> Anjali Raguraman Cassandra Yeap	<b>PRODUCTION SUPPORT</b> Ng Heng Ghee
	<b>PICTURE EDITOR</b> Ng Jun Sen	<b>TEACHER ADVISORS</b> Andrew Duffy Juleen Shaw	
	<b>NIGHT EDITORS</b> Joanna Hor Zakaria Zainal	<b>DESIGN CONSULTANT</b> Rishad Patel	
	<b>CHIEF LAYOUT EDITOR</b> Neo Wen Tong	<b>LAYOUT EDITORS</b> Maxie Aw Yeong Yamuna Yeo	

A students’ newspaper published by the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information Nanyang Technological University, 31 Nanyang Link, Singapore 637718. Tel: 6790 6446  
Printed by KHL Printing Co. Pte Ltd., 57 Loyang Drive, Singapore 508968  
Editorials are the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee or Nanyang Technological University, its employees, the students or the Council of the University.

FACTS OF THE WORLD


**UNITED KINGDOM**

British diver Tom Daley was the first person to win the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year award twice, in 2007 and 2009.




**EGYPT**

Rowing was first used as a means of transport in the ancient cultures of Egypt, Greece and Rome. Rowing as a sport probably began in Victoria England in the 17th and early 18th centuries.



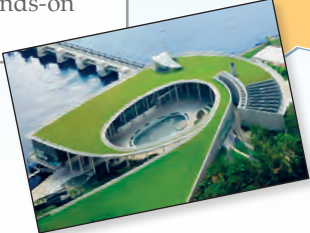
**GREECE**

The first Olympic mascot was first introduced at the 1968 Grenoble games in France. Since those games each nation has chosen a mascot to symbolise their nation.




**SINGAPORE**

At Marina Barrage, athletes learn about water conservation and contributing to the environment through hands-on activities.



**CHINA**

In winning the 110m hurdles event in Athens 2004, Liu Xiang was the first Asian to win an Olympic gold in a men’s track and field event. He is also the first Chinese athlete to win the “triple crown” of athletics: World Record Holder, World Champion and Olympic Champion.





# BACK WITH A VENGEANCE

*Lithuanian-Russian pair make a surprise comeback*

BY DARREN TAN

The pair rightfully claimed their bronze medal, despite entering the run and shoot relay in 15th place. Russian Gulnaz Gubaydullina and Lithuanian Lukas Kontrimavicius ended off just 72 points behind the eventual winners, Ilya Shugarov of Russia and Anastasiya Spas of Ukraine.

Though they finished ninth in their respective individual events, Lukas was quietly confident of their chances.

“After the draw when I knew I had a strong partner, I believed we had a shot at a medal,” the 18-year-old said about his partner.

The draw, which paired boys and girls of different nationalities, had landed Gulnaz with Lukas.

Gulnaz was the champion in the Youth A European Championships in Bulgaria in May, and finished second in the Modern Pentathlon Youth A World Championships in



Bronze medalists Gulnaz Gubaydullina (left) of Russia and Lukas Kontrimavicius of Lithuania present their medals during the awarding ceremony of the Mixed Relay of Modern Pentathlon.

PHOTOS: XINHUA/SYOGOC-POOL/ LIU JIE

Sweden in June this year.

Despite heading into the final combined running and shooting segment handicapped by 1min 1sec, the pair managed to turn things around with a final score of 4566.

The pair had a disastrous start when they finished second last in the fencing leg, dashing their initial hopes of a medal.

They recovered in the swim relay segment by

finishing second, with Lukas clocking a new personal best for 100m.

He thought to himself: “Do your best, fight strong and look to the work ahead. You have nothing to lose, just do it.”

To add to his confidence, Lukas knew that running and swimming were his strongest points in modern pentathlon.

The pair eventually finished first for running

and shooting, even though they never trained together before the competition.

This allowed them to rightfully claim the bronze overall.

On the result, Lukas said: “I’m surprised, but always held a hope for it.”

Lukas, who picked up modern pentathlon five years ago, intends to celebrate his victory at home with family and friends in Vilnius, Lithuania.

## BRIEFS

### Shoot for gold



PHOTO: SPH-SYOGOC/KENT CHOW

Bronze medal for the 10m air pistol event yesterday was secured in the closest of margins — 0.8 points. With Ukraine’s Denys Kushnirov topping the scoreboard with 676.3 points, Brazilian Almeida Felipe Wu came in second. Korean Choi Daehan nicked the bronze from Belarus’ Aliaksei Horbach.

### Banking on sportsmanship

In the C1 men obstacle canoe slalom round one, a restart had to be called when Patryk Sokol from Poland jumped the gun. Despite the inauspicious start, Patryk defeated Croatia’s Matija Burisa. After the highly competitive race, however, the athletes showed sportsmanship as they “high fived” each other.

### Comeback kid

After capsising in the C1 men’s head to head canoe sprint, Hayden Daniels from Canada fared better in the C1 men’s obstacle canoe slalom. He managed to defeat Timofey Yemelyanov from Kazakhstan with his timing of 1:45.46 against the average 2:08.96 and qualified for round three with a timing of 1:47.73.

### Soccer shootout

The Chileans girls triumphed over crowd favourite Equatorial Guinea in the girls football gold medal match, winning 5-3 in the penalty shootout after the game ended 1-1 in regulation time.

Orellana Romina’s splendid freekick from 25 yards out in the 25th minute was equalised by Equatorial Guinea captain Ndong Judit’s 55th minute spot kick.

The game went down to the wire and had to be settled through the penalty kicks.

### Dive in the dark

A brief lights-out did not stop Chinese diver Qiu Bo who went on to win his second gold medal for the 10m platform event yesterday. He even managed a perfect ‘10’ from two judges for his fourth dive, which was in half-shadow.

## T-30 MINUTES TO...

# Rhythmic gymnastics kick-off

*Flexible bodies, nimble feet and elaborate routines were on display at the Bishan Sports Hall for the individual all-around qualifications. Photojournalist Xue Jianyue was there to capture the moment*

**10:30am**  
In the warm-up hall, gymnasts stretch. For many of them, it is their first time participating on an international stage.

**10:43am**  
Gymnasts go into the changing room just behind the holding area to touch up their make-up.

**10:45am**  
The first gymnasts to compete enter the holding area. Officials check their equipment, such as hoops and ropes, to ensure it meets competition requirements.

**11:02am**  
Sports presenters tell the spectators that the judges are entering the field of play. As the competition starts, the crowd sits up in anticipation.

**11:06am**  
Sports specialist volunteers guide the first gymnast up to the field of play. All eyes are on her when the music starts.



**11:21am**  
Alexandra Merkulova does her last warm-ups in the holding area, swinging the hoop before entering the playing field.





PROFILE

MADELEINE JOHNSON  
GYMNASTICS  
AUSTRALIA

GYMNASTIC GIRLS'

“It was really tough to do both gymnastics at the same time. I spent my Friday evenings going from one training to the other but I really enjoyed doing both.”

– Madeleine on switching to trampoline from artistic gymnastics

PHOTO: LAM YARN

ATHLETE DNA

GREGORY ENGLISH  
TAEKWONDO  
USA

My best friend is myself

Describe your best friend in 3 words: funny, cool, entertaining

I knew I wanted to be an athlete when I was good at Taekwondo.

The weirdest thing I do when I train is make funny sounds.

When I'm not training, I'm usually eating or losing weight or sleeping.

My hero is my mom because she's a problem solver

If I were not an athlete, I would be eating a lot now

If I were an animal, I would be a dog

BY SITI LATIFAH

At the tender age of 10, Madeleine Johnson was diagnosed with a condition that threatened to crush any young gymnast’s dream.

She was diagnosed with juvenile chronic arthritis in her hands.

The vivacious athlete started attending artistic gymnastics classes with her cousin at the age of eight before trying trampoline gymnastics when she turned 10.

She says: “It was really tough to do both gymnastics at the same time. I spent my Friday evenings going from one training to the other but I really enjoyed doing both.”

This was before doctors delivered the shocking news. Under the guidance of her gymnastics coach, Madeleine made a life-changing decision to make a permanent switch from artistic to trampoline gymnastics. However, this does not imply that her journey has been any less trying as she still continues to experience aches in her body due to her medical condition.

Juvenile chronic arthritis is a condition where the patient suffers from inflammation of joints, which causes pain and stiffness in the affected areas.

The Australian gymnast who began competing internationally at the Indo Pacific Games in Canada at the age of 11 says: “My hands were always sore and I suffered aches at the hips and ankles. There were times when I couldn’t even grab the bars.”

Still, to surrender and give up her dream as a gymnast was never an option for the 17-year-old, who won first position in the under-15 category at the 2007 World Trampoline Championships. She fought for her dream instead.

Johnson displays the same tenacity to overcome the odds at her recent performance in the Games’ trampoline gymnastics event last Friday evening.

Despite starting the qualification round at 7th position, Johnson ended the competition at the 6th position during the finals. The gymnast who spent her year training five times a week expressed that she was happy with her performance.

Throughout the interview, she speaks with enthusiasm.

So, it is not surprising that she has already thought of her plans and goals after the Youth Olympic Games 2010.

Her ultimate goal is to represent Australia at

the Olympics Games one day.

When asked when she wants to make her Olympic debut, her eyes sparkle as she says: “Hopefully, London 2012.”



CARLOTTA FERLITO  
GYMNASTICS  
ITALY

“It’s a great sport. But I would not be able to bear seeing (my child) fall or getting injured from it.”

– Carlotta on the high chance of injury in artistic gymnastics

CAN-DO SPIRIT

BY CANDICE NEO

She may not be a gold medallist Russian gymnast, but 15-year-old Carlotta Ferlito’s amazing performance at the Artistic Gymnastics Individual Women’s All-Around Finals had international spectators taking a second look at Italian gymnastics.

Carlotta was third at the women’s qualification and went on to clinch the bronze medal at the women’s individual all-around final, with a total score of 55.350, just behind Russia’s Viktoria Komova and China’s Tan Sixin.

This came as a surprise to many, as Italy has always been famed for its footballers and racers, but seldom for its gymnasts. The Italian ‘dark horse’ admits that she is not the first from her country with outstanding achievements in gymnastics. She speaks of Vanessa Ferrari, who in 2006 was the first Italian woman to win an all-around gold medal at the World Championships.

Carlotta also achieved a silver in her pet event, the balance beam, and a bronze at the vault.

Despite Carlotta’s love for the sport, she reveals after her competition on Thursday that if she were to have a daughter in the future, she would not encourage her daughter to enter the sport, nor is she thinking of a future career as a gymnastics coach.

“It’s a great sport,” she admits in Italian. “But I would not be able to bear seeing (my child) fall or getting injured from it.” Gymnasts commonly sustain injuries through accidents during training or competition.

The petite teenager mentions that it was her mother who introduced her to gymnastics when she was younger. Her family members are her motivators and best supporters. When asked who she looks up to, she says without hesitation: “Shawn Johnson, the US champion at Beijing (Olympics).” Shawn Johnson is an Olympic women’s balance beam gold medallist.

The 15-year-old also confesses she has a liking for the Russian champion, fellow gymnast and rival, Viktoria Komova.

While the two have spoken briefly, the language barrier prevented further communication. Carlotta is learning French and English as her second and third languages in high school. “But she doesn’t like to speak (English),” her coach reveals with a twinkle in his eye.

She attends school in the evenings for three to four hours after her gymnastics training in the day. Now in the midst of the Games, she trains six days a week, six hours a day.

Of her third position placing, Carlotta says she is “happy” but will strive to work even harder. “I want to win more medals,” she says, with an eye to competing in the World Championships and the 2012 Olympics.

PHOTO: NG JUN SEN



CHAT WITH A CHAMPION



Usain Bolt  
Athletics  
Jamaica



PHOTOS: INTERNET

*Born in Trelawny, Jamaica, Usain Bolt was the first man in history to set two world records at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. His name and achievements in sprinting have earned him the media nickname of ‘Lightning Bolt’.*

9.58

Usain Bolt’s current 100m and world record (in seconds). It was set at the Berlin World Championships in 2009.

2004

The year Usain Bolt became a professional athlete.

21

August 21, 1986, is Bolt’s birthday.

2,253,843

Number of people who “liked” his facebook page at time of print

1.95

Bolt’s height, in metres.

“All I can say is: ‘Yo, Jamaican sprinters, taking over the world.’”

– In reference to his record-breaking runs



## YOYVoice

Shout-outs and dedications



### TO TEAM FRANCE

Allez les bleus!!! Go France!  
Alexia Sedykh, Athletics, France



### TO TEAM NIGERIA

Thank you Nigeria team for all the hard work.  
Emmanuel Gyang Gwom, Athletics, Nigeria



### TO VANUATU SOCCER

All the best to your future competitions.  
Petch Ham, Soccer, Vanuatu



### TO HEIDI SCHMIDT

Good luck for the following years competitions ahead. And I hope to see you again!  
Evangelia Psaraki, Athletics, Greece



### TO RUSSIA JUDO TEAM

All the best, good luck and see you in the next championship.  
Krisztian Toth, Judo, Hungary

PHOTOS: SIA GEOK LENG

Leave a message for someone on [facebook.com/youngolympiandaily](https://www.facebook.com/youngolympiandaily)

# FRIEND, MENTOR OR FOE?

*Despite different coaching techniques, athletes recognise it is always for their own good*

BY MELISSA LIN

Some yell, some cheer and others even shed tears of joy or disappointment for their athlete.

They are the coaches who, love them or hate them, play a key role in the athletes' performance during the Youth Olympic Games.

Australian freestyle wrestler Haris Fazlic may only have trained under his coach, Fabricio Itte, for 17 days, but through the Games the two of them have developed a close relationship.

Haris was full of praise for Mr Itte, whom he says he hangs out with for about 12 hours a day during the YOG. "He's very nice, very enthusiastic, funny and makes you laugh. When you do something wrong, he will yell at you but you'll know that everything he does is good for you," said the 16-year-old.

Mr Itte, 30, believes that a coach should develop the athlete holistically. "You don't just show them how to do things, you give them the tools to be able to deal with things," he said.

"I'm very big on punctuality, respect for myself and each other, on how they treat the opposition and how they deal with defeat because I think that lays a foundation for later,"



Fencer Wang Lianlian (left) says that her coach, Mr Wu Hanxiong, demands the best from her. PHOTO: WANG SIMIN

he added.

For Team Ireland's athletics coach Bernie Alcorn, her philosophy is to help athletes reach their potential. To her, being nice, instead of being fierce, is the way to go.

"Sometimes, the athletes have to learn from their own mistakes. You can advise them and then they can decide whether to take your advice or not," said the 52-year-old who has been coaching for 25 years.

However, some coaches adopt a stricter approach, albeit with the same hope of unleashing the true potential of those under their wing.

Mr Wu Hanxiong, 30, who coaches China's three fencing athletes, is one such coach.

Cadet foil fencer Wang Lianlian, who trains under him, said: "During

training, he is a stern coach. He has high expectations of me and demands my best."

Mr Wu revealed that his strictness may be due, in part, to his wish for his fencers to clinch a gold at the Olympics because he did not manage to fulfil that dream. He was a silver medallist in the 2004 Athens Olympics and a national player for 12 years before retiring to be a coach.

"In everyday life, we are friends. But during trainings, I'm her teacher. On normal training days, I have a well-laid out schedule for them to complete. So I want them to be serious, and concentrate on their training," Mr Wu explained.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY  
SIA GEOK LENG AND NG YEE THENG

**"In everyday life, we are friends. But during training, I'm her teacher."**

– Mr Wu Hanxiong, China's fencing coach, explaining the intricacies of the coach-athlete relationship

## Starry starry-eyed

BY CASSANDRA YEAP

Clinging along barricades and partitions, the fans waited, notebooks at hand. Screaming athletes' names, they jostled for prime positions and did not rest till they captured their target's attention.

Many athletes at the Youth Olympic Games may not yet be known on the world stage, but to these fans, they are already every bit a star.

One such admirer was ball boy Alex Chen. The fact that he had never heard of any of the players at the Kallang Tennis Centre venue before the Games did not faze him.

"If they look really good on court when they play tennis, I'll go and get their autograph."

A school tennis player himself, the 13-year-old student said that he and other volunteers often approached players during their practices or after matches.

Between themselves, they have amassed a hefty collection of autographs, photographs, players' headbands and wristbands and discarded balls.

When quizzed about his personal



Chinese tennis player Zheng Saisai signs autographs for clamouring fans.

PHOTO: CASSANDRA YEAP

trove, Alex boasted: "I got loads of players. I got Gavrilova, Babos, Golding, Rodriguez from Venezuela," and displayed a signature-filled page of his notebook as evidence.

To housewife Tan Sok Hoon, getting players' autographs is a way of supporting them. The 42-year-old was one of a crowd persisting to get Chinese tennis player Zheng Saisai's attention.

Following a brief but heated negotiation, the 16 year-old's minders relented. When Saisai came over, Madam Tan repeatedly cheered her

in Mandarin "Zai jie zai li" – keep doing your best.

"To get to this position, they must have put in a lot of effort," she explained. "So I think they ought to be recognised for that."

Her son was with her. Earlier in the week, she also brought her two younger children to watch the matches.

The autographs will serve as a lasting reminder of what is possible when they give their best: "It's very inspiring for myself, my children, my family."



# BREAKING OUT OF THE BOX

*For these athletes, cultural restrictions are not an obstacle to sportsmanship*

BY AUDREY LIM  
AND NG YEE THENG

Not comfortable with exposing her shoulders for the swimming leg of modern pentathlon, Egypt's Jihan El Midany nearly quit her sport.

Swimming's governing body FINA had stricter requirements for swimwear that made the 18-year-old ditch her full body suit for a conventional one.

In Islam, women's clothing must cover the entire body with the exception of the face and hands.

Despite this, Jihan continued



Jihan El Midany competes during the Girls' Individual Final of Modern Pentathlon.

PHOTO: XINHUA/SYOGOC-POOL/LIU JIE

with her sport.

"Either I do it or not do it at all," the Egyptian said after consulting the religious authorities in her country.

Like her, many female athletes from Islamic countries want to change the misconception that dressing conservatively, like wearing the *hijab* (headscarves worn by Muslim women), prevents them from taking part in sports.

This follows the incident in April when football's governing body FIFA prevented the Iranian girls soccer team from playing in their traditional headscarves.

The girls now wear long-sleeved tops, trousers that fall below the knees and long stockings.

Meanwhile, Tunisian steeplechase runner Nour Sioud does not wear a *hijab* when competing. "I only intend to wear a *hijab* when I grow up," the 17-year-old said. She added that most girls in Tunisia only start wearing the *hijab* in their 30s.

Currently, there are over 50 predominantly Islamic countries participating in the Games.

Qatari shooter Bahya Mansour Al Hamad said that fathers often have the final say in the matters of their daughters' lives.

This is the first time Qatar is sending female athletes to the Olympic Games.

However, the fathers of 15-year-old Iranian football girls Mogharrab Zad Hosseinali, Nastaran Moradloo and Yasaman Pakjoo, all encourage them to play sports.

They started with futsal before progressing to football. Futsal is a variant of football. Their team was formed four months ago after



The Iran girls football team pose for a traditional group photo before the start of the girls bronze medal match. PHOTO: SPH-SYOGOC/EDDIE CHEN

being talent-scouted through futsal competitions around the country.

Though there is usually greater support in sports for men in Iran, female national teams do have sufficient training facilities as well.

"If the government sees that we are improving, they will provide more funding," said Iranian girls' football coach Shahrzad Mozafar, 39.

Some of the female athletes from Islamic nations were introduced to sports because their family members were former sportsmen.

Libyan NOC official Masara Khraif said her father was in the national football team while her

mother, who is now a member of the Olympic Committee and tennis federation, was a ping pong player.

Sharing a similar sporting background is 17-year-old Bahya, who has cousins who are shooters.

"I am trying to show that girls can do it – studying and playing sports at the same time," said Jihan, who was Egypt's flag bearer at the YOG opening ceremony.

She adds: "It won't be easy but the end will be very nice."

When the Iranian girls were asked if they want to inspire other girls in their country, Nastaran summed it up most aptly: "We are!"

**"I am trying to show that girls can do it – studying and play sports at the same time."**

– Egypt's modern pentathlete Jihan El Midany, who hopes to be an inspiration and role model to other Muslim girls

## Faster, higher, stronger — with faith

BY CASSANDRA YEAP  
AND NUR ASYIQIN

Athletes and officials from Fiji and Gambia rubbed shoulders with Singaporeans — literally — on Sunday.

They attended Mass at the Church of St Francis of Assisi, receiving communion and kneeling at pews alongside the congregation.

Sitting in the front rows of the church, the Fiji team was an unmistakable sight in matching blue buttoned-down shirts. When the priest signalled it was time to pass the peace to, or greet, one another, they turned warmly to their neighbours.

Attending the service was a priority for teams, such as Team Fiji, even when away from home.

"Fiji is a Christian country and religion runs parallel to everything we do, whether it be work or play," team official Eugene Panuve said.

"In this case, being sport, we find it just as important to come to church as to compete in the Games," the 23-year-old added.

While a multi-faith centre and prayer rooms are built into the village, religious services are not

provided.

When interviewed, liaison officers from Fiji and Austria had no knowledge of any formal protocol to bring athletes to external religious venues.

Nevertheless, religious faith is an important source of inspiration for many of the athletes here.

Roughly half of the athletes in this paper's informal poll said the first thing they do when they wake up is pray. A large proportion of these were athletes from Caribbean and African nations.

For Fijian sprinter Lepani Naivalu, a finalist in the 100m race last Saturday night, the 17-year-old recalled how his faith had helped him.

"Before I ran, I asked for strength and guidance for me to run a good race," Lepani said.

"It was tough, with every athlete with me on the track," the Fijian confessed. "There was a lot of pressure."

**"Before every shot, I say a little prayer."**

– Singapore archer Abdul Dayyan on how religion acts as a source of confidence

He weathered the stress, and beat his personal best.

Others also found comfort and motivation in their faith. "Whenever I was troubled after a bad day at training, I would turn to God for encouragement," 16-year-old Singaporean diver Timothy Lee said.

Meanwhile for Team Singapore archer, Abdul Dayyan Mohamad Jaffar, religion is a source of confidence that helps steady his hand.

"Before every shot, I say a little prayer," Abdul Dayyan said.

As a Muslim, he wakes up before sunrise for the first of five prayers in the day.

In the archery mixed teams competition last week, Abdul Dayyan clinched the bronze medal with his teammate Elif Begunham Unsal from Turkey. This was after a long battle with their opponents, Miriam Alacorn from Spain and Md Emdad Haque Milon from Bangladesh.

Having tied at five set points each at the end of five rounds, the two teams moved into a tie-breaking shootout match.

Abdul Dayyan and Elif won by a single point: they both shot perfect



Fiji athletes, in blue, with heads bowed in unison at the Church of St Francis of Assisi. PHOTO: CASSANDRA YEAP

tens, leaving their opponents, with their total score of 19, in the dust.

The 16-year-old is sure his faith helped him with his sport.

"It's the month of Ramadan and, God willing, our prayers will be answered," he said.



# ATHLETES' DAY OUT

BY CASSANDRA YEAP

With the Youth Olympic Games in its final days, athletes done with their competitions have been taking in local sights.

In the day, they toured schools and the streets of Singapore. The Fiji team visited its twinning school of St Anthony's Canossian Secondary School. Percussion rhythms greeted the athletes as they stepped from the bus, courtesy of the school's anklung ensemble.

Principal Melanie Ann Martens, herself a former national hockey player, was on hand to welcome the athletes.

As she introduced her school of a few thousand students as a small one, team officials and athletes exchanged bemused looks.

The male athletes, in particular, seemed to enjoy making friends in the all-girls school. At the revelation that trim Charles Lolohea was a weightlifter, his hosts gasped audibly. Gregarious tracker Lepani Naivalu, 17, cheekily said he was 15 when introducing himself, lowering his age to match those of the girls around him.

The school's Chinese orchestra and the Indian dance troupe performed, much to the delight of the athletes. To the surprise of their hosts, the Fijians then took a turn on the instruments.

Student Isabel Soh was delighted by her encounter with the athletes. Said the 14-year-old: "It was fun! They were a lot more sociable than I thought they'd be."

A trip to Changi Museum and spot of shopping at Little India's mega department store Mustafa whiled the afternoon away. Electronics, chocolates, bags, and a zodiac necklace, were among their buys.

At night, some athletes rocked to tunes spun by DJs and mingled by the beach. Teams from countries like Germany, Gambia and Kenya took to Tanjong Beach Club for a chill-out party organised by the German Olympic Federation.

Surrounded by coconut trees, they sipped drinks (non-alcoholic for the under-aged) and tucked into poolside dining. The strict bedtime curfews no longer an issue, they lingered in the company of new-found friends.

PHOTOS: EUNICE CHAN, LAM YARN AND TAN YAN XI



ABOVE: German gymnast Oliver Amann (top) and friends create a triple-decker in the pool at Tanjong Beach Club, Sentosa, during a party organised by Deutsche Sportjugend.



TOP: Guam wrestler Christopher Aguon (centre) goes shopping with coach Lui Ting and athlete Michael Gaitan at Suntec City.

ABOVE: It is back to school for Fiji athletes Lepani Naivalu and Diau Bauro, as they sit in for an English lesson at St Anthony's Canossian Secondary School.

RIGHT: Namibian coach Agnes Samaria and Botswanan official Basadi Akoonyatse dance with a mime at Tanjong Beach Club in Sentosa.

