

Young Olympian Daily

2010

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TUE
17
AUG
2010UNMASKING THE
MASCOTSLyo and Merly
unveiled

3

"I'LL BE COMING
FOR THEM"Odane Skeen embraces
the challenge

4



EVERY DOG HAS ITS DAY

Underdog nations triumphs
against stronger opponents

7

TWEET OF THE DAY

Finally had my first forray into
the Village today. It was hot,
humid and SUPER exciting!

@lizlaw123

Elizabeth Law, Chief Editor

Young
Olympian
DailyThe official
2010 Youth Olympic Village
newspaperA publication by the
Wee Kim Wee School of
Communication and
Information,
NTUMIND OVER
MATTER:
THAI TENNIS
COMEBACK*Asia's best in tennis, Thailand,
show that they have what it takes to
overcome powerhouses America and
Europe*

BY CASSANDRA YEAP

It was a study in contrasts — the fair, blonde girl from Belarus versus the tan, tomboyish Thai.

On the stands, the spectators were just as clashing – Belarus fans decked in green-and-red striped jerseys, while the Thais were dressed in traditional costumes.

But more drama was going on court than a mere juxtaposition of cultures. A match of wills was underway.

Wiry Thai Kumkhum Luksika was crushed 1-6 in the first set. But she clawed back to dominate the better-ranked Ilona Kremen 6-3 in the second set. In the third, she swept ahead to clinch the set — and match — with a decisive 6-0.

It was not the first time she had come from one set down to win a decisive victory. Luksika had done it just the day before.

In advancing to the quarterfinals,

Luksika had left in her wake higher-ranked peers Ilona — who had just the day before beat 2010 Wimbledon Junior Championships finalist Sachie Ishizu — and Adriana Perez.

Thailand has been known to produce players undaunted by traditional American and European powerhouses of the game.

Among them is Paradorn Srichaphan, who at his career-high of 9th in the world is the highest ever ranked Asian tennis player, and the first Asian to break in to the top ten ranking.

The highest ranked Thai female player, Tamarine Tanasugarn, has also beaten world number ones such as Jennifer Capriati and Jelena Janković.

Luksika's coach, Thanakorn Srichaphan — who is also the older brother of Paradorn — chalked up the success of Thailand's top players, including Luksika, to mental strength.

Said the 42-year-old: "It's about your mind on court and outside of court, and

when you are playing. When you're down one set, even when you're down 0-5, you come back to win."

He recalled how that morning, he had given Luksika advice on the mental aspects of the game and how to stay confident on the court.

This is especially key in tennis, where success is based on momentum: "One point can turn the game and one game can turn the match."

Another key factor to success is a good relationship between the athlete and coach.

Thanakorn said he saw his role as keeping his player motivated and encouraged. He stressed the importance of letting the player know he was right there with them.

"Even if you're on court and I'm outside, I'll be with you."

He also advised players to first learn to love the game with all their heart and mind, as it would get more difficult when it got to competitions.

Luksika Kumkhum of
Thailand hits a return to
Ilona Kremen of Belarus
during the Singapore 2010
Youth Olympic Games (YOG)
Girls' Singles Second Round
Match 3 at the Kallang
Tennis Centre.PHOTO: SPH-SYOGOC/GARY
GOH

COLUMN

Beyond the tally



BY BENEDICT YEO

By now, the first medals of the Games would have been awarded. Celebrations would well be underway for the winners, and tears of disappointment would have flowed and stopped.

In a way, the medals are what the Games is about. They celebrate victory, exalt the fastest, the most nimble, and the strongest.

But medals should not, and cannot, be all that the Games is about. By themselves, medals do not tell of those who trained as hard as the winners,

but missed out by a hair's breadth. They do not tell of those affected by accidents, nor of those who had to train under adverse circumstances.

IOC President Jacques Rogge said at the Opening Ceremony that there is a difference between a winner and a champion.

"To win, you merely have to cross the finish line first," he said. "To be a champion, you have to inspire admiration for your character, as well as for your physical talent."

I am not saying that we do away with the medals. In fact, we need them as a source of motivation, and reward of triumphing.

But winning medals should not become the main motivation for competing, or even training.

The Olympics is not about winning; even the IOC does not keep an official medal tally.

Instead, we should look at unlikely champions — those who possess the never-say-die spirit. They have neither a place on the podium, nor an entry in the record books. But these are the people who, against all odds, competed and overcame.

Many remember John Stephen Akhwari, who came in last in the 1968 Summer Olympics marathon due to injury. But through grit and determination, he hobbled his way to the finishing line.

Root for the winners, yes, celebrate with them. But let's not forget these 'other' champions, champions like John Akhwari.

MEDALS WON YESTERDAY

COUNTRY	VVV			TOTAL
	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	2	2	2	6
CANADA	2	0	3	5
CHINA	1	2	1	4
AUSTRALIA	2	1	0	3
ITALY	1	1	1	3
UNITED STATES	0	2	1	3
GERMANY	0	1	2	3
SOUTH AFRICA	1	0	1	2
UKRAINE	1	0	1	2
AZERBAIJAN	1	0	0	1
BULGARIA	1	0	0	1
DPR KOREA	1	0	0	1
HUNGARY	1	0	0	1
IRAN	1	0	0	1
JAPAN	1	0	0	1
JORDAN	1	0	0	1
MONGOLIA	1	0	0	1
NEW ZEALAND	1	0	0	1
CHINESE TAIPEI	0	1	0	1
COLOMBIA	0	1	0	1
INDIA	0	1	0	1
ISRAEL	0	1	0	1
KAZAKHSTAN	0	1	0	1
KOREA	0	1	0	1
MOLDOVA	0	1	0	1
SPAIN	0	1	0	1
THAILAND	0	1	0	1
VENEZUELA	0	1	0	1

COUNTRIES WHICH WON ONE BRONZE MEDAL
AUSTRIA, FINLAND, INDONESIA, NORWAY, PORTUGAL, SINGAPORE, TURKEY, UZBEKISTAN, VIETNAM

“Race smart ... try to keep steady and save as much energy to the end.”
– Aaron Barclay, 17, New Zealand Gold medallist, Men's Triathlon

NEWS IN NUMBERS

1920



The year tug of war was discontinued as an Olympic sport.

3

Number of coins launched by the Monetary Authority of Singapore to commemorate YOG. The coins bear the image of Lyo and Merly and the Olympic rings, and come in values of S\$2, \$5 and \$10.

27

Number of US states represented by Team USA. Leading the way are athletes from California (16), followed by Texas (8) and Illinois (7).

2

The number of swimming caps Michael Phelps wears. The second cap is to smooth out the wrinkles on the first.

YOVoice Shout-outs and dedications



TO TEAM PHILIPPINES

Good luck and all the best to the swim team from the Philippines!
Patricia Hapsani, Swimming, Indonesia



TO TEAM GERMANY

I love the way Germany swims! Waiting to compete with them...
Joachim Ofusuhene-Wise, Swimming, Ghana



TO EVERYONE

Good luck everyone! We are friend! Nice to meet you all.
Patarawadee, Swimming, Thailand



TO OLIVER ARMAN

Good luck to Oliver Arman from Germany!
Nathan Bailey, Trampoline, Great Britain



TO TEAM NAMIBIA

Do your best and good luck Namibia!
Anica Profitt, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Namibia

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PHOTOS: BHAVAN JAIPRAGAS AND JU XINHANG

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NEWS OF THE WORLD

RUSSIA

When Olympic gold medallist Alexander Popov first started swimming at age eight, he was afraid of water.

BHUTAN

Bhutan's national sport is archery and most villages have a shooting range.

USA

Rucker Park in New York City is the most famous streetball court in the world. Many NBA players, like Lamar Joseph Odom, developed their skills at Rucker.

GREECE

Fencing is one of the four sports which have been featured at every one of the modern Olympic Games. Fencing was also a sport in the original Olympic games in ancient Greece.

SINGAPORE

Singapore divers Timothy Lee and Myra Lee, both 16, and Chloe Chan, 17, are beginners in the sport, having stepped on the diving board only about a year ago.

FACES BEHIND LYO AND MERLY

Wearing the 10kg costumes is no easy task for these mascot talents of the Youth Olympic Games



Glenn Tan and Ruan Jing Wen (centre) with their mascot minders Sophia Chua and Minami Muraoka. PHOTO: CHLOE TANG

BY CHLOE TANG

They are everywhere, celebrities in their own right. Bags, soft toys, t-shirts, key chains and even on public buses. They even have their own Facebook page with 2,570 likes. When they enter the room, heads turn and cameras snap.

Everyone knows Lyo and Merly, the two mascots for the inaugural Youth Olympic Games can be seen before matches, at the Suntec Convention Centre and in the Youth Olympic Village. But not many know who they are when they shed their whopping 10kg costumes.

"I still find it entertaining how people find us cute," said student Glenn Tan, one of the mascot talents for Lyo. He is paired with Ruan Jing Wen, a mascot talent for Merly.

Six pairs of mascots are deployed around the island daily, where they make five appearances with two-hour intervals. These appearances wear out

the talents considerably even though there are inbuilt fans in the suits.

"We are perspiring inside the costume and Lyo's head is considerably heavy," Mr Tan explained.

Lyo's head weighs 8kg while Merly's head is 6kg. To keep the heads in place and support their weight, the heads are attached to a harness worn by the volunteers.

"I actually like Merly more than Lyo," said Glenn with a tinge of envy, "it is so hard for Lyo to move around."

Mr Tan has to bend down when passing through areas with low signboards in his costume. Lyo's mane, resembling the Flame of Passion of the Spirit of Youth, adds height.

For these reasons, the height of all mascot talents is kept between 1.55 and 1.7 metres.

The mascots have to be assisted by minders like Sophia Chua and Minami Muraoka to handle the costumes that are mostly made of foam.

The minders help to guide them

around the venues as talents have to see through the eyes and mouths of the costumes, which are partially covered by mesh.

Their presence helps to control the situation as young children can get carried away at times.

"Sometimes they pull Merly's hair, or Lyo's tail and whack their heads," said Ms Chua.

Children tend to crowd around them and request for multiple pictures to be taken. This sometimes results in the mascots getting their break 20 minutes late.

Teachers accompanying students need to constantly remind them to be gentle with the mascots.

When asked what happens when they need to use the washroom while in their costume, Ms Ruan said: "We usually go to the restrooms before appearances to avoid such situations."

It will certainly be an interesting sight to behold when Lyo and Merly enter the washrooms.

BRIEFS

Jos drops in



Deputy Village Mayor Joscelin Yeo visited two injured triathletes yesterday evening. Ms Yeo met with Cristina Luizzet Betancourt de Leon and Clara Wong, who were involved in Sunday's crash with Kim Heesun.

As of press time, Heesun was still in hospital under observation.

NZ triathlete triumphs

New Zealander Aaron Barclay won gold at the men's individual triathlon yesterday. He did not expect to win as it was his first race outside of Oceania. The former swimmer finished 13.79 seconds ahead of pre-race favourite American Kevin McDowell.

Swimming Sharks

The South African contingent erupted in cheers when Chad le Clos won the 200m individual medley in 2.00.68s. Not to be outdone, Canadian fans held up their flags proudly when Rachel Nicol's name was announced, winning gold for the 50m breaststroke event in 32.06s.

Taekwondo Titans

Host country Singapore picked up its first medal yesterday when Daryl Tan Jian Jun won a bronze in the men's Under-55kg Taekwondo event yesterday. After defeating Daryl in the semis, Iran's Kaveh Rezaei took home gold, beating Kazakhstan's Nursultan Mamayev in the final.

Isinbayeva graces the Village

Russian pole-vaulter and Games' ambassador Yelena Isinbayeva was at the World Cultural Village yesterday evening to interact with the young athletes. She stopped by at the networking workshop and motivated budding Olympians to enjoy their stay here.

The creative side of her was unveiled at the Tile Mosaic booth where she meticulously created her own unique tile. Many young Russian athletes were elated to catch a glimpse of Ms Isinbayeva at the Russian booth.

T-30 MINUTES TO...

TIME ALONE WITH MUM

Lending her support to fellow mums, Juleen Shaw was at East Coast Park to experience the competitive tension just before the Men's triathlon final.

PHOTO: ZAKARIA ZAINAL



8:50 am
Moments to the race, USA's Kevin McDowell cracks a smile as mum Traci tells him to have fun.

8:21 am
Friends and family lean over the fence, bidding the triathletes good luck. Feels more like a community event than the Olympics.

8:25 am
Triathletes start warming up, taking running dives into the sea.

8:28 am
Alois Knabl from Austria gets a peck on the cheek from mum.

Further along the beach, Boyd Littleford from Zimbabwe gets a tremulous smile from mum Margot, who reveals that Boyd is still recovering

from a dislocated shoulder and other rugby-related injuries.

8:35 am
Clutching a camera, Beate, the mother of Germany's Tobias Klesen, confides that she hasn't been able to sleep well since the Opening Ceremony.



CHAT WITH A CHAMPION



Angela Ruggiero
Ice Hockey
USA



Three-time Olympic Ice Hockey player Angela Ruggiero is not only the all-time leader in games played for Team USA, but also a humanitarian who has founded a girls' hockey school.

1

The ranking given to her by "The Hockey News" in its list of best female hockey players in the world.

4

The number of times she was voted Top Defenseman in the World Championships.

2005

The year which she became the first woman non-goalie to play in a men's hockey team in North America.

"I think one of the most important moments in sports is to enjoy the moment and enjoy the Games. It's gonna be really fast, so take lots of pictures while you're here and make lots of friends."

— Angela's advice to the YOG athletes

PHOTOS: INTERNET

PROFILE

ODANE SKEEN

ATHLETICS

JAMAICA

"I'LL BE COMING FOR THEM"

The one to beat in the 100m sprint, Odane Skeen, is confident about his performance in the YOG and hopes to emulate his idol, fellow Jamaican sprinter, Asafa Powell.

Photos by Darren Tan



BY DARREN TAN

Potentially the fastest sprinter on the Youth Olympic Games track, 16-year-old Odane Skeen was a picture of calm when spotted in the Village Square with his fellow Jamaican athletes.

The young athlete was clad casually in a green top with a purple towel draped over his head and ears plugged into Sony headphones.

He qualified for the YOG in April by sweeping gold medals in the under-17 100m (10.53s) and 200m (20.84s, breaking the competition record) in the Caribbean Free Trade Association Games. The games acts as a showpiece of young and upcoming athletes from the Caribbean region and has produced the likes of Usain Bolt, the current 100m world record holder.

Odane was six when he first started sprinting. His father was the first to introduce him to the sport. "My parents have always been supportive. The sprinting technique was hard at first. It sometimes still is," he said.

But Odane was not the least worried about his competitors

TEAM PROFILE BASKETBALL, THE PHILIPPINES



Meet the faces of the Philippines basketball team. PHOTO: IVAN TAN

“To prepare for my race, I listen to dancehall music and visualise myself winning.”

– Odane on his race preparations

Dribbling their way to glory

BY DEBORAH LEE

For the boys of the Philippines three-a-side basketball team, making sacrifices for the love of the sport is not an issue.

The team comprises of Jeron Teng, 16, and Cris Tolomia, Bobby Parks and Michael Pate, all 17. All four were chosen from the Under-18 national squad to fit the new 3-on-3 format of play that has been introduced at the Games.

The boys, who are juggling between school and sports, have made a formidable team so far. One of their sporting highlights was emerging first at the Southeast Asia Basketball Association Under-18 Championship in Myanmar this year.

With the rest of the national squad, they managed a clean sweep of all their games and earned a spot at

the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Asia tournament this September.

Being part of the national squad meant moving away from home for two of the boys. Cris’ family is a one and half hour plane ride away from Manila while Michael’s is a four hour drive away.

But the team is carrying on what could almost be called a family legacy. Jeron’s father and Cris’ brother were former professional basketball players. Bobby’s father, Bobby Parks Senior, was talent-spotted by the Philippine Basketball Association to play in the country’s professional league.

The four possess strong camaraderie even off the court, at times poking fun at each other’s jokes. Here at the Youth Olympic Village, the boys enjoy playing on

the Playstation together.

Their coach, Jose Ramon, said that making it to the YOG was one of his team’s biggest accomplishments thus far. “We are here to compete for the gold,” he said.

Even their coach has a stellar sporting career that many are envious of.

Coach Ramon played college basketball at De La Salle University, and later on in the men’s Professional Basketball League in the Philippines for a year. His coaching career spans more than eight years and he brings with him a wealth of experience in the sport.

His advice for basketballers who want to become professionals: “You have to work hard and be willing to improve yourself. You can never be satisfied with what you have.”

in the YOG. He declared confidently: “I’ll be coming for them.”

Odane will be competing at the blue riband event of athletics – the 100m sprint. He is the second fastest in the 39-strong field with a personal best of 10.46s. He will come up against the likes of David Bolarinwa (10.06s) of Great Britain, Jirapong Meenapra (10.51s) of Thailand and Mexican Hector Ruiz (10.54s) from tomorrow onwards.

Perhaps his success in running is due to his pre-match ritual, rooted in Jamaican culture. “To prepare for my race, I listen to dancehall music and visualise myself winning,” he said. Dancehall is a genre of Jamaican popular music which has its roots in reggae.

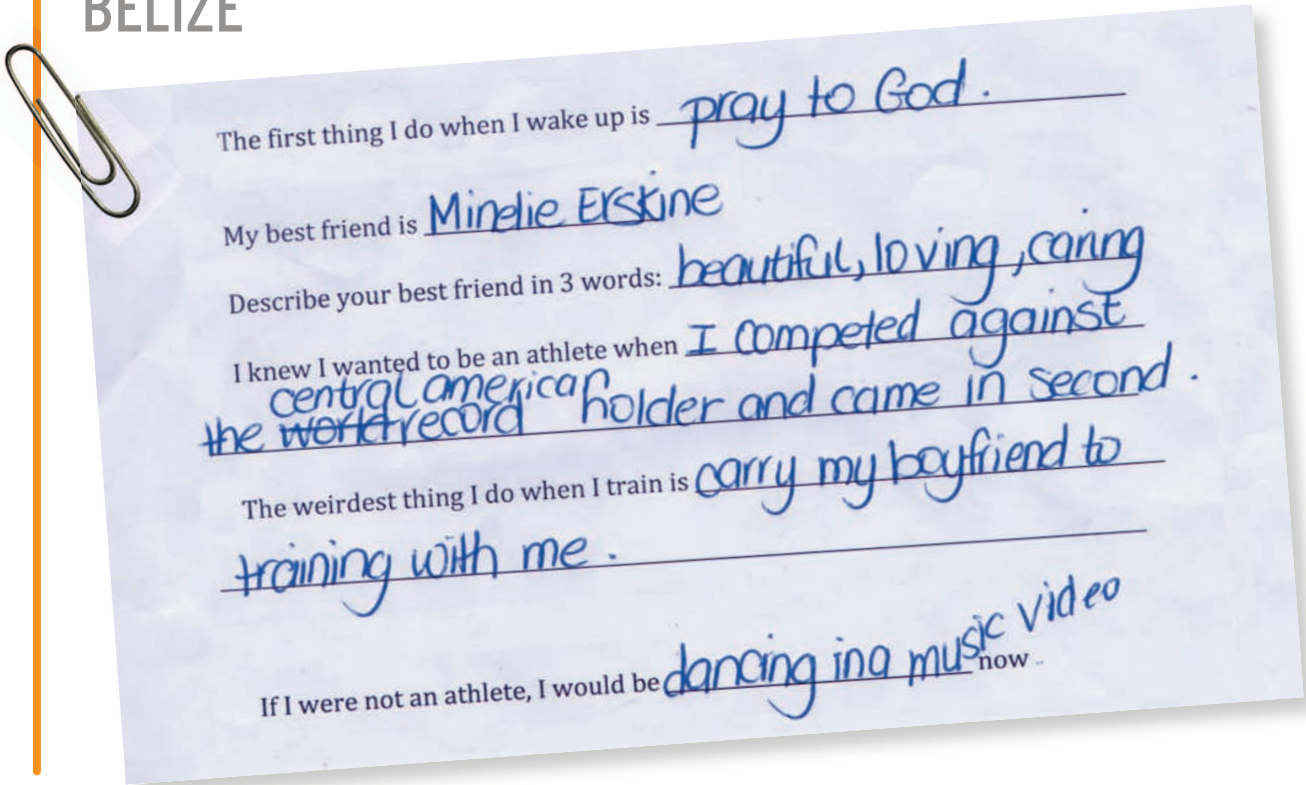
Just like his predecessor, Bolt, Odane showcases a playful and humorous side. Throughout the interview, Odane gamely struck poses with different hand signs, and even joked about how Singapore’s food “could be more spicy”.

However, it is another Jamaican, Asafa Powell, whom Odane hopes to emulate.

He said: “I very much hope to model myself after him because he is very humble. I also aim to beat the world record in the future.”

DNA

LEANNE MURRAY
ATHLETICS
BELIZE





PIECING TOGETHER HISTORY

Madagascan swimmer Tsilavina M. Ramanantsoa leaving his mark on one of 3,600 tiles that form a giant mosaic. His message "Peace for Youth" will be exhibited at the Esplanade MRT station along with other messages of hope. PHOTOS: NUR ASYIQIN

BY NUR ASYIQIN

Long after the dust settles on YOG, the imprints left by the athletes will not just be preserved in memory, but also etched in clay.

Many athletes have left their messages and hand-drawn pictures at the Tile Mosaic booths in the Village Square. Organisers hope to form a giant mosaic of 3,600 tiles, one for every athlete present at the Games.

At the booths, the athletes engrave pictures and words on palm-sized ceramic tiles. And they all have messages of their own to leave behind.

Madagascan swimmer Tsilavina M. Ramanantsoa left a message

behind on Sunday morning. Bent over in quiet concentration, the 18-year-old chipped the words "Peace for Youth" on his tile.

Full of pride for her country, 17-year-old Ashrakt Metwaly's tile had her country, Egypt's abbreviation "EGY" printed in bold letters, accompanied by a row of pyramids.

"I really like it. It's so amazing to be here doing this and I'm very proud," said Ashrakt, who is competing in the Girls' Hammer event.

The designs of the tiles are varied, but most contain messages of hope: smiling bears, blooming flowers, and fluttering hearts.

Designing the tiles usually takes 15 to 30 minutes, after which

the tiles are carefully packed and sealed into little plastic bags.

The tiles collected from the athletes will be fired up after the Games to harden the clay and ensure the tiles remain permanent. The massive mural will then be permanently installed at the Esplanade MRT station.

So far, the response has been "enthusiastic and eager", booth volunteers say.

Sprinters, swimmers, and boxers from countries like Iran, Spain and Cuba have been filing into the booths to leave their mark.

The mosaic will not simply be a memory. It is also a legacy of the world's first ever YOG and the young athletes who made history through their participation.



Learning Olympic values by paper folding

BY CHERIE THIO

Folding origami is not just a simple activity of art and craft. At the Youth Olympic Village, this kids' craft has been given an important role of instilling values of friendship, respect and excellence.

These values are represented in three shapes — the crane, heart and star.

As part of the Community Project under the Culture and Education Programme (CEP), athletes can visit the "Fold-an-Origami" booths near the YOV Transport Mall and learn how to fold origami. These paper origami shapes will then fill an empty plastic sculpture of the YOG emblem. The final complete sculpture will be displayed at the YOG museum at the Singapore Youth Olympics Games Organising Committee (SYOGOC) Headquarters in Singapore.

Aside from athletes, local students, beneficiaries and special education school students will also be entering the Village to

participate in the paper folding exercise. The total number of people folding origami will be a total of 9,410.

So far, volunteers manning the "Fold-An-Origami" booth said the response has been enthusiastic. About 100 athletes visited the booth on its first day of operation. 50 odd athletes had already visited the booth in four hours the day before.

"Most of them do not know how to fold, so we teach them step-by-step," said Sammel Yeo, one of the CEP facilitators at the booth. To overcome the language barrier for some athletes, they mainly communicate through actions as it is clearer.

Athletes seem to enjoy the activity. Ghana's Rita Luonab, 17, who is competing in athletics, said: "I enjoyed it very much and it was not difficult as the volunteer taught me patiently."

The first athlete to fold an origami was Great Britain's Andrew Martin, who will be competing in the canoeing events.



A participant showing his completed origami heart, representing respect. PHOTO: NUR ASYIQIN

9,410

The total number of people who will learn the Olympic values of friendship, respect and excellence through origami.



THE UNDERCURRENT OF THE UNDERDOGS

Song Jong Hun of Republic of Korea (left) competes with Leonardo Affede of Italy (right) during the Cadet Male Individual Sabre final. Song Jong Hun won the game 15-8 to clinch the gold medal. PHOTO: XINHUA/SYOGOC - POOL/ZHANG CHUANQI

Underdog nations Ukraine, Tajikistan and South Korea cause upset in Taekwondo and Fencing over the hot favourites

BY SANTHIYA KULASAKERAN AND CLARA LOCK

Big reputations count for nothing, as fencing and taekwondo minnows showed on the first day of the Games.

Underdogs Ukraine, Tajikistan, and South Korea threw the formbook out the window and claimed the scalps of traditional heavyweights en route to the podium.

Little known Tajikistan's Shukrona Sharifova won bronze in the taekwondo women's under-44kg category, while unfavoured Ukraine's Iryna Romoldanova won silver.

Only Russia's Anastasia Valueva, who won gold, is recognisable in taekwondo circles.

Taekwondo was founded in Korea, and its neighbour China often sent athletes to train in Korea. However neither, along with the usual suspects Iran and Mexico, reached the finals.

In Ukraine, taekwondo is not as popular as sports such as football, said Ukrainian wrestler

Iryna Merleni. A gold medalist in Athens, she is now in Singapore as a YOG champion.

Now armed with an Olympic medal, 16-year-old Iryna hopes that taekwondo will become more popular back home.

"I want to inspire other young Ukrainian athletes doing taekwondo, so that they will want to compete and win at the YOG too," said the petite girl.

On the other side of events, fencing was experiencing a similar counter-trend.

Ranked 20 rungs under his opponent, South Korean Song Jong-hun unexpectedly triumphed over Leonardo Affede from longstanding powerhouse Italy in the men's sabre finals on Sunday.

Still stunned by his win, Song said: "I cannot think of anything right now. I just feel like I am floating on air".

Affede's coach, Tommaso Denticco, 41, was impressed by what he saw and admitted Song was the better fencer.

"My student displayed good fencing. But the Korean was stronger," he said. "He won Hungary, France, and Germany



Ukraine's Iryna Romoldanova (L) reacts during the Women's Under-44kg Taekwondo's semi-final match at the Youth Olympic Games. PHOTO: XINHUA/SYOGOC - POOL/ZHANG CHUANQI

"I want to inspire other young Ukrainian athletes doing taekwondo, so that they will want to compete and win at the YOG too."

- Under-44kg Taekwondo silver medalist, Iryna Romoldanova

before coming to meet Italy in the finals. He has won all the superpower nations in fencing."

Fencing an extremely popular sport in Italy since the 16th century, producing fencers like Greco, Pini, Pessina, and Nadi.

With the sport enshrined in Italy's culture, there are even schools and universities that specialise in imparting the skill and tradition of fencing.

In contrast, fencing is not as established in South Korea, which is known more for its prowess in taekwondo. It has been a 10-year gap since they last won an Olympic gold in fencing.

It was a day for the underdogs, and they more than showed that they are not here just to make up the numbers.

THE UNSUNG HEROES

BY LAI JUNJIE

It is eight in the morning. At this hour when many of us are still in bed, Siti Hajar, senior housekeeping supervisor, is already making her rounds at Hall 16.

In the morning glow of sunlight, she quietly pushes her trolley of cleaning equipment down the hallway, passing the many closed doors that await her meticulous attention to detail. Reaching the room carefully marked on a checklist, she gently knocks, before calling out, "Housekeeping!"

The housekeeping crew have a hard job, working 10 hour shifts every day, sometimes even up to 14 hours. "I often have to climb many flights of stairs during the job. Sometimes, I feel like an athlete myself!" says Ms Hajar, as she changes the bed linen.

She is part of the housekeeping crew that are responsible for cleaning the 6,000 beds used during YOG. And it is no easy task either. Each housekeeper has about seven minutes to clean each room. Nevertheless, they remain unfazed.

"Even though we are very tired everyday,

we are very happy. We sweat, we smile and we enjoy together," says fellow housekeeper, Zaiton Othman. Her favourite time of the day is when she can sit back with her colleagues at the end of a shift and drink some honey lemon juice together.

Downstairs at the laundry center, May Chan, the laundry manager, collects the soiled laundry using a Radio Frequency Identification machine. "No other laundry service in Singapore uses a machine like this," says Ms Chan proudly. It scans a barcode on each laundry bag, which corresponds to a holder's identification card. This replaces the traditional paper receipts that can be lost or mixed-up.

As if on cue, a hall resident pops in to collect his clothes. Ms Chan calls out a cheerful greeting to him and asks him about his day, while another colleague looks for his order. Soon, the resident's freshly-laundered clothes arrive, and Ms Chan presents it to him with evident pride.

She says: "I have to do my job properly, this is an important service for these people."

Down the road from the Residential Zone

is a vast kitchen that occupies the space of about two football fields. The Head of Food & Beverage, Kenneth Francisco, maintains a stoic gaze as he surveys the kitchen and his working chefs who carry the weighty duty of feeding the Village's population. He marches down the kitchen with measured steps, stopping occasionally to stir a large pot, or to help one of his chefs with the cooking.

"I have tried my best to ensure that my kitchen provides an international variety of food," says Mr Francisco amidst the hive of activity. "We actually invited people from Australia and other countries to taste our dishes and used their feedback to come up with our menu."

There is so much more to see, but Mr Francisco had to resume the interminable task of preparing enough food to feed the lunch crowd.

It is not even noon yet so much has happened within this short space of time. But for these tenacious men and women that are the backbone of the Youth Olympic Village, it is simply another hard day's morning.

And their stories...



ABOVE: One of the kitchen chefs hard at work preparing a pizza for dinner at the Dining Hall. The kitchen churns out three pizzas per minute. PHOTO: LAI JUNJIE



ABOVE: (from left) Project Manager Zaiton Othman, Senior Supervisors Zurainah Khairul and Siti Hajar as well as Operations Manager Muhammed Salleh after a morning of cleaning rooms. The housekeeping crew clean 6,000 beds in seven minutes every day. PHOTO: LAI JUNJIE



LEFT: Lin Ming Hong, 29 (left) and Andrea Chew, 28, keep the torch relay smooth during the six-day journey around Singapore. Behind the scenes, they labelled lampposts late at night so torchbearers would know their positions during the 305km long torch relay. PHOTO: EUNICE CHAN

LEFT: As a World Culture Village host, Okky Aryanto Tok, 14, dons a thick Viking costume in the scorching heat to attract people to the Norwegian booth set up by his school. He finds "taking a lot of photos with many athletes from different countries" and "receiving a lot of attention" a memorable experience. PHOTO: EUNICE CHAN