

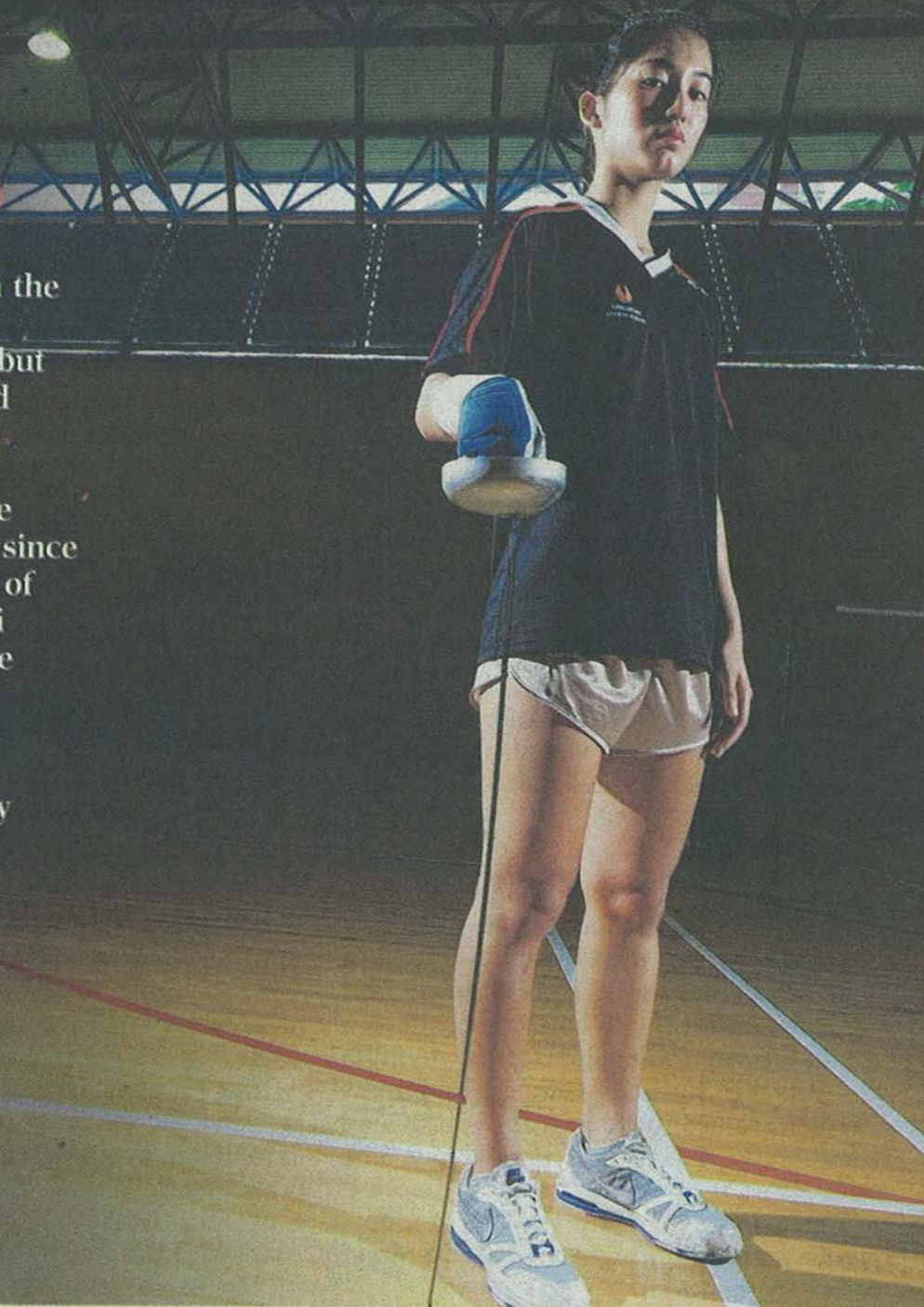
# big dreams

All eyes will be on our army of young athletes when the Youth Olympic Games roll into town in August.

The Singapore contingent has yet to be finalised, but one thing is for sure, there will be both veterans and newbies among them.

Several new sports associations - such as the Wrestling Federation of Singapore and the Singapore Modern Pentathlon Association - have been started since 2008 in a bid to have the country represented in all of the Games' 26 sports. That has given wrestler Puteri Erna Natasha and modern pentathlon athlete Valerie Lim the chance to showcase their new skills.

Meanwhile, established athletes like swimmer Amanda Lim and sailor Darren Choy are training rigorously in the hope that they can help the country nab some medals at the Games.



## VALERIE LIM

Age  
16

Event  
Modern  
pentathlon

School  
Singapore  
Sports School

## Training hard to overcome the odds

MODERN pentathlon may test the skills required of a 19th-century cavalry soldier, but the sport is taking baby steps here. It comprises five events: air pistol shooting, a 200m-swim, fencing, horse riding and a 3km run. Horse riding will be omitted at the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) while shooting and running will be combined.

Unrepresented in the Olympics and Asian Games, Singapore is now forming a team to compete in the YOG. As host, it automatically qualifies for the event.

That gave Valerie Lim the rare chance to experience the sport. "I would not have known about modern pentathlon if not for the YOG," she admitted.

The 16-year-old swimmer thinks that each event has its challenges. On firing an air pistol, the teen - who had never picked up the weapon before - said: "It was harder than I expected. I did not know I had to sight the gun, nor how to aim and where to put the foresight."

However, she has taken to shooting like a duck to water, and impressed the judges at last month's Asia-Oceania YOG modern pentathlon qualification. But, she has a lot of catching up to do after finishing last.

"It's a lot of pressure because the time we have to train for the YOG is very short. It won't be easy, especially with injuries," said Valerie, who injured the ligament on her right ankle last October and has to undergo physiotherapy and strengthening exercises.

Hobbling around at training sessions, Valerie is excited but cautious about the Games.

"I'm training as hard as I can. There are a lot of other countries stronger and with a better history in modern pentathlon who stand a much bigger chance than us but it's an honour to be able to represent the country."

FRANKIE CHEE