

It all started with a game of tag ...

Promising S'porean sprinter Liang Wei was inspired by a game of 'police-and-thief'

LOW LIN FHOONG

linfhoong@mediacorp.com.sg

LIANG Wei couldn't decide what sport she loved best and wanted to focus on.

So she did them all, and she represented Fuchun Primary School in athletics, badminton, basketball and table tennis.

Then a game of tag – or “police and thief” as it's popularly known here – helped her make her mind up.

“When I was in Primary 6, I was playing the game with my friends at the playground near my flat,” Liang Wei, now 16, told TODAY at her home, a flat in Woodlands, yesterday. “I managed to catch all my friends, and that got me thinking ... so I went for trials at the Singapore Sports School.

“I still play some table tennis, badminton and basketball at school, but it's only for fun as my time is now all spent on athletics.”

Besides track work five times a week, Liang Wei hits the gym every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Next week, the Secondary 4 student will don Singapore's colours at the inaugural Asian Youth Games, which officially open on Monday and close on July 7. Liang Wei will line up for the 100m event on Tuesday at Bishan Stadium.

The teenager qualified for the Games in April, at the National Schools Track and Field Championships where she clinched the “B” Division 100m gold medal with a time of 12.56sec.

Liang Wei, who sports a short, spunky hairdo, had earlier set personal best (PB) of 12.50sec at the 3rd Allcomers Meet in



Lady Gaga's *Poker Face* is what gets Liang Wei hyped up on race day.
ERNEST CHUA

March, but the result is not official due to strong tailwind.

“I've been training very hard for the Asian Youth Games this year with my coach, Pedro Acuna, in the gym and on the track,” she said.

“My goal is to break my PB, and hopefully I'll go under 12.50sec. Getting a medal

will be a bonus.

“There's definitely a bit of pressure on me, as I'm the fastest 100m sprinter in my school.”

It won't be just her schoolmates who'll be watching Liang Wei, after her performance at last year's International Children's Games in San Francisco.

The 16-year-old returned from the Games with a bronze medal in the 100m, after clocking her PB of 12.56sec behind her American and Korean rivals.

“It was my best international competition and I got to compete with athletes from 20 to 30 countries, including powerhouses like USA and Korea,” she said.

“I was just amazed and happy, and I didn't expect to do my PB there.”

LADY GAGA GEES HER UP

Approximately 1,400 athletes from 45 Asian countries will compete in nine sports – aquatics, 3-on-3 basketball, beach volleyball, bowling, table tennis, shooting, sailing, swimming and athletics – at the Asian Youth Games with 90 athletes from Team Singapore competing in the inaugural event.

Twelve Singaporean athletes will compete in track and field, which starts Tuesday and ends on July 3.

With Round 1 of the 100m event barely a week away, Liang Wei may be feeling some jitters, but she's already got her race-day playlist planned on her iPod.

“There are two songs I listen to for two different moods: *Poker Face* by Lady Gaga to get me in the hyper mood, and *Jet's Look What You've Done* when I need to calm down and relax,” she said.

Liang Wei can also count on the support from her parents and elder brother Eddie Liang.

“We'll definitely be at Bishan Stadium to cheer Liang Wei on,” said dad Jin Wen, who runs a stall at a foodcourt in Woodlands with Liang Wei's mother.

“We want her to do well.”

Added mum He Feng Mei: “We're very happy for her that she's in the Asian Youth Games. Liang Wei always loved sports as a child. We'll cheer her on, this is her dream.”