

Ilma, Dyana spearhead Malay challenge

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Malay bowlers in Singapore colours used to be a rare sight on competition lanes.

Not anymore, if Ilma Nur Jannah Fadzal and Nur Dyana Abu Bakar have their way.

At the Schools National Bowling Championships two weeks ago, the Singapore Sports School keglers tied for first place in the B girls' all-events with an 18-game total of 3,724 pinfalls, averaging 207 a game.

They were not only the first joint champions in the 15-year-old competition but also the first Malay winners in the girls' all-events.

Dyana and Ilma, both 15, are among an emerging crop of Malay talent. There are four other Malay bowlers in the Sports School's 56-strong squad, which makes it the largest number of Malays in the team to date.



Solid performances by Nur Dyana (left) and Ilma Nur Jannah, both 15, have forced the bowling fraternity to sit up and take notice.

Dyana and Ilma's solid performances have forced the fraternity to sit up and take notice.

Said national coach Henry Tan: "The last time we saw top local Malay bowlers was more than a decade ago.

"But now there are a few prospective talents coming through the Sports School."

He cited Rahman Noor, who represented Singapore from the 1980s to the early 1990s.

And now there are Ilma and



Dyana to light a trail for aspiring Malay keglers.

Ilma has been called a "trail-blazer" by Jessie Phua, president of the Singapore Bowling Federation (SBF).

Last year, she was the youngest member of the Singapore team that won a silver medal at the Asian Youth Games.

It was a proud moment for Ilma, a member of the SBF's national development squad.

The next goal for this high-fly-

ing youngster is to win an international title.

Big dreams, indeed. But few would bet against her achieving that.

In contrast, Dyana rose to prominence just this year but her story is no less compelling for she competes for her late mother, Siti Hajir, who died of lung cancer last month.

It was mum who inspired Dyana to give her all on the bowling lanes.

"When I saw my mother suffering, I worked even harder to win something so I could brighten up her day," she explained.

Said Phua: "It was an incredible display of mental strength by Dyana at this most trying period of her life.

"This is what sport is all about."

Such courage suggests that Dyana and Ilma have what it takes to go far.

Look out for them.