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 Albertario 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.”
**MEDALS WON YESTERDAY**

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“**NEWS IN NUMBERS**

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 Hopghead and Carrie Steineiser, who registered the first place in Olympic fencing history at the 1964 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 footyhead fans 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.

**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.

**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.

**Singapore**

At Marina Barrage, athletes learn about water conservation and contributing to the environment through hands-on activities.
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, Bia Shugurov 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. I knew I had a strong partner, their chances.

Anastasiya Spas of Ukraine.

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.

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. Photjoournalist 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.

BRIEFS

Shoot for gold

PHOTO: SPH-STYOGOC/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 Kashynov topping the scoreboard with 67.3 points, Brazilian Almeida Felipe Wu came in second. Korean Choi Daehan nicked the bronze from Belarus’ Alakssei Horbach.

Banking on sportsmanship

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

Comeback kid

After capsizing 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 Timeofy Yemelyanov from Kazakhstan with his timing of 1:45.46 against the average 1:28.96 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.

Orelana Romina’s splendid free kick from 25 yards out in the 29th minute was equalised by Equatorial Guinea captain Nelang Judi’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.
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
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

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 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.

“Can-do spirit”

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FRIEND, MENTOR OR FOE?

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

BY MELISSA LIN

Some yells, 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, Fabricius 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,” 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 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 week-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-eyed

BY CASSANDRA YEEP

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 trove, Alex boasted: “I got loads of players. I got Gorrilovea, 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.”
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 swimsuits than that modern pentathlon had. So the 17-year-old ditched 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 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.

For Fijian sprinter Lepani Naivalu, this is the first time Qatar is sending female athletes to the Olympic Games. However, in the first year of Zayan’s 15-year-old Iranian football girls Mogharrab Zad Hosseinali, Zastani Moradlou 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 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 Khraili 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.

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.

“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 four of five prayers in the day.

In the archery mixed teams competition last week, Abdul Dayyan clinched the bronze medal with his teammate Efene Begunham. He was able to do it after a long battle with their opponents, Miriam Alacron from Spain and Md Emad Haque Milan 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 Efene won by a single point: they both shot perfect 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.
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

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.

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.