

By Ms Chan Jing Jing

**Valerie Teo** is both a medical student and a national bowler. She recently took the Singles Gold medal and the Doubles' Silver at the 2006 World Youth Championships. How did it all start and what does she make of it all?



## Striking Gold

"I hope that our achievement as a team will inspire other budding athletes out there to believe that though a small country, we can achieve big things if we just believe."

**Congratulations on winning the tournament in Germany! How does it feel?**

It feels great. I have been to many majors, including World Women's and Asian Championships but the World Youth was a tournament that I somehow was not able to go to till this time (due to school or coach's rules). I think the feeling of winning the first medal, especially the first Gold medal of the tournament is something that words cannot describe. Honestly, it took a while for it to set in before I realised what had just gone on. I was most happy because it was a day for Singapore as we won both the gold and silver and we put ourselves on the world map as a team to look out for. I think that did a lot for our local community and I hope that our achievement as a team will inspire other budding athletes out there to believe that though a small country, we can achieve big things if we just believe.

**How did you pick up bowling and was there anyone in particular who inspired you?**

I picked it up when I was about 11. It began as a family outing, a weekend sport at the Singapore Island Country Club. I fell in love with the game almost instantly. (I mean who would not – exercise in aircon. Haha.) I started taking up bowling seriously in Primary 6 when I was 12. The club sent a group of us for the National Age Groups and I took part in the Under-17 category. To my surprise, I actually won that tournament and everything from there seemed to just go along smoothly. I cannot really pinpoint anyone in particular who really inspired me but I think the game itself really inspired me. It made me want to be the best I could be at it. And that has kept me going ever since.



Jing Jing is a third year student and an editorial team member of the medical students' magazine, *pULSE*. She loves jazz music and jazz dance and is currently wondering where she should do her electives.

**Balancing sports and studies can be trying.**

**What advice would you give to someone doing something similar?**

I think trying to balance anything is always difficult, be it sports, studies, personal life and family. At the end of the day, it is about prioritising and time management. At any point in time, you have to list what is most important to you and sacrifice what may be less urgent. There is never a perfect situation

but it is about making the most out of every opportunity that you are given. I have had a lot of rough times with balancing sports, studies and my social life. One always has to take a back seat and it is never easy. But if you keep the ultimate goal you wish to achieve at the end in mind all the time, then it gets easier along the way.

**What do you love about bowling and what is the best memory you have had?**

I would say the best memory I have in bowling is not the bowling itself but the human interaction. During the competition, everyone is out to "kill" everyone else but after it all ends, everything is left on the lanes and competitors become companions. I think that is the one thing which I really enjoyed. The friends I have made over the years and the bonds I have created with people from different countries have made bowling really enjoyable.

**Do you have any role models? And what would be your long term goal in bowling and in medicine?**

I think I would say Doctor Ben Tan has always been a role model. I heard stories about him all the way as I was growing up. He really managed his time well and always went all out to get what he wanted.

My long term goal in bowling is to hopefully increase the popularity of the sport so that my fellow colleagues and friends will be able to enjoy the game and benefit from it in so many ways as I have over these 10 years. As for medicine, I hope to gain as much knowledge as I can as a student now, so as to provide the best service and judgement in the future (and of course pass my exams). I hope to give back to the people who have been supporting me and my team all along. Because I believe the spirit of Team Singapore applies not only to sports but also to us as a nation.

*Valerie represented Singapore in the 2006 Asian Games in Doha. We would like to congratulate her for winning the women's doubles gold medal, together with Michelle Kwang and for breaking the Asian Games' six-game series record set by Japan 12 years ago. ■*