

NEWS

Bounding with enthusiasm

By ZHENG XIN
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Despite serious setbacks, including a broken neck and a fractured leg, Namibian Reinhardt van Zyl's passion for trampoline gymnastics has never waned.

"I enjoy myself so much during the flips and jumps with tricks," said the 17-year-old.



Reinhardt van Zyl PHOTO BY ZHENG XIN / CHINA DAILY

"It feels good with the jumps in the pike, the backward somersaults, the tuck and the straddle positions up in the air."

Van Zyl started out on the trampoline when he was a four-year-old in kindergarten.

"The coach said I was physically fit and 'got some talent' for the tumbling and mini-trampoline," he said.

"I was just fascinated by the tricks and jumps and just thought why not gave it a try."

The arduous training, with all its repeated and challenging elements that take up three to four hours a day, is tak-

en in stride by Van Zyl, whose wish is to compete at the 2016 Olympic Games.

However, the lack of coaching expertise and facilities in Namibia is not helping him reach this goal.

"I have had three coaches, all of whom have helped me a lot in refining my trampoline," said the 2014 African champion.

"However there is still something I can't get from them."

Unlike leading countries like China, New Zealand and Russia, trampoline is not particularly popular in Namibia.

"Most of my peers play soccer and very few do the jumps and bouncing," he said.

"The Chinese are really good in gymnastics and trampoline, especially with outstanding body positioning and good movements."

"They train much harder than us, with repeated movements," he said.

Van Zyl recently went to Vesselin Kostin, a renowned local gymnastics coach in Namibia, to hone his skills.

"I hope we can go to the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro and make it to the top eight," he said.

To make that dream come true, Van Zyl said he needs to practice even harder.

IOC chips in to help out Namibian

By ZHENG XIN
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Although Namibian trampoline athlete Jivanka Kruger failed to make the final eight for the women's final, she has enjoyed her time in Nanjing.

Facing the toughest test of her fledgling career at the Nanjing Olympic Sports Center Gymnasium, the 17-year-old said she learned a lot during the competition.

The event was fun but hanging out with and learning from her opponents was also a great experience, she said.

"That's also part of the Games," Kruger said.

With her dad as coach, Kruger started in the sport at the age of 4 and despite concerns about the father-daughter, coach-athlete relationship, the younger Kruger is quite content.

Kruger, or 'Vava' as most of her

friends call her, recently got some help from the International Olympic Committee.

She was the recipient of a financial grant from the IOC's Olympic Solidarity Athlete Support program.

Kruger competed at the 2013 World Age Group Championships in Sofia, Bulgaria, where she and her teammates finished 45th.

She was also crowned the top female gymnast during the All African Double Mini Trampoline Girls Championship in 2012, which took place in Pretoria, South Africa.

Kruger is a typical teenager who enjoys hockey and athletics and the popular video game *Flappy Bird*.

Unlike most other young athletes, who are looking ahead to Rio 2016, Kruger says her professional objectives are to become a vet or a physio-therapist.



QUANTUM LEAP

Karim Mouliom of France leaps over three athletes for a basket during the slam dunk competition of the Youth Olympic Games on Thursday. Mouliom scored three 10s to win. PHOTO BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

ITF president expects Li Na to have hunger inside her

By XINHUA

Francesco Ricci Bitti, president of the International Tennis Federation, said on Thursday that Chinese star Li Na still has what it takes to win but she has to have the hunger inside her.

"Of course, Li Na can still perform at the highest level of her game. She is still ranked No 2 in

the world and a great talent. We have more and more examples of players who continue on the professional circuit to have outstanding results into their 30s. Serena Williams at 33 is still No 1 in the world. Flavia Penetta is ranked No 14 at 32 years old," said Bitti during the Youth Olympics in Nanjing.

"What is important is to know if

she has the hunger inside her. She has to want it."

At the age of 32, Li won the Australian Open title at the beginning of the season but suffered early exits at the French Open and Wimbledon. After the humiliating loss at Wimbledon, she split with her coach, Carlos Rodriguez.

Li, who has been forced to skip the US Open because of a knee

injury, is likely to quit the sport in the next few years, but Bitti is upbeat that China can produce more stars.

"Although players of the caliber of Li Na are rare, China can create the climate to develop more outstanding players by having enough courts available, by having quality coaching and by hosting tournaments at the junior, entry level

and professional level. It is great to have top tournaments but, without the base, it is hard to grow talent in your own country."

Bitti also expects China to groom star male players.

"There are probably several factors to take into consideration. There are some talented players who have moved very quickly to around the 300 ATP mark, such as Wu Di or Zhang Ze, but in order to progress beyond that point, a variety of factors need to occur," he said.