
Beyond the Boundaries of Propriety:

Singapore's Pioneer Women Olympians

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Many athletes from Singapore lost part of their childhood during the years of Japanese occupation (1942-1945) and yet subsequently went on to represent their nation in the Olympic arena. Having survived the horror, deprivation, and insecurity that beset the war-ravaged British colony, a number of young women sought revitalization, challenge, and stimulation from competitive sport. However, the opportunities for female athletes to pursue any sort of recognition in sport were limited in the extreme. At a time when women's sport, globally, was taking hesitant strides towards liberation and quality, the cultural and social constraints that existed in South East Asia, dictated that the sporting career of a young Chinese, Malay, Indian, or Eurasian woman would represent but a brief transition before domestic responsibilities prevailed. Yet, out of the chaos and turmoil of war, and despite the impositions of a patriarchal society, there emerged three talented teenage girls, who gained the honour of becoming the first female Olympians from Singapore.

This paper documents the achievements, of Tang Pui Wah, Mary Klass, and Janet Jesudason: three women who were pioneers of sport but who were still impelled by the conventions of the time. The context is one of a predominantly migrant society, where issues of survival, peace and security were largely prescribed by the dominant male section of society. These factors mediated heavily against the continuing success of these three young women, each of whom slipped away from the field of glory with lingering doubts about unfulfilled dreams and elusive crowns.

Sport for the majority of women in Singapore, as in other Asian countries, once represented a topic that was virtually taboo. The public involvement of girls and women in organized competitive sport before the Second World War was only conceivable if the participants were European or wealthy Chinese, who had been edu-

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cated in English-speaking schools. The War in the Far East brought many radical changes in the cultural and social role of women. Rapid changes from the traditional 'mores' were exemplified by the adoption of western styles of dress, and the ability to be more expressive generally in all patterns of behaviour. School activities were highly influential in providing opportunities for girls and young women to participate in games. A widening of choice, a greater acceptance by society, and the individual's blossoming motivation to experiment and grapple with previously inconceivable challenges in sport provided the starting point for a cascade of sporting achievements from the local population. Among the first to capitalize on the growing freedom to participate in Singapore were three school girls who had been born during the pre-war period of depression and political tension. The three girls: a Chinese, a Eurasian, and a Sino-Indian, were swept into a male-dominated environment of challenge, excitement, curiosity, and sometimes, confusion.

Singapore

Singapore enjoys an equatorial location at the tip of the Malaysian peninsula. During the years leading up to the Second World War its existence was based largely on this excellent trading location, on migrant manpower, and on faltering colonial leadership. However, its strategic and economic importance in the declining British Empire was so significant that the island became a prime target of the Japanese during their invasion of South East Asia. The local population of Singapore, including a large migrant faction from China, experienced three and a half years of Japanese occupation between 1942 and 1945. With the official surrender of the Japanese on 5 September 1945, the people entered a seven-month period of British Military Administration. Then, on 31 March 1946, Singapore reverted to being a Crown colony, with a civilian government; but this time it was to be as a separate entity.¹ The rehabilitation of the island rested firstly in the hands of the military administration, and then on the legislative council that included only British subjects. A Chinese section of the population who had lived within the Straits Settlements for generations, who had sought citizenship, and who had confirmed their allegiance to the Crown, were well represented.² Indians, Malays, and the small Eurasian contingent also had a voice in government. The first census after the War reported that the population of Singapore was slightly less than one million with 78% Chinese, 12% Malays, 7% Indians, and 3% Europeans and Eurasians.³

The Status of Women

Change and discontinuity were the overriding themes of life on this small island from colonial rule, to self-government, and later finally, to independence.⁴ The population of the colony was to grow rapidly, with twice as many births in 1949 than there had been just before the war. There were fewer women than men in Singapore because the pre-war trends in migration from China and India had been almost exclusively geared towards males.⁵ Nevertheless, the number of women was gradually increasing, as the anticipated return to normality promised increasing opportunities. Stability and economic advantage prompted the arrival of many women, so that there were more women living in Singapore than ever before. The status of women was

lower than that of men, and this, combined with a continuing influx of migrants, had a number of crucial consequences for a vulnerable population faction, notably females.⁶

First, the number of children started to increase and with it the need for a more extensive provision of primary and secondary education. Second, the protection of girls and young women, which had always been an important issue, continued to erode any equilibrium that might exist.⁷ Trafficking of women, usually from China, to a largely migrant male population for prostitution, or as secondary wives, had led to the establishment of the Institute for the Protection of Women (or Po Leung Kuk) before the war.⁸

Prostitution, linked with gambling and opium dealing, led to the exploitation of many women.⁹ Stories about crime in the colony announced that girls were the pawns of the secret societies.¹⁰ Even sport, with its predominantly amateur code of ethics, presented moral issues that reflected the position of women in a patriarchal society. The most readily available form of public entertainment immediately after the war was “all-in-wrestling.” A paying public witnessed “maulers” and “killers” in “hate contests.” Jaded appetites were whetted with the prospect of spectating at events featuring “Rough-House Nancy” and “Shanghai Susie,” who wrestled in mud. In May 1946, an editorial in the *Straits Times* rallied its readership against this “Objectionable Spectacle” and even achieved a police ban on the venture.¹¹

The tradition of a patriarchal society such as Singapore, where migrant and colonialist alike supported the development of an androcentric system, dictated that women fell short of equality. If a woman did venture into the workplace she was immediately at a disadvantage in her earning capacity.¹² Nevertheless, the re-construction of the colony gradually necessitated an increasingly active role for women, and made more demands on them. It also gradually gained for them more influence in traditional male roles. In the crucial area of law and order, a growing problem in an island struggling to rehabilitate itself, women became actively involved. Women police officers were recruited for the first time in 1949.¹³

The Rehabilitation of Singapore

An immediate tidying-up program was initiated after the war and this was assisted by the use of Japanese prisoners of war, the last of whom were transported back to their native land in late 1947.¹⁴ Peace after the war, however, immediately brought problems of poverty, malnutrition, disease, crime, unemployment, and a shortage of housing.¹⁵ Severe limitations on rice supplies, the staple diet of many people in Singapore, led rapidly to malnutrition and increasing physical decline for the poorer people. An inconsistent supply of fresh food and vegetables even affected the more affluent. However, as occupants of larger properties with land to spare, they were able to direct their ingenuity towards supplementing their diets by growing their own supplies. There were direct consequences for those who played tennis, as their private courts were prime sites for conversion to vegetable plots.¹⁶

Levels of health were declining, not improving, with the number of tuberculosis outpatients increasing. The prevalence of polio at one stage even prevented the annual school sports.¹⁷ Lack of food, and sometimes water, were not simply problems for the poor and needy, they were also major concerns for prospective athletes, who might normally emerge from a more affluent background. An anonymous note in the *Straits*

Times of 9 October 1949 captures the essence of an athlete's deprivation in post-war Singapore:

We try to do our best every year. We are young and taxing our strength continually, but there is nothing in the way of good food that we can get because we just can't afford it. We save up as much as we can months before a big event, and find that we have just enough to get some eggs and few steaks into our systems only about a fortnight before the event. Some may say we are making a fuss over nothing, but if you are an athlete - boxer, swimmer, footballer - who cannot afford a reasonable amount of nourishment, you will understand.¹⁸

The Singapore Improvement Trust, which had been established in 1927, had failed to construct sufficient housing before the war. Following the war, with even more limited resources, it was hard pressed to provide even basic accommodation for the young and old in the poorest areas of the town.¹⁹ Living conditions were stark, rancid, and infested.²⁰ The areas suffering the most were in the heart of Chinatown, where the densities reached 2,500 per hectare.²¹ Then, too, the growth of discontent encouraged the intrusion of communist reaction, particularly in the workplace. There were strikes. Threats to law and order resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency by Sir Edward Gent, the Governor, first in Malaya, and then, six days later, in Singapore.²² Finally, the loss of four years of education due to the Japanese occupation was also sorely felt by the growing population. When education resumed there were many overage pupils in the various schools. The education system itself was based on vernacular language of the four main groups: Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and English. A lower percentage of girls were involved in elementary education than boys.²³ Out of a total of approximately 80,000 school students registered in 1946, only 27,000 were female.²⁴

The Culture of Sport in Singapore

While the vast majority of the population was struggling for basic survival, a small proportion of the less disadvantaged, economically secure, and resourceful were returning to sport to satisfy some of their basic needs. Sport represented a symbol of peace and the restoration of playful recreation. It was a distraction from hardship and a pleasant way to engage in social interaction. The wish to return to the halcyon days of pre-war colonial Singapore would also have been considered by the Europeans and the Straits Chinese, who sought to emulate the British in their style of recreation. Even for girls and women, who had benefited minimally from the male-dominated, club-oriented pastimes before the war, sport represented a new opportunity to expand their horizons. However, the exclusivity of some sports clubs meant that sport in the schools became an important focus of attention and a significant path to individual expression. The presence of military service women in the transit camps and garrisons was a positive benefit to women's sport in Singapore as they provided a ready made source of challenge and inspiration for the girls who were fortunate enough to have access to sports and games. For women, however, whatever glory there was, would be short-lived. There was no lasting athletic career paths for the

local enthusiasts as sport in general was an amateur pursuit. Talented Europeans very often returned to their home countries and to the village green,

During the period of Military Administration, fewer sports were available than before the war. Swimming, tennis, golf, field hockey, soccer, cricket, and rugby were revived fairly quickly. In schools, track and field athletics, netball, basketball, and volleyball were offered. Sport could only thrive on the Army and RAF camps, in the private clubs, in ethnic sports clubs, and in the schools, once sufficient space had been cleared of war debris.²⁵ There was a fundamental lack of facilities, playing space, and equipment for sport at this stage. While some were clearly motivated to play, there was little opportunity for the majority.²⁶ The Japanese had converted many open spaces and recreational areas for agricultural or building purposes.²⁷ Trenches, gun emplacements, and transport depots often occupied the playing fields and club premises. The Padang, home of the Singapore Cricket Club and the Singapore Recreation Club, required much attention: "This great playing field had been left in a mess. There were slit trenches, gun emplacements and scrap all over it. so that the former beautiful green sward looked more like a rubbish heap than anything else."²⁸

After liberation, the Military Administration requisitioned many of the facilities formerly occupied by the sporting and social clubs. Clubs like the Singapore Swimming Club became Service Clubs at the end of the first year - it had taken three months to bring the facilities back to pre-war standards. In July 1946, the club, re-named the "Lido," was re-opened for civilian members. In September 1945, the Tiger Swimming Pool was among the first to be re-opened for public use, with charges of 20 cents for men and 10 cents for women presumably being a reflection of the amount of water the respective groups required for adequate exercise or recreation. The following year one of the two main stadiums, Jalan Besar stadium, was de-requisitioned by the civilian government, but this was used mainly for soccer matches.

The lack of space for school playing fields and club activities eventually became a government issue, Member of Parliament Patrick de Souza received the credit for being the first to remind the Colonial Secretary of the need to provide adequate recreational facilities:

Now, Sir, closely allied with Town Planning is the task of providing adequate recreational and playing fields for the populace. In the United Kingdom and other progressive countries of the world the need for open spaces is generally accepted not only from the point of view of providing recreation and encouraging sport but necessary for the physical and moral uplift and development of the nation.

It is the accepted fact that for every thousand of the population at least four acres should be set aside for recreational and playing fields. The figures . . . in Singapore at the present day make astounding reading. We have a population now of almost a million people. If we therefore accept these figures of four acres per thousand people, then we should be able to boast of four thousand acres of recreational and playing fields. A recent survey, however, shows us that we have not even one hundred acres set aside for this purpose - a truly shocking state of affairs.²⁹

The local press suggested that the main reason behind the lack of playing fields was that while people in Singapore had been slow in appreciating organised games, the land that was then available was being utilised for both domestic as well as industrial purposes. Reclaimed land that should only have been used as sports grounds was purchased for building. This situation was all the more acute because, apart from the actual lack of fields, more and more people were indulging in organized games, and to a greater extent than they had done before the war.³⁰

It was the smallest section of the population that provided the majority of active sportswomen. Europeans and Eurasians dominated the sport scene, not just because of the tradition for sport that had been brought to Singapore by the British, but also because of the greater opportunities the settlers and their dependents had had to participate.³¹ Indian and Malay women were rarely expected to engage in any leisure activities that had a social context. Only the Chinese female would possibly be exposed to any form of sport, either at school or within the social club environment.

Even so, the opportunities for girls and women to participate in sport before the Second World War were very limited. Netball and hockey were relatively new games to Singaporeans. Indeed, netball was only introduced in 1929 by the Principal of Raffles Girls' School, Mrs K.A. Waddle. Eurasian girls and women were denied membership in the Singapore Recreation Club; the club was the province of children of mixed European and Asian parentage.³² Nevertheless, a group of active Eurasian young women took the initiative to create their own exclusive club. The Goldburn Sports Club (1929), which was renamed the Girls Sports Club in 1930, was a club for "Girls only." It represented the sole sporting club that was open to women at that time.³³ As such, this initiative was a very bold step, and one that might only have happened within the Eurasian community. This small section of the population enjoyed considerable unity as a racial and language group, they benefited from fewer cultural or religious constraints than the Malays and Indians, and they had a greater sense of social freedom and independence than the Chinese. The Eurasians, who shared many of the same experiences in sport as the Europeans, might have seen this type of venture as an opportunity to establish their identity as a minority more aggressively.

Pre-war sport for European women in mixed clubs was best typified by the experiences of women at the Singapore Cricket Club. Female participation in the Club did not occur until 1938, when field hockey was introduced. But women had no voting powers - a situation that existed until the 1980s.³⁴ Two of the leading Singaporean sportswomen of the immediate post-war period were Dorothy Roper of the Cricket Club and Sergeant Lorenza Dowdeswell of R.A.F. Changi. The former was voted the sportswoman of 1950 by the sports writers of the *Sunday Times*. The latter was a fine "all-rounder" and figured significantly in the development of athletics.

Singapore's Introduction to the Olympic Movement

There was great determination to co-ordinate the existing sports structure into a more coherent body and to encourage the revival of sporting facilities and sporting ties. The Singapore Olympic and Sports Council (SOSC) was set-up in 1947 to bring interested parties together and to test the value of sport as a means of removing communal barriers.³⁵ There were to be additional benefits. Recognition by the International Olympic Committee would provide Singapore with the opportunity of

celebrating its status as a Crown colony by participating in the 1948 Olympic Games in London.

In 1950, one of Patrick McKerron's last actions as Colonial Secretary, was to introduce the Singapore Sports Stadium Incorporation Bill. The government agreed to allocate almost two million dollars and set up a statutory body to operate the stadium. At one time, the construction of an Olympic stadium was recommended for the outlying area of Bukit Batok, near the centre of the island, close to the site of the surrender to Japan in 1942. Sadly, the Ordinance lay dormant for 20 years.³⁶

The inadequacies of facilities for participation were heightened by the lack of qualified coaches. It had always been part of the traditional approach that willing volunteers with past competitive experience would undertake the coaching and training responsibilities. As most talented local athletes were recruited through the schools, the associations turned to the former champions and current sportsmen to coach the new generation of athletes. Up-to-date programs were slow to arrive in Singapore, but in track and field athletics, the clubs did benefit from the technical support of coaches from England. At the request of the Singapore Olympic and Sports Council, the Amateur Athletic Association in England sent two of its most notable coaches, Geoffrey Dyson in 1950 and Kay Barkway in 1951, to re-vitalize the athletics scene.³⁷

The Singapore Olympic and Sports Council was motivated by other objectives as well. It sincerely wished to play a part in uniting the sports people of Malaya. Although sport in the Malayan peninsula was somewhat weaker than in Singapore, there was a growing sense of isolation based on the physical location and the separate Crown Colony status. Here was a problem that confronted the economists and the politicians as well, Singapore needed its hinterland to assure its security. Singapore sport needed the Malayan states to bolster its wish to compete at higher international levels.³⁸ The guiding principles of the various sporting bodies and associations in Singapore were very typical of the time. Sport was for the amateur athlete, for the willing volunteer, and predominantly, though not exclusively, for the male. The Victory Sports festival to celebrate the liberation of Singapore and the end of the war, which was held in June 1946, did not include any female participants. Likewise, the Singapore Island Amateur Athletic meeting the following month organized no women's events.

It is not clear whether women in Singapore, other than those representing the Eurasian community, were slow to press their claim for greater involvement in sport. However, the development of the game of badminton in Singapore does illustrate both the hesitant approach adopted by girls and women and the type of support provided by the men, in what was to become one of the golden sports in Singapore during the 1940s and 1950s.

The quickest sport to recover after the war had been badminton, which existed within a club system termed the 'badminton parties.' They had the advantage of being much less exclusive than the larger, private clubs.³⁹ Easy to create, an outdoor badminton court provided one of the cheapest forms of recreation. Traditional rivalries had developed before the war and international talent was spawned in the yards and back gardens of Cambridge Road or Joo Chiat Place.

Though talented women badminton players were supposedly rare in Singapore, efforts were made to encourage younger players to take up the sport.⁴⁰ More girls should be playing badminton was the call. Alice Pennefather, although approaching

50 years of age, and a grandmother, was still an active participant. Chionh Hiok Chor, a mother of 5 children at 32 years of age, defeated 15 year-old Helen Heng, the Malayan champion, 12-10, 2-11, 11-7 in the Singapore Women's Open singles in 1947. Chionh had been the Singapore singles champion in 1933, 1935, and 1941.

There were special privileges for women in the Badminton Parties. Club subscriptions were half price for women, preference was given to ladies for court time, and coaches were readily available. Entry fees for competitions were \$2 for women as compared to \$3 for men. Nevertheless, there was still a chiding, even a rather patronizing, tone about the evaluation of female performance:

...it is likely that the turn-out will not be a representative one. Women players are not very keen to enter the competition for the sake of supporting it, or for gaining match temperament, and it is usually only those who feel confident of success who enter. The rest appear to be contented with confining themselves to their own parties' activities.⁴¹

Surely it is not unreasonable to expect the young healthy girls we see in Singapore to emerge as future world champions. It is a game where women can show off to the best advantage their grace of movement. The more polished their strokes the less they have to run. Besides a woman's intuition can beat a man's anticipation any day.⁴²

Although the popularity of badminton had been increasing rapidly (even challenging soccer), there was still a wide gulf between the numbers of males and females prepared to play at a competitive level. One year, the junior tournament attracted 120 entries for the men's singles, while there were only 19 entries for the women's singles.⁴³ By 1949, the year in which the Malayan team had won the Thomas Cup, there were serious doubts about the ability of women to play at top international levels.⁴⁴

Other Games

Women's field hockey was the preserve of the clubs and the Services in Singapore, notably the Singapore Cricket Club and RAF Changi. Unlike badminton, the hockey traditions were sustained and the game was considered to be well up to pre-war standards.⁴⁵ In January 1948, the Girls Sports Club played its first hockey game since Allied liberation. The Cricket Club dominated the scene with Pat Sewell and the Still sisters the stars. RAF Changi boasted the services of the ubiquitous Lorenza Dowdeswell, who was undoubtedly one of the true "all-rounders" in Singapore at that time. The Civilians, led by Sewell and the Stills, defeated the Forces (Dowdeswell) 2 - 1 in November of that year. Five members of the Girl's Sports Club were members of the Civilians team.

Outside of the traditional individual and team games, a range of activities - some surprising - appealed to women. The All-Singapore Women's Table Tennis Championships at the Great World arena were announced, in September 1946, as the first time in Singapore that sports enthusiasts would be able to see women players in action in this particular branch of sport since liberation.⁴⁶ Lee Swee Lang went to Penang, one of the former Straits Settlements, to give a demonstration of weightlift-

ing. She even challenged the local Malayan girls to a contest but, not surprisingly, there were no takers.⁴⁷ The Singapore Amateur Weightlifting Federation organized a contest in 1948 that attracted 44 men and 14 Chinese girls to compete for the Body Beautiful title. At the New World arena, 5,000 spectators defied the rain to watch Patricia Ho become Miss Singapore at the age of 16 years. She also won the middle-weight lifting competition.⁴⁸

Tennis always figured as a popular social game amongst the 'well-to-do' in Singapore. However, the actual standard of play among the women, Dorothy Roper excepted, did not impress the men. When an invitation to send four tennis representatives to the British Empire Games in Auckland in 1950 was received, Edward Strickland, the Secretary of the Singapore Olympic and Sports Council, preferred to send four men rather than two men and two women. Swimming likewise was a social activity designed to facilitate relaxation rather than challenge. The annual Inter Chinese Swimming Club Easter aquatic meetings involving the Chinese Swimming Club and the Penang Chinese Swimming Club were judged typical of the mediocre standard of performance.

International sport for women focused on opportunities to represent Malayan Chinese at the China Games. In April 1948, Ho Lye Ying, a woman weightlifter was selected to be part of the Malayan team to the multi-sport Games. Lam Peck Har and Tan Siok Ngor were two young female athletes who blazed the trail as well. Unfortunately, the Malayan team failed dismally in the women's events. The only consolations were minor placings in track and field events and in swimming.⁴⁹ There were clearly questions about the preparation of female athletes for anything other than local competition. Almost inevitably, with schools providing many of the athletes, the age of the representatives was often very young. Enthusiastic engagement was a positive characteristic, but motivation to train, combined with inadequate nutrition and equipment, were always going to be constraining factors:

It is clear that Malayan women are way behind their sisters in the mother country. The experience they gained was seen as invaluable however. They do not lack in enthusiasm. Obviously the girls' schools in Malayan - the nurseries for women's sport - have to overhaul their training system, if they have any.⁵⁰

At the same time they must do a lot more to popularise women's sport in this country. That is a task which would take both time and money before it could bear fruit, but it is hoped that by the time the next national meet comes along Malayan girls will be able to do better than they have done this year in Shanghai.⁵¹

The dismal failure might well have been attributed to the youthful age of the participants, because there were only a handful of talented athletes, almost exclusively from Nanyang High School who had made any sort of impact in track and field during the three years since the end of the war. One of these was Tang Pui Wah.

The first official record of this shy, slightly awkward looking fourteen year-old was in late 1947. On 12 November, Tang Pui Wah finished first in an, age-group high jump competition organised by the Singapore Chinese Amateur Athletic Federation.⁵²

By March the following year Pui Wah had become a leading candidate for selection to the Malayan Chinese team for the trip to Shanghai. However, Tan Siok Ngor, her schoolmate, just edged her out of contention in the high jump - an experience that left an indelible mark on Pui Wah. It was probably this single failure that motivated her more than anything else to pursue a sporting dream. But, without growing interest in athletics among the colony's devotees and the recognition of Singapore by the International Olympic Committee in 1948, there might have been no further news of the girl who was to be the first female Olympian from Singapore.

Progress in developing female athletics was initially slow. There was only a small range of events: sprints, jumps, and throws, but no middle or long distance races. In May 1948, the Singapore Amateur Athletic Association announced that, for the first time ever, there would be a women's 100 yards sprint in the up-coming championships to be held in July at the Singapore Recreation Club. In her heat Pui Wah was defeated by Lorenza Dowdeswell and Lam Peck Har.

At the school level, 1948 represented an important watershed in the development of athletics. The 7th Annual Chinese Inter-School championships were held at Jalan Besar stadium, with winners in 48 events improving on records set the previous year. Fifty-five boys and girls schools were represented, with 610 boys and 350 girls participating in the events.⁵³ The pre-war records had been lost, so all events set 'new' standards.

Tang Pui Wah - Olympian



Tang Pui Wah was born in Tanjong Pagar, a district of the town of Singapore, on 11 October 1933. She lived through the Japanese occupation in Chinatown, but was fortunate enough to benefit from a good education at Chinese vernacular schools, and later for a brief time at Raffles Girls' School. She spent most of her early years in the Cross Street area of Chinatown, which had the dubious claim of being the area of Singapore with the highest density of population and the least amount of open space. Pui

Wah was luckier than most because her family were sole occupants of one of the larger concrete houses.

Daughter of a soya sauce factory owner, Pui Wah made a name for herself at Nanyang Girls' High School in King's Road as an all-rounder in sport. First as a high jumper, then as hurdler and sprinter, her height and speed later gave her an advantage at the Chinese Schools sports meets that were the focal point of sporting activity. From the age of 13 in 1946, she was coached by Tay Kai Teck, a representative of the Singapore Chinese Amateur Athletic Federation, and for three years she was the Chinese school champion in high jump, long jump, 80 metre hurdles and sprints. She also represented her school against the visiting Philippines women's basketball team in 1950.

Pui Wah competed regularly during an eight-year period (1948-1956). She benefited from the meets organised by the Singapore Chinese Amateur Athletic Federation (SCAAF). Her victories were featured regularly in the Chinese press. She owed no particular allegiance to the two main athletic clubs (Swifts and Achilles), being content to attend different training sessions on invitation. She followed directions closely and was always a focused athlete. The psychological characteristics of this female athlete cannot easily be verified, but Pui Wah was seen as sensitive and sometimes moody. These characteristics, not uncommon in committed athletes, did not go unnoticed. At one event in the annual Chinese school meet, she failed to live up to her own expectations and externalised her feelings:

...a highly-strung athlete, (Tang) was expected to win the women's high jump event. She failed to do better than third, however, knocking down the bar at low heights through sheer nerves. Thoroughly upset, she turned away.⁵⁴

In 1949 at the age of 15, Pui Wah broke the Olympic record for Chinese women (wherever they resided in greater Asia) in the 100 metre hurdles. A year later she created a new All China record in the hurdles with a time of 13.3 seconds. Ken Jalleh named Pui Wah the "best Chinese woman athlete" of her day.⁵⁵ In 1951, at the age of 17, she won the Malayan Games 100 metre sprint and was selected to represent Singapore in the first Asian Games, which were held in New Delhi. She finished third in her heat and did not advance further in the competition. Nevertheless, Pui Wah's pioneering performances represented a real breakthrough for women's sport in Singapore. The accolade "Malayan 'Sportsman' of the year," an unofficial title based on a *Straits Times*' readership poll, did not go to the girl from Nanyang High school; she finished fourth, placing higher than the hero of the Thomas Cup, the All-England badminton champion Wang Peng Soon.⁵⁶ In the person of Pui Wah, Singapore had its first local sporting heroine.

The selection criteria for the 15th Olympiad in Helsinki were duly met. A small team comprised of three weightlifters, a swimmer, and Pui Wah travelled to Helsinki.⁵⁷ There, the cold weather, the strange track, and the size of the crowd were negative factors in Pui Wah's performances in the hurdles and the 100 metre sprint. Little has been written about these experiences, but it is clear that Pui Wah was at a disadvantage in terms of the coaching expertise available to her at the time. She had developed a rather upright style leading over the hurdles and probably spent too long in the

air. Pui Wah recognises these limitations today, but amusingly, responded that the rigidity of the hurdles somewhat discouraged a lower trajectory.

Pui Wah was entered for two events. She was drawn in heat 3 of the 100 metre event with Brouwer (Holland), Ruvid (Israel), Cessarini (Italy), and Turova (USSR). She finished fourth in a time of 13.8 seconds and was eliminated. She fared no better in heat 3 of the 80 metre hurdles. Pui Wah finished in 12.8 seconds, but again was eliminated. Although unsatisfactory at a personal level, and a reminder that international standards were developing very rapidly, this Olympic experience propelled Pui Wah into the forefront of public awareness of sport for women. In 1953, the 'Helsinki Girl' dominated the Singapore Chinese Inter Schools championships after a slow start to the season. By now Pui Wah was the object of much adoration and attention. Some observers were happy to explain Pui Wah's poor early season performances:

The cynosure of all eyes, Teng [sic] of the shapely legs was rather disappointing in the 100 yards (13.7) and 80 metre hurdles (13.3).

Her performance was attributed to the poor track, the lack of real competition, the fact that she was not peaking yet, the adjustment to a new coach (Tan Eng Yoon, and naturally, to post-Olympics blues.⁵⁸ Nevertheless Pui Wah was successful in the 32nd Malayan AAA Championships. She broke the record for the 80 metre hurdles, coming in "at least 10 m ahead of the field." However, her hold on the title of top sprinter was beginning to slip. In the 100 metre sprint, both Annie Choong and Fay Siebel of Selangor defeated Pui Wah.

The 2nd post-war Asian Games were held in 1954. Pui Wah returned to the international scene in the warmer climes of Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Clearly affected by the death of her mother the month before, she was unable to attain the gold she sought. Although winning her heat in the hurdles against a Japanese rival, a poor start in the finals relegated her to the bronze medal position.

In 1956, the Singapore Olympic and Sports Council set a qualifying time for the hurdles that was to prove beyond Pui Wah's capability. Rather mysteriously, she failed to join the state team for the 35th Malayan Championships held in Penang. Singapore nevertheless won the overall title for the eighth consecutive year. It is at this stage in her sporting career that Tang Pui Wah disappeared completely from the athletics scene in Singapore. Before she died Tang Peng Hung, Pui Wah's mother, had expressed considerable concern for her daughter's future well-being and security. It seems very likely that marriage now became a more important priority for the twenty-two year-old athlete. In 1956 she married Tay Hean Tuan, a businessman, and for the next forty-two years devoted herself exclusively to family life. Nor willingly separating herself from sport, Pui Wah nonetheless followed the tradition of remaining at home to look after her husband and two sons.

Mary Klass - Olympian

A Eurasian of Dutch and Portuguese descent, Mary Klass was born on 16th May 1935. Eighteen months younger than Tang Pui Wah, Mary lived in McNair Road, where as a nine-year-old girl, she experienced the horror of Japanese bombardment:

...running with my parents, relatives and uncles, running for shelter. Yes,

there were bombs and splinters in all directions. So much so that there came to a point when they almost hit one of the houses that we were running towards and we were going to my uncle's place. and with the excitement and with the fright, instead of calling for my uncle, we were all calling, 'Oh Jesus, please open the door.'⁵⁹

Later came the terrible threat of the Japanese as an occupying force:

. . . there was a trade school in Anthony Road. There, they had a camp, it was a Japanese camp. And they use to come over, every evening they used to pass by, come over and at that time they wanted to find young girls. All these officers. And my father was so terrified because he had grown-up daughters like my three (elder) sisters. They were teenagers. And my father used to make them all run and hide under the bed. So we the little ones will be talking with the officers and we learn to speak a little bit of Japanese. so just speaking to them and finally they will just go off.⁶⁰



After the war the Klass family moved to Emergency Quarters in Rangoon Road. Mary attended St. Anthony's Convent until the age of 13 (Standard 6), but showed no inclination for competitive sport. She was denied the opportunity of a job or profession because she was obliged to stay at home to help with the housework. She joined the Eurasian Youth league and later discovered that she could run much faster than her friends. Mary and her five sisters and one brother lived in the vicinity of Balestier Plain. This was a large open area, which included the Malay Football Association ground, the Indian Association ground, the Clerical Union Hall, and the Ceylon Sports Club, among other recreational facilities. This location provided her with more opportunities to participate in sport than many of her contemporaries. However, Mary did not emerge as a sprint star until 1953 when she won the Coronation Triangular

meet held on the Padang:

Before going in for the Coronation Meet, I used to read the newspaper about Eleanor Ross and Tang Pei Hwa (sic). I always learn that they are running and Tang Pei Hwa (sic) is a hurdler and making a name for themselves. Behind my back, I thought to myself, why don't I try out, maybe I can get into somewhere. So then I just got into it and training by myself and without my parents knowing. We had a lot of triangle meets and at that time we had the RAF people here, so we had a lot of triangle meets, just running and that sort of things.⁶¹

Mary was a member of the Achilles Club. She was coached by Ng Liang Chiang, a hurdler who had represented China in the 1948 Olympics, and by Joselyn de Souza, who had acted as team manager for the single athlete Singapore team at the same Games. As a virtual unknown, Mary equalled the existing record of 12.2 seconds for the 100 yards, set by Eleanor Ross. In April 1954, the trial for the 2nd Asian Games in Manila was held at Victoria School. Mary qualified for the 100 metre with a time of 12.6 seconds. Eleanor Ross was left in her wake in a time of 13.0 seconds. Just two weeks before her nineteenth birthday, Mary Klass stunned everyone by winning the silver medal in the Asian Games 100 metre final. She accomplished this without the benefit of starting blocks, a technological device with which she had not as yet become accustomed. Both Klass and the well known Japanese sprinter, Atsuko Nambu, recorded the same time of 12.5 seconds. yet some partisan observers at the time claimed that Mary might have been awarded gold outright but for the greater regional fame of her Japanese rival. Mary herself suggested that the judges believed that she would have other opportunities to win the Asian games gold medal being only eighteen at the time. and thus awarded the gold to Nambu. An inability to come to terms with benefits of starting blocks may have been one reason why Mary was unable to achieve even faster times.

In 1955 the Malayan AAA Championships were held in Ipoh. At the age of nineteen, Mary completed a dramatic double, winning the 100 yard dash in 11.5 seconds and the 220 yard race in 26.7 seconds. In 1956, the rivalry with Tang Pui Wah's former nemesis, Selangor's Annie Choong, featured highly in Mary's preparation for Olympic qualification. Still suffering the effects of a spiked ankle, experienced the month before, Mary travelled with the Singapore team to Penang, where they were due to defend their inter-state title. According to Lloyd Morgan in the *Malayan Monthly*, the duckling had become a swan, for the "vivacious, black-eyed, golden skinned" runner attacked her rivals mercilessly, taking the sprint double and confirming her eligibility for Olympic selection and the title of the fastest woman in Malaya.⁶² Reminiscing about Pui Wah's failure to participate in Penang in 1956, Mary had this to report:

As she (Pui Wah) used to say, I always want to do what I can do - better, but if I can't then I would just give it up. That's why I think she never turned up for all those races.⁶³

Melbourne, in the early weeks of November 1956, was cold and windy. The Singapore contingent was not fully prepared for these conditions, having received little

guidance or material support from the Singapore Olympic and Sports Council. Yet, Mary was to achieve her supreme moment in the second heat of the 100 metre sprint. There were two things that Mary Klass lived on as an athlete: concentration and determination. One might also add a strong sense of self-belief, for when pitted against Marlene Mathews who equalled the Olympic record time with 11.4 seconds, and later won the bronze medal, Mary Klass refused to let the situation affect her. She ran a close race but was unable to overhaul the favorites. She had raced against the best in the world and, in the 200 metres, at least, she even left two other runners behind her:

I say it's a pity for me that I did not have competition. If I had competition, I would have lasted much longer, added many more years to my career. You see when I don't have competition, how am I going to break the records and how am I going to beat the time, you know, I'm running against myself.⁶⁴

Even Shirley Strickland, who had met Mary before, recognised that good competition would make or break a champion:

I think she has the talent as a sprinter and I should not like to see it wasted. She's got to take part in competitive athletics, that is, on international level, if she is to reach world standard.⁶⁵

Mary stunned her Singaporean fans by retiring at the age of 22 after the 1957 season. There was no more challenge in the local scene. The fleet feet would remain untested outside the region - there were simply few opportunities for her to travel abroad, no competitive circuit. The shadows grew long over her sporting life.

Janet Jesudason - Olympian

The third Olympian, Janet Jesudason, is Sino-Indian. Her father was, at one time, the Principal of Raffles Institution, the most widely known and prestigious school in Singapore. Janet was born in Taiping (Malaya) on 15 December 1936. The Japanese occupied this area during the war and Janet remembers the more human side of the invaders. A weeping soldier, clutching a photograph, was clearly reminded of his own child when he saw Janet one day. After the Second World War, the Jesudason family moved to the Katong area of Singapore and Janet was dubbed 'speedy Gonzalez' by her classmates at the local Convent. Subsequently, she enrolled at the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus in Victoria Road as a thirteen year-old. A streak of individualism set her slightly apart and she established herself as a leading figure in the school athletics scene, competing against rival institutions such as Methodist Girls' School and Raffles Girls' School. Together with Mary Klass, Eleanor Ross, Gloria Beck, and Joyce Deans *inter alia*, she was responsible for upholding the fine tradition of Eurasian athletes in Singapore.

Janet's competitive career was the shortest of the three athletes. It may have been that the environment of her home and school had prompted a broader view of life than her two illustrious contemporaries, urging her to venture out and experience more of the richness of life that would become available to her. Her introduction to athletics at school was based on matches against other branches of the Convent and mission schools. Like Pui Wah and Mary Klass, she demonstrated drive, determination and a

sheer love of sport. Janet, like Klass, was a member of Achilles, a club containing many Eurasian and Services athletes. She was coached and guided by Ng Liang Chiang, the 440-yard hurdler. Janet was involved in the typical triangular meets that often featured athletes from the British Armed Forces. In 1955, Janet competed at the 34th Malayan Championships in Ipoh, taking third in the 100 metre behind Mary Klass and Annie Choong. She also ran the anchor leg on the 4x 100 meters relay team. One of the most memorable photographs of the time shows this race with Janet striding majestically across the finishing line. Unaware of a baton exchange infraction committed earlier in the race, Janet's triumphant expression does not reveal the fact that the team had already been disqualified.

Janet trained with Mary Klass at Raffles Institution and often competed at the Jalan Besar stadium, at Tengah (the Royal Air Force base), and, most significantly, at the Nee Soon Garrison. It was here in 1956, on a well-tended grass track that Janet was, in fact, the first to qualify for the Melbourne Olympics. The absence of Mary, whom she had always recognized and acknowledged as the golden girl of sprinting, coupled with the availability of a flat racetrack, conspired to produce the desired qualifying time of 12.5 seconds. Janet readily admits to experiencing shock as the announcement signalled her elevation to Olympian status. The Convent girl was to accompany Mary Klass to the Games of the 16th Olympiad.

The athletes' village was situated in Heidelberg, to the north of the Melbourne Cricket Ground where the Games were staged. Males and females were segregated, and visits to the women's section could only be arranged after a strict series of checks. Guards from the Australian army were posted at the gates. Janet possessed a stronger need to socialize with the other athletes than her more intense teammates. She incurred some displeasure from her Singapore teammates for being just as interested in the cultural activities as she was in the competition. With little time to acclimatize to the cool and wet conditions of the days immediately before the Games and unable to match her teammates' fierce determination and inspiration, Janet Jesudason ultimately came fifth in her heat. Disappointed with her time, Janet nevertheless recalls her moments at the Melbourne Cricket Ground with obvious pride. She can vividly recall the mood of apprehension in the waiting room before the heat, the sound of the crowd cheering over the loudspeakers, and the words of de Coubertin written to inspire the attending athletes: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."

The responses of the other athletes and the spectators have remained as clearer memories of the race than the disappointment of her 5th place finish. For instance, she met once again with Bob Mathias, the noted American gold medal decathlon champion of the 1948 and 1952 Olympic Games, who had provided friendly assistance to the Singaporean athletes during a visit to the island. Following her race, Janet was determined to sample the celebrations of the hosts and slipped away to join the buzz of activity at Swanston Street in the centre of Melbourne. She was adopted one evening by a French film-camera crew, who were preparing "Bienvenue à Melbourne." Janet tagged along to the zoo and to the streets filled with festive crowds. Her escapade appeared to alienate her from some of her teammates. For Janet it was time to move on and live the rest of her life.

Conclusion

These three women, all of them still active and vibrant today, just as they were in the years of military administration and emergency, represent an inspiration to young Singaporean athletes of today. They shared many important characteristics - they had the drive and the determination to succeed. Largely self-supporting, they were able to focus on improvement in performance without the distraction of material gain. They shared a national pride, and perhaps most significantly, the sense of enjoyment and satisfaction that is inseparable from the hard endeavour that is involved in the pursuit of excellence. Representative of different ethnic groups and social/economic backgrounds, they were introduced to sport in different ways. Yet, ultimately, they reached the same pinnacle of performance. Not Olympic medalists perhaps, but nevertheless, Olympians. That they all disappeared, at what today would appear to be a relatively early age, is undoubtedly regrettable. But it would have been most difficult for them to progress without more material assistance and without crossing the boundaries of propriety.



Where are these women now? Tang Pui Wah returned to the public gaze during a conference on Women and Sport held in Singapore in March 1999. She remains agile and vigorous, still contemplative, a listener, a stimulating and amusing speaker who thrives on the company of sporting people. Mary Klass (wife of Sandy de Souza), who retired unchallenged in the local scene, impresses one with her indomitable spirit and her forthright criticism of young athletes who fail to take advantage of vastly superior conditions today. Her joy at personal success, coupled with her ready smile, creates an impression of total self-confidence in her abilities. These two athletes now live a short walking distance from each other in Toa Payoh, a large satellite town in the centre of the island of Singapore. Not surprisingly, Janet Jesudason (now Janet Stevens) has become the most widely travelled of the three Olympians. A teacher by

profession, Janet worked in Singapore, England, France, and the United States. She is now a citizen of Australia, who remains passionate about physical activity in its different forms. She is a Yoga exponent, a rock-climber, a windsurfer, and a runner. Probably the most versatile of the three Olympians, Janet Jesudason was even able to contemplate the possibility of an additional Olympic challenge as a fencer when she was a British citizen living in England.

There were similarities in the ways these three athletes emerged to become the leading runners of their time, but there were also distinct differences in their personalities and backgrounds. Like three sisters they were born within three years of each other, but within very different social settings. Each one peaked at or just before the age of 21 years. Each one retired completely from the athletics scene at an early age because other challenges and life priorities captured their attention. One, Pui Wah, was apparently a quiet thinker and observer, who happily took a back seat in a male dominated environment. Sometimes described as highly strung, she nevertheless displayed the qualities of a champion on the track. Another, Mary Klass, was more openly and fiercely competitive and expressive, one who thrived on the big occasion and who could produce peak performances at key moments in her career. The third, Janet Jesudason, found that her natural sporting talent provided a perfect means for continuing personal expression, one who was prepared to experiment and experience the varied challenges of life.



Finally, pioneers blaze new paths and create fresh horizons for those that follow. However, in the case of Singapore, the growth of women's involvement in competitive sport resulting from the efforts of Tang Pui Wah, Mary Klass, and Janet Jesudason, was, at best, both hesitant and unspectacular. These three athletes had raised women's sport to newspaper headline status, but they were not able to create an enduring legacy of commitment to female sport development. Locally born, they appealed as personalities to the general population. Nevertheless, interest began to wane as the nation struggled through the last phases of the Communist-induced Emergency and towards national independence. Though track and field events were

among the most popular activities, and the fact that schools continued to provide the testing ground for young athletes, there were still severe limitations on the range of involvement that women could experience in sport. Traditional values in Singapore dictated that sport would continue to remain largely a male preserve. The only real avenue to success in competitive sport during the late 1950s was provided by the rapid rise of interest in swimming. New pools were constructed. But, even this expansion was largely restricted to girls of school age whose family background permitted them access to private club facilities. To follow in the shoes of the first three Olympians continued to be a daunting task. The next young female Singaporeans to represent their country on the Olympic stage were schoolgirls even younger than the three pioneers. In 1964 and 1972 young female Singaporean swimmers participated in the Olympic Games in Tokyo and Munich, respectively. However, Singapore would have to wait until 1976 and the Montreal Games, a gap of twenty years from Melbourne in 1956, for its next, and significantly, its only female track and field Olympic participant to date since the original appearances in the Games of its lady pioneer Olympians.

Endnotes

1. Gretchen Liu, *Singapore: A Pictorial History, 1819-2000* (Ministry of Information and the Arts, Singapore: Archipelago) Press, 1999), p. 248. The separation from the other main Straits Settlements, Penang and Malacca took place on July 10th 1946.
2. In 1931, 36% of the Chinese population of Singapore were settlement-born, the remainder were migrants.
3. Gretchen Liu, *Singapore: A Pictorial History, 1819-2000*, 1999, p.248.
4. Self-government was achieved in 1959 and independence. after a brief period of merger with Malaya. was confirmed in 1965.
5. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Modern Malaya* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press Ltd.), p. 15. In 1947, there were 833 females per 1000 males. The disparate ratio was due to a national sentiment to retain women in China, and simultaneously the inability of a new migrant to support a wife.
6. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Modern Malaya*, p. 18. The low status of women meant that the transference of young girls, as domestic servants (*mui tsai*) was a tradition brought from China.
7. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Modern Malaya*, p. 15, The traffic in women and girls represented a major abuse of rights.
8. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Modern Malaya*, p. 17.
9. Sit Yin Fong, "Girls as Opium Den 'Lures'", *Straits Times* (undated). "Many Singapore young Chinese men are becoming opium addicts because some of the

- colony's 1000 underground opium smoking saloons attract them with charming 'hostesses' or serving girls. The girls are paid at \$3 or \$4 a day to introduce a new note of glamour and luxury into the drabness of sordid smoking dens, tucked away in Singapore Chinatown's underworld."
10. *Sunday Times* (Undated). "The most vicious type of crime in which women in Singapore indulge is that connected with secret societies. Coffee shop waitresses, barbers' assistants, prostitutes, hawkers, and quite often dancing girls, are the pawns of secret society gangsters."
 11. *Straits Times*, 26 May 1946, "Objectionable Spectacle--The idea of women being allowed to go through the pretence of wrestling for the amusement of a gathering of males is nauseating... We are not prepared to sell space for the promotion of something which we feel very strongly should be banned by the police."
 12. *Straits Times*, 5 December 1945. "The authorities are very fair in fixing a lower rate of pay for females. A woman may consider herself just as efficient as the males and does the same amount of work, but she is generally putting in twice as much work into it as a man would need to do."
 13. Annual Report of the Colony, 1949, p. 4.
 14. Mamoru Shinozaki, *My Wartime Experiences in Singapore*, 1975.
 15. Gretchen Liu, *Singapore: A Pictorial History, 1819-2000*, 1999, p.247.
 16. O.W.Gilmour, *With Freedom for Singapore*, p. 16. "The struggle against hunger had caused the conversion of tennis courts into vegetable gardens, a transformation, which in England might pass unnoticed, but, as almost every better class residence in Singapore had its court, was, therefore, very conspicuous."
 17. *Straits Times*, 2 June 1948.
 18. *Straits Times*, 9 October 1949.
 19. Gretchen Liu, *Singapore: A Pictorial History, 1819-2000*, p. 264. Singapore was just a town - only gaining its City status on 22 Sept 1951.
 20. People's Association, *Twenty Years of the People's Association* (People's Association), 1980.
 21. Gretchen Liu, *Singapore: A Pictorial History, 1819-2000*, p. 281. A commitment was made to re-house people and to abolish the fearful slums of the town with their terrible overcrowding and their attendant evils of crime and disease.
 22. *Annual Report of the Colony*, 1948, p. 3.
 23. *Annual Report of the Colony*, 1947, p.10.

24. *Annual Report of the Department of Education, 1947* (Government Printing Office), p. 56. In 1946, registered schools educated 14,408 primary level girls in the Chinese vernacular (colloquial Mandarin), In mixed or girls schools. there were only 507 girls receiving secondary education. No accurate statistics were available for an indefinite number of girls attending small, unregistered schools.
25. Army bases included Tanglin, Nee Soon, Buona Vista. RAF camps included Changi, Seletar, and Tengah. Private clubs included Tanglin, the Singapore Cricket Club, the Singapore Recreation Club, the Singapore Swimming Club, the Chinese Swimming Club, the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, the Girls Sports Club.
26. O.W.Gilmour, *With Freedom for Singapore*, p. 171. There was little opportunity of playing games, even for those who had the leisure.
27. O.W.Gilmour, *With Freedom for Singapore*, p. 101. Ramshackle buildings of coarse brick, timber and corrugated iron were scattered haphazardly on all open spaces. golf courses, playing fields, and parks.
28. O.W.Gilmour, *With Freedom to Singapore* (New York: AMS Press, 1975), p. 101.
29. Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Colony of Singapore, 1949.
30. *Tribune*, 15 September 1948.
31. Nicholas Aplin, "Values and the Pursuit of Sports Excellence: The Case of Singapore." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 1999.
32. Valerie Barth, "Belonging - Eurasian Clubs and Associations," in *Singapore Eurasians: Memories and Hopes*, 1992, p. 102.
33. *Girls' Sports Club, Singapore - Its Story, 1930-1980*, 1980, p.5.
34. Ilse Sharp, *The Singapore Cricket Club: 1852-1985*, 1985. With the introduction of 22 lady associate members there began a protracted problem for males. With this change however were sown the seeds of potential conflict within the club, a perennial problem which bubbles under the surface still. even today.
35. *Annual Report of the Colony of Singapore*, 1948, p.12.
36. *Straits Times*, 22 June 1951. The layout plans for a two hundred acre recreational facility in Bukit Batok were published.
37. *Annual Report of the Colony of Singapore*, 1951, p.19.
38. *Straits Times*, 7 May 1957. There was an urgent need to inaugurate an Amateur Sports Federation in Singapore according Mr. G.G. Thompson, the public rela-

tions officer for McKerron. It was intended to incorporate Singapore with the Malayan Union under one central body known as the Pan-Malayan Amateur Sports Federation. It was intended that a similar general meeting of sporting bodies would be held in Kuala Lumpur shortly after the one in Singapore. The objectives of the body would be: to amalgamate amateur sport; to select a Pan-Malayan committee; and to establish the means of training and selecting a Malayan contingent to compete in London.

39. "Badminton More Popular Now," *Sunday Times*, 11 May 1947. The present number of affiliated clubs on the roll was thirty. The Badminton Parties involved regular "friendlies" and competitions included: Mayflower, Devonshire, Merrytime, Playfair, Peterdale, Amicable, Mayfair, Brighton, Spitfire, Maxfli, Eclipse, New Life, Merry Union, Sphinx, OCBC, Argonauts, Muhibbah, Chinese Bank, United Family, Rocklites, Jacques, Rompers, Marigold, Combined Friendship Olympic, New Star, F&N, Sunnydale, Cosmos, and Chung Hwa.
40. The most notable female players at the time were Helen Heng (United Family), Alice Pennefather, Chung Kon Yoong, Chionh Hock Chor, and Lau Hui Keow.
41. *Sunday Times*, 11 May 1947.
42. *Straits Times*, 17 January 1948.
43. *Sunday Times*, 23 May 1948.
44. Lee Siew Yee, "Malayan women have a long way to go in world badminton. The victory of the Malayan team in the Thomas Cup far overshadows the standard of women's play. The Uber Cup would be well out of reach of the women playing in Singapore," *Straits Times*, 21 March 1949.
45. *Straits Times*, 29 October 1949.
46. *Straits Times*, 17 September 1946.
47. *Straits Times*, 15 October 1946.
48. *Straits Times*, 19 November 1948.
49. "Still Far Behind," *Straits Times*, 15 May 1948.
50. *Straits Times*, 15 May 1948.
51. *Straits Times*, 15 May 1948.
52. The spelling of Tang Pui Wah's name appears in many different forms: Tan Puay Hwa, Tang Pooi Wah, Teng Puay Wah, Teng Pei Wah, Tien Pei Hua, Teng Pei Hwa, Tng Pei Hwa, Deng Peihua
53. *Straits Times*, 19 September 1948.

54. "Schoolgirl Breaks China Olympic Hurdles Record." *Straits Times*, 10 July 1950.
55. "SAAA Athletes for Asian games Named - 2 Women Included," *Straits Times*, 12 January 1951.
56. *Straits Times*, 7 January 1952. The complete list in descending order of merit was 1st Neo Chwee Kok (Swimming with 317 votes: Ooi Teik Hock (Badminton) 284 votes; Harith (Soccer) 163 votes; Teng Pei Hwa (Athletics) 148 votes; Wong Peng Soon (Badminton); Lloyd Valberg (Athletics); Awang Bakar (Soccer); Cletus Gomez (Athletics); Ng Liang Chiang (Athletics); Tan Eng Yoon (Athletics).
57. *Straits Times*, 19 July 1952. March past with Thong Saw Pak (Weightlifter), Ted Strickland (Manager), Teng Pei Wah, Lon bin Mohamed (Weightlifter - the first Malay Olympian), Chay Weng Yew (Weightlifter), Neo Chwee Kok (swimmer), and Kee Soon Bee (Neo's coach). The assistant manager Goh Chye Hin was absent. He was knocked down by a motor cyclist in Rome during a stop-over - unconscious for 48 hours - he had amnesia for four days.
58. "Our Helsinki Girl Shows Her Paces," *Straits Times*, 17 May 1953.
59. Tape recorded interview with Mary Klass, 31 May 1999.
60. Tape recorded interview with Mary Klass, 31 May 1999.
61. Tape recorded interview with Mary Klass, 31 May 1999.
62. *Malayan Monthly*, September 1956, pp.48-49.
63. Tape recorded interview with Mary Klass, 31 May 1999.
64. Tape recorded interview with Mary Klass, 31 May 1999.
65. Shirley Strickland, as quoted by Lu Lin Reutens, in *New Nation* (New York: AMS Press, 1974).