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SHOOTING

Parents want Vanessa to turn professional

They feel that she should grab the chance to train full time for Olympics

By Jeanette Wang

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HEMCOMING QUEENS: Never mind that it was not gold. Nearly 100 people were at Changi Airport yesterday to welcome back shooting silver medallists (from left) Vanessa Yong, Adrienne and Jasmine Ser from the Asian Games. In Doha, though, the sporting fever has yet to catch on. -- NG SOR LUAN

IF YOU were at Changi Airport Terminal 1 yesterday afternoon, you would have thought Charlie's Angels were in town.

Close, but not quite.

Rather, it was Singapore's very own gun-wielding and now-famous trio - Vanessa Yong, Adrienne Ser and Jasmine Ser - who flew in after accomplishing their mission in Doha.

They claimed a surprise silver in the women's 10m air rifle team event behind China.

About 90 people turned up to welcome the shooting team, who included the men's air rifle and trap shooters.

As soon as the trio appeared, their medals dangling around their necks, the crowd gave out a loud cheer. Then they went to work, their cameras clicking furiously.

Adrienne, 19, looked pleasantly surprised under the barrage of camera flashes.

'For a moment, I felt like a movie star,' she said.

The crowd included family, friends and officials from the Singapore Shooting Association and Singapore Sports Council.

Some 40 students from Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary School's (AISS) shooting club, led by school principal Stephen Chin, were also at the airport.

Both Adrienne and Vanessa are alumni, and Jasmine, 16, has just completed her O levels at the school.

Said AISS shooter Soh Li Xin, 13: 'I really respect their spirit and determination and aspire to be like them.'

Amid the joy, a million-dollar question weighs heavily on Vanessa: To train full time or not for the 2008 Beijing Olympics?

'Everyone is asking me that question,' said Vanessa, 18, who has just completed her A levels at Hwa Chong Institution. 'I still don't know the answer.'

If she decides to join the programme, training could start as early as Febru

Teammates Jasmine, who will be entering Anderson Junior College, and Adrienne, a freshman at the National University of Singapore, will pass up the chance.

They want to focus on their studies.

Vanessa's parents - Patrick, 46, and Doris, 45 - are in favour of their eldest daughter going pro.

Said her dad, who helps run a family business: 'Not everyone has such an opportunity. Once it's gone, she won't get it again.

'I'll definitely persuade her to train full time.'

Mum also has no qualms about Vanessa taking two years off school to train full time.

'I think for girls it's okay - just treat it as two years of national service,' said the mother-of-three, who works in quality assurance.

International Olympic Committee Executive Board member Ng Ser Miang assured that Vanessa's training programme and studies would be 'well taken care of' should she decide to go full time.

But there is another obstacle - fear.

Said AISS teacher-in-charge of shooting, Ng Suan Ching, who has seen Vanessa mature since Sec 1: 'She told me she wants to train full time. At the same time, she is scared of failure and not meeting others' expectations of her.'

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