

sport kevin kung



Did you know? Scuba divers are often keen finswimmers, using it as training for swimming against strong currents underwater

In the swim with a very large fin

Finswimming is a sport which will allow you to fly through the water like an Olympian, writes **Kevin Kung**

You should have watched Michael Phelps' incredible performance in the Beijing Olympics on TV.

It takes years for a competitor to reach his level. But there is another sport that can give you a chance to achieve fast times in the pool – finswimming. The fastest finswimmer in the world can reach 50 metres in 15.2 seconds while the current world record for men's 50m freestyle is 20.91 seconds.

You may not have heard about finswimming. It is a sport that combines swimming with swimfins and skills used in scuba diving. That is why the sport in Hong Kong is managed by the Hong Kong Underwater Association (HKUA). There are two types of finswimming in general, bfin and monofin. Bfin swimmers use freestyle kicks and two separate fins. Monofin swimmers move from the waist using the same style as dolphins.

Young Post had a chance to meet rising junior finswimming stars at the BOCHK Festival of Sports Scuba

Diving and Finswimming Fun Day at Victoria Park Swimming Pool on Sunday. They demonstrated their skills four times during the day to show newcomers how to finswim.

Two years ago at a similar event, 16-year-old Bvlgari Wong Bo-wah tried finswimming for the first time. Now she is a Hong Kong team member. "I remember the day when

I was attracted to join the sport and now it's my turn to encourage more people to join

I was sitting at the pool side and looked at the finswimmers that did the demonstration," said the fifth former from St Clare's Girls' School.

"I was attracted to join the sport and now it's my turn to encourage more people to join. I saw a girl that looks like me and wore a swimsuit similar to mine today. It reminded me of my fun day experience."



(FROM LEFT) HILDA LEONG, KELLY LEUNG, WONG BO-WAH, BERNICE NG, COCO CHAN WING-KI AND KELVIN TANG (FOREGROUND). PHOTO: KEVIN KUNG

Another rising star, Kelvin Tang Chun-hin, 14, said he hopes to learn from Bvlgari and other senior finswimmers. "This is my first time performing at a fun day. I started by joining the summer course organised by HKUA in 2009, after seeing a poster at a sports centre. I like the speed of finswimming and it looks cool to swim like a dolphin," said the Form Two student from HKBU Affiliated School Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School.

Jimmy Wong, 24, a coach and elite finswimmer, said finswimming was not well understood in Hong Kong. "People think finswimming is actually a butterfly stroke but

actually they are not alike. Finswimming uses the waist to generate motion in the water but the butterfly stroke uses arms and shoulders," he said. "But finswimmers rarely get injured in the waist area ..."

He said participants gradually built up from using two fins to using the monofin over a period of months.

The association was delighted to see the sport growing and wanted more youngsters to join in.

"We have a very tight schedule every year," said HKUA director Andy Li Man-Shing.

"There are three major local

competitions in May, October and December each year, and an invitational event held in the sea near the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and some competitions on the mainland. We offer many opportunities for beginners aged nine to 40."

If you want to know more about finswimming, you can watch the Hong Kong spring finswimming open competition on May 15 at Tai Wan Shan swimming pool or join summer classes co-organised by HKUA and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department.

For more details, visit www.hkua.org.hk/

Hong Kong team has concerns about student games

Swimming

Hong Kong's leading young swimmers face a dilemma this year with the two top events of their sporting calendar starting on the same day.

The All China Secondary School Students Games will be held in Baotou (包头), Inner Mongolia (内蒙古) from July 16-22 while the international Fina World Championships will be hosted by Shanghai from July 16-31.

Qualification for the World Championships, which is held

every two years, is much harder than for the student games. Those who meet the criteria will naturally prefer to enter this major international event.

The list of swimmers representing Hong Kong at the student games will be released by the end of the Easter holidays. Some local swimmers will not qualify for this competition because they were born before the cut-off date of September 1, 1992. However, others may pull out from the event on their coach's advice.

According to a Hong Kong

swimmer who did not want to be named, coaches told them they are concerned about food safety at the China schools games. One risk facing swimmers is accidental exposure to chemicals like Clenbuterol in mainland pork, which has happened before.

Testing positive for Clenbuterol and other substances banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency could end the career of a young swimmer, even if the chemical was innocently ingested in a meal before the event.

The Hong Kong team coaches could not be reached for comment. The Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation said all athletes, including swimmers, were well-protected from prohibited substances. Officers went to host cities

to vet accommodation and catering, the federation said. Teams will stay and take meals at an approved hotel for the entire games.

Kevin Kung

