

FITNESS

WALK THIS WAY

Turn that casual walk into a calorie-sapping workout, Nordic style

By JEANETTE WANG

AMID Bishan Park's lush greenery, Ellen Lim negotiates the footpath with poles in hand like a skier on dry land.

"A lot of people stop and ask me, 'Auntie, what is this?'," the sprightly 54-year-old said. "They think I have a leg problem and use the poles to assist me in walking."

Lim, in fact, is fit and fabulous. The part-time manicurist keeps in shape by Nordic walking thrice a week, covering up to 10km each time.

A former brisk walker, she picked up the sport last May when Nordic Academy Singapore was founded. She is one of eight people to have taken lessons from the academy's founder, Philip Lim.

So what is Nordic walking? "Unlike normal or brisk walking, Nordic walking is a full-body workout with very low impact," said Philip, 45, who picked up the sport four years ago and is a certified trainer by the Austria-based Nordic Walking Organisation.

"It's ideal for both genders, young and old and for all fitness levels."

It began in the 1930s when competitive cross-country skiers in Finland used poles to walk in their off-season training when there was no snow.



Trainer Philip Lim doing the Nordic walking at Bishan Park. "Unlike normal or brisk walking, Nordic walking is a full-body workout with very low impact," he said. ST PHOTO: ALBERT SIM

In the 1980s, people started using it as a recreational physical activity. Now, there are reportedly over nine million regular Nordic walkers across America, Europe and Australia.

Nordic walking, which can be done on trails or tarmac, has shown to reap more benefits with less exhaustion.

As Ellen said: "I walk much faster and sweat much more now, but without feeling as tired. My stamina has improved."

Studies have shown that Nordic walking increases oxygen consumption and energy expenditure by about 20 per cent compared to regular walking.

Despite the body working harder, research participants perceive a similar rate of exertion as regular walking.

Ultimately, learning the right technique is key to getting the most out of the exercise. The secret lies in the use of poles in a specific technique, pushing off the ground in rhythm with the legs to propel the walker along.

This movement engages the upper body muscles, while reducing the impact on the lower limbs due to the support provided by the poles.

The elderly and rehabilitation patients have found it useful. Studies have been done on coronary heart patients and sufferers of Parkinson's disease over the age of 60 - with positive results.

Fitness buffs can increase the intensity by using a slightly longer pole and performing variations such as downhill striding, jogging and bounding.

Nordic Academy Singapore sells the poles packaged with a six-week training programme.

Philip said it takes about six 50-minute lessons (\$197-\$349 depending on the type of pole) to learn the basics, and about three months to get fully adapted to the Nordic walking technique.

Here, he gives The Straits Times a glimpse on how to walk the Nordic way. jjwang@sph.com.sg

Getting started

Equipment

Nordic walking poles come in different styles, sizes and materials.

Beginners can calculate their pole length using this formula: 0.68 x your height (cm).

Intermediate and advanced walkers can increase intensity by getting a slightly longer pole using this formula: 0.7 x your height (cm).

Nordic Academy Singapore sells both fixed-length (\$349) and adjustable (\$179) carbon-fibre poles. While adjustable poles are easier to transport and can be shared, fixed-length poles are lighter.

All poles have a mesh wrist-strap and a cork composite grip on one end, and a metal tip and removable rubber paw (for grip on hard surfaces) on the other.

See www.nordicacademy.sg for more information.

Technique

Correct technique is key to get the most health benefits out of the sport and prevent injury.

You should walk naturally, keeping the shoulders down and relaxed as the arms and legs move alternately. Your stride length should be slightly longer than normal, with a heel roll and toe push-off.

The forward arm swing should be long and relaxed, the poles always pointing diagonally backwards.

The leading pole tip should plant between the front and back foot. At the moment that the pole is in contact with the ground, grip the pole and apply downward pressure through the wrist strap.

Push the pole back behind your hips as far as possible, simultaneously opening your hand to release the pole.

PHOTO: ALBERT SIM

Pietersen, Flintoff cost IPL record \$2.3m each

GOA (India): England's Kevin Pietersen and Andrew Flintoff became the latest members of cricket's get-rich-quick club yesterday, fetching record bids of US\$1.55 million (\$2.32 million) each at the Indian Premier League player auction.

Flintoff was snapped up by Chennai Super Kings, which last year set the previous record of US\$1.5 million for India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Liquor baron Vijay Mallya's Bangalore Royal Challengers secured Pietersen on a day in which a total of US\$7.65 million in salaries was bid for 17 players.

The two former England captains had reserve salaries around the US\$1 million mark despite being available for only the first three weeks of the lucrative six-week Twenty20 tournament, which starts on April 10.

"A player like Kevin is a great buy for us," said a beaming Mallya, whose team finished seventh out of eight teams in the inaugural edition last year.

"He is one of the most explosive batsmen in the world and will bring a lot of class to our team."

Indian cricket board secretary N. Srinivasan, who owns the Chennai Super Kings, said he was delighted to have all-rounder Flintoff on board.

"Twenty20 cricket is a game for all-rounders and Flintoff is one of the best in the business," said Srinivasan.

The most dramatic bidding came for Bangladesh's Mashrafe Mortaza, whose reserve was set at US\$50,000 but soared to 12 times that amount before Kolkata Knight Riders clinched him for US\$600,000 after half an hour of counter bids from Kings XI Punjab.

The IPL terminated the contracts of six Pakistan players, a fall-out of the deteriorating political relations between the two nations. The contracts of four other Pakistanis have been suspended, after the Pakistan government declined permission to its players to take part in the tournament for security reasons.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Joe Calzaghe, with sons Conner (left) and Joe, after his light-heavyweight win over Roy Jones Jr in New York last November. PHOTO: REUTERS

British boxer Calzaghe retires undefeated

LONDON: Joe Calzaghe, whom many view as the greatest British boxer to have laced a pair of gloves, has announced his retirement, undefeated.

Many legendary boxers such as Muhammad Ali and George Foreman have kept on fighting well past their prime.

But the 36-year-old Welshman, a super-middleweight and light-heavyweight champion, said: "There's always the temptation to fight on... But I've come to a point where the satisfaction of retiring undefeated has to outweigh the thrill of another fight."

There were plenty of tempting offers to fight on, including lucrative rematches with either Roy Jones Jr or Bernard Hopkins. But Calzaghe's name will now go alongside that of heavyweight legend Rocky Marciano, who retired as undefeated heavyweight world champion after winning all 46 of his professional fights.

The last time Calzaghe tasted defeat was as a 17-year-old amateur in the 1990 European Junior Championships. He vowed never to be beaten again.

His spell as WBO super-middleweight champion, from 1997 to 2008, was the third-longest world-title reign in history, after those of heavyweight Joe Louis and featherweight Johnny Kilbane.

But he has remained down-to-earth and still lives in the same area of South Wales where he grew up. Throughout his career, he was trained by his father, Enzo, a wise-cracking former musician who had no background in the sport.

Often derided as "Stay at home Joe" for not boxing in the United States, he

corrected that in his final two bouts when he beat Hopkins in Las Vegas as the crowned light-heavyweight champion, a title he retained against Jones.

He won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award in 2007, and was made a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Said Ricky Hatton, the British fighter with just one defeat in his 46 fights: "He'll retire as one of the greatest fighters that Britain has ever produced."

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Next 72 hours

Today

Basketball
NBA: Boston v New York (Live, Ch23, 8.30am).

Football

English Premier League: Man City v Middlesbrough (Live, Ch27, 8.40pm), Blackburn v Aston Villa (Live, Ch21, 10.55pm), Chelsea v Hull (Live, Ch27, 10.55pm), Everton v Bolton (Live, Ch22, 10.55pm), Sunderland v Stoke, West Brom v Newcastle, Wigan v Fulham, Portsmouth v Liverpool (Live, Ch27, tomorrow, 1.25am), Italian Serie A: Lecce v Inter Milan, AC Milan v Reggina (Live, mio TV, Ch61, tomorrow, 3.30am), Spanish Primera Liga: Real Madrid v Santander (Live, Ch22, tomorrow, 3am), Sevilla v Betis (Live, Ch27, tomorrow, 4.55am).

Golf

ANZ Ladies Masters: Day 3 (Live, Ch23, 11am), Buick Invitational: Day 3 (Live, Ch26, tomorrow, 3am).

Hockey

SHF Premier League - Men: Janssenites v Police (3pm), National Jrs v Khalsa (4.30pm), ORA v SCC (6pm) - Delta Stadium.

Rugby

Six Nations: England v Italy (10.55pm), Ireland v France (tomorrow, 1am) - Live, Ch24.

Special Olympics

Opening Ceremony (Live, Ch24, tomorrow, 5am).

Tennis

RSA C'ships (Kallang Centre, 9am), ATP Johannesburg: S-final 2 (11am), Final (3.30pm) - Live, Ch21.

Windsurfing

Singapore Open C'ships (NSRCC Sea Sports Centre, Changi Coast Walk, 10am).

Tomorrow

American football

NFL Pro Bowl (Live, Ch117, Monday, 5.30am).

Football

Dutch C'ship: Vitesse v Ajax (7.30pm), Feyenoord v Groningen (9.30pm) - Live, Ch116, EPL: Tottenham v Arsenal (9.25pm), West Ham v Man Utd (11.55pm) - Live, Ch27, Italian Serie A: Roma v Genoa, Cagliari v Atalanta, Catania v Juventus, Fiorentina v Lazio (Live, mio TV, Ch61, 10pm), Sampdoria v Siena, Torino v Chievo, Udinese v Bologna, Palermo v Napoli, Spanish Primera Liga: Getafe v Espanyol, Malaga v Almeria, Mallorca v Deportivo, Valladolid v Bilbao, Huelva v Atletico Madrid, Villarreal v Numancia, Barcelona v Gijon (Live, Ch22, Monday, 2am), Osasuna v Valencia (Live, Ch27, Monday, 3.55am).

Golf

ANZ Ladies Masters: Day 4 (Live, Ch23, 9am), Buick Invitational: Day 4 (Live, Ch26, Monday, 3am).

Hockey

SHF Premier League - Men: National Jrs v Janssenites (3pm) ORA v Police (4.30pm), SRC v Khalsa (6pm) - Delta Stadium.

Rugby

Six Nations: Scotland v Wales (Live, Ch24, 10.55pm).

Tennis

RSA C'ships: Finals (Kallang Centre, 9am), ATP Johannesburg: S-final 2 (11am), Final (3.30pm) - Live, Ch21.

Windsurfing

Singapore Open C'ships (NSRCC Sea Sports Centre, Changi Coast Walk, 10am).

Monday

No live telecast.

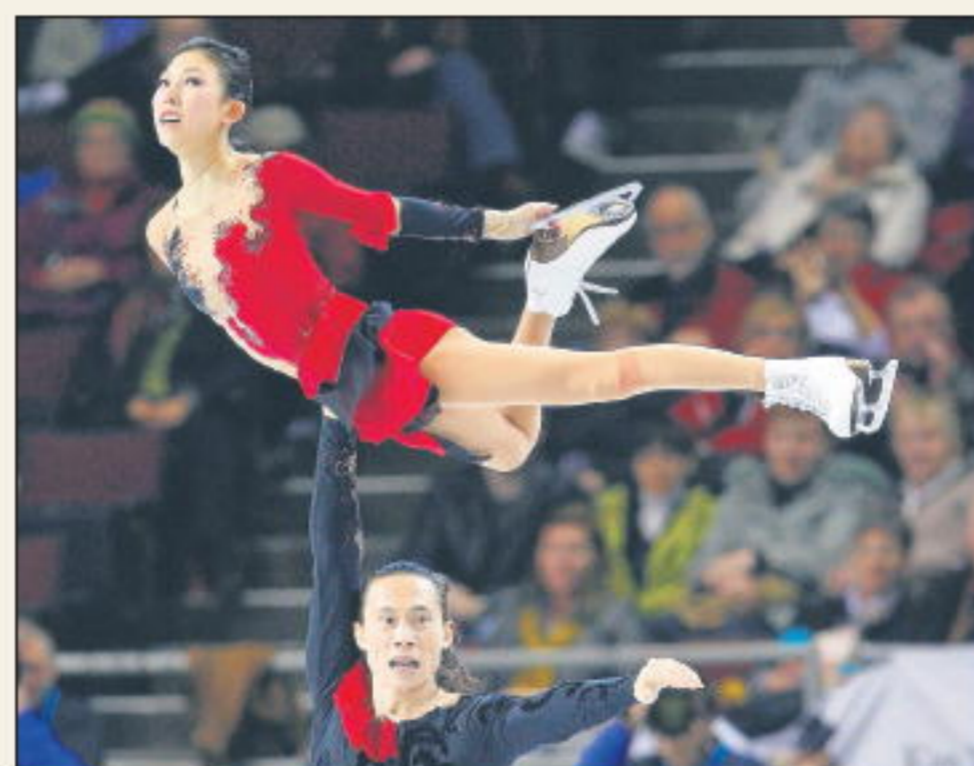


PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chinese skating pair in near-flawless showing

VANCOUVER: China's Pang Qing and Tong Jian (above) gave a near-flawless performance to win the pairs title at the Four Continents skating competition on Thursday.

For their fourth win, the pair included a couple of huge lifts and throws for a score of 194.94 in the free skate.

Said Tong: "Before we came here, we were very excited... We tried to live up to expectations and we were able to do that. We're very happy with our performance."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Secret of British cycling suits in the shredder

LONDON: The aerodynamic "skin suits" worn by Britain's cycling heroes at last year's Beijing Olympics have been destroyed to stop rivals getting their hands on the technology.

The decision means none of the cyclists, who won eight of Britain's 19 golds, could keep them as souvenirs.

British Cycling's performance director David Brailsford told The Independent: "The suits were created by British Cycling, had adidas labels and were assembled in Japan. They were shredded because we believe the technology will hold well for 2012."

Scoreboard

Basketball

NBA Philadelphia 99 Indiana 94, LA Lakers 110 Boston 109 (OT), Utah 115 Dallas 87.

Cricket

1st Test In Kingston, 2nd day: England 318 all out (K. Pietersen 97, M. Prior 64, S. Benn 4-77), West Indies 160-1 (C. Gayle n.o. 71, R. Sarwan n.o. 74; Flintoff 1-24).

Football

Dutch C'ship PSV Eindhoven 6 Den Haag 0, Spanish King's Cup S-final, 1st leg: Barcelona 2 Real Mallorca 0.

Golf

Asian Tour International In Bangkok, 2nd rd: 130 Toni Karjalainen (Fin) 66 64, 131 Marcus Both (Aus) 63 68, 132 Tetsuji Hiratsuka (Jpn) 64 68, 133 Hiroto Naito (Jpn) 67 66, Singaporeans (missed cut on 140): 143 Mardian Mamat 73 70, 144 Lam Chih Bing 72 72.

Buick Invitational In San Diego, 1st rd (USA unless stated): 63 Camilo Villegas (Col), 66 Davis Love, Aaron Baddeley (Aus), 68 Stuart Appleby (Aus), Jeff Overton, Robert Garrigus. Selected: 70 Phil Mickelson, 71 Padraig Harrington (Irl).

Sailing

Louis Vuitton Pacific Series In Auckland, Gold fleet: Alinghi (Sui) bt Italia Challenge (Ita) by 44sec, Oracle Racing (USA) bt Team Origin (Gbr) after race withdrawal, Team New Zealand (NZ) bt Luna Rossa (Ita) by 26sec, Silver fleet: K Challenge (Fra) bt Team Shosholza (Rsa) by 14sec, China Team (Chn) bt Greek Challenge (GRE) by 2min 58sec.

Tennis

ATP South African Open In Johannesburg, 2nd rd: Jo-Wilfried Tsonga (Fra) bt Denis Istomin (Uzb) 6-1 6-4, Kristof Vliegen (Bel) bt Ivo Minar (Cze) 6-4 6-1, Sebastien de Chaunac (Fra) bt Izak van der Merwe (Rsa) 6-7 (3-7) 7-5 7-6 (7-5), Frederico Gil (Por) bt Rik de Voest (Rsa) 4-6 7-5 6-4, ATP Zagreb indoors tournament 2nd rd: Jan Herych (Cze) bt Paul-Henri Mathieu (Fra) 6-7 (7-9) 6-4 6-2, Ivan Dodig (Cro) bt Ernests Gulbis (Lat) 7-6 (7-3) 6-4, Mischa Zverev (Ger) bt Victor Hanescu (Rom) 6-4 5-7 7-6 (9-7), Sergiy Stakhovskiy (Ukr) bt Ivo Karlovic (Cro) 6-4 3-6 6-3, Mario Ancic (Cro) bt Teimuraz Gabashvili (Rus) 6-1 6-1.

"There's no chance Beckham can do it in two years. This is a golden moment for the lad, and I think he'll take it."

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson, when asked about former midfielder David Beckham's plans to turn his loan move from the Los Angeles Galaxy to AC Milan into a permanent deal