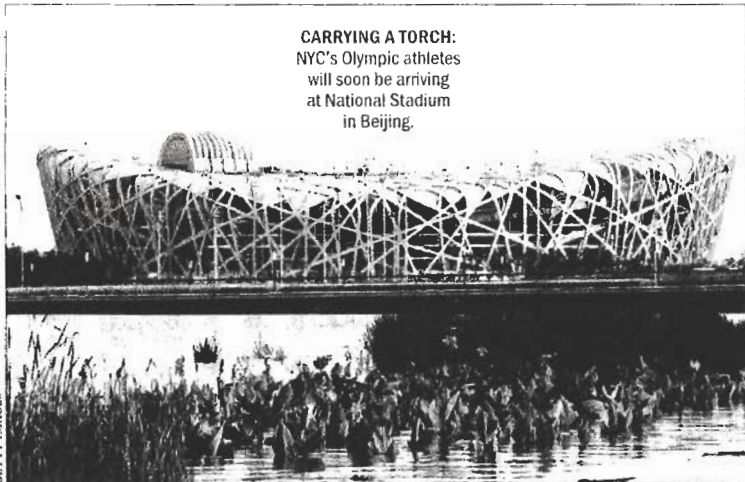


CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS®

DATE: JULY 28, 2008



CARRYING A TORCH:
NYC's Olympic athletes
will soon be arriving
at National Stadium
in Beijing.

SUMMER GAMES

Local Olympians face unique trials

In the shadow of
celebs, athletes get little
support, few cheers;
fencing one exception

BY HILARY POTKEWITZ AND
AMANDA WHEAT

SANDRA FONG, an 18-year-old Manhattanite, will represent the United States in sharpshooting next week at the Summer Olympics in Beijing, even though she's too young to own a gun in New York City.

"It's not a common sport here, which makes things a little more difficult," says Ms. Fong, who stores her .22 caliber rifles on Long Island and must travel to shooting ranges upstate or in New Jersey to practice.

She is one of the nine New Yorkers on the U.S. Olympic Team competing in the summer games. Like the others—a boxer, four fencers, a table tennis player, a judoka and a steeplechaser—she lives and trains, and will most likely return from China, in relative obscurity.

The eight to 10 residents who have gone to each Olympics since 2000 have received scant support from the city.

See **NO SPOTLIGHT** on Page 8

MORE OLYMPICS Scores of local execs are headed to Beijing See Page 2

NYC'S OLYMPIANS



Sadam Ali
Brooklyn
19
Boxing



Emily Cross
Manhattan
22
Fencing



**Anthony
Famiglietti**
Manhattan
29
Steeplechase



Sandra Fong
Manhattan
18
Shooting



**Timothy
Morehouse**
Bronx
30
Fencing



Erinn Smart
Brooklyn
28
Fencing



Keeth Smart
Brooklyn
29
Fencing



Chen Wang
Manhattan
34
Table tennis



**Taraje Williams-
Murray**
Bronx
23
Judo



No spotlight for local athletes

Continued from Page 1

That's especially true for those competing in less popular events. While other places send their Olympians off as celebrities, featuring them in parades and ribbon-cuttings, competitors from New York are overshadowed by professional athletes, movie stars and business tycoons—who are also locals.

"We'll do something for them when they get back," says a spokesman for Mayor Michael Bloomberg. "Especially if someone wins something."

Fundraising woes

MISSING OUT on local attention often deprives New York's Olympians of fundraising opportunities.

Tarajé Williams-Murray, the 23-year-old judo champion and Bronx native, could have benefited from a photo-op at City Hall. He will most

likely travel to China alone because his mother, whom he calls his "biggest fan" and public relations manager, can't afford to go.

"I'm in an obscure sport in a city

'It's difficult to get the recognition you deserve'

like New York," Mr. Williams-Murray says. "It's difficult to get the recognition you deserve."

In the absence of a citywide effort, the neighborhood rally machines kick in. Sadam Ali, a 19-year-

old boxer from Bedford-Stuyvesant, has an entourage of Brooklyn fans who follow him to all his bouts.

Mr. Ali, known locally as the "Canarsie Kid," is a two-time Golden Gloves winner heading to his first Olympics. A son of Yemeni immigrants, he is also the first Arab-American to represent the United States at the games.

"If we were in a smaller town, Sadam would have gotten the key to the city by now," says Joe Higgins, president of USA Boxing-Metro, the local chapter of the amateur boxing association.

New York City's many distractions can also derail some Olympic hopefuls.

One by one, the group of young boxers Mr. Ali started out with have dropped out.

"A lot of friends who trained with him ended up quitting," says his fa-

ther, David. "They got into other things in the city."

Not surprisingly, these young competitors say the city's toughness plays a part in their success.

"The pace of life in New York makes you a harder worker," Mr. Williams-Murray says.

Steeplechaser Anthony Famiglietti, 29, of Manhattan, thinks of New York as the ultimate testing ground.

Fencing mecca

"I CHALLENGE MYSELF in a way, to prove that if I can make it here as an athlete I can make it in anything," says Mr. Famiglietti, who often trains in Central Park and has clocked some of the fastest times in his event in U.S. history.

In at least one Olympic sport, however, New York City makes training easier.

For the past two decades, fencers have flocked to the Big Apple to sharpen their skills, making it the sport's global hub. Prestigious clubs, including the Manhattan Fencing

Center on West 39th Street, attract some of the world's top coaches and competitors. A handful of local colleges, such as St. John's University and New York University, boast renowned fencing programs.

All of the international fencers training in New York "make our development program the best in the world," says Keeth Smart, 29, of Brooklyn. He and his sister Erinn Smart, 28, are both competing in Beijing.

"In New York, you're used to the hustle and bustle, so it's never a shock to have to deal with different types of people and situations," Ms. Smart says.

"My first few trips to Europe, I was with a girl from Minnesota," she adds. "She wasn't used to even trying different types of food and was just overwhelmed by a lot of things. New York makes you open to differences."

COMMENTS?

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