

'Games will inspire higher goals'

By XINHUA

The Nanjing Youth Olympic Games will inspire athletes to achieve higher goals, according to Young Ambassador and Olympian Monika Fasungova. "It's great for them because it's really big. They can experience something amazing," said the retired badminton player. "When they think this is 'just' the Youth Olympics, then what could it be like at the 'big' Olympics?"

Fasungova said the youngsters "will really want to go for the best results after Nanjing so that they can participate in the Olympics".

The 26-year-old Slovakian gave up badminton last year and now hopes to pass on her experience and inspire younger athletes.

"For them, to see people from the Olympics is very motivating. I can share this with them," Fasungova said.

When she started playing badminton, following her brother's passion, Fasungova did not even dream she would one day become an Olympian.

"The Olympic Games were really far from me. But one day my federation asked me if I was interested to try to qualify, so I tried to practice more and to travel more to gain experience,

and the Olympics got closer and closer to me and started to be more real."

So real, in fact, that Fasungova competed at the London 2012 Games.

"It was such a good year for me. I had set myself three goals at the beginning of 2012 — to finish university, to be national champion again and to qualify for the Games. I was so proud of myself (when I achieved all three)."

Having stopped playing badminton, Fasungova now works in a sports travel agency. "I'm ready for other things in life," she said.

She believes the Youth Olympic Games could help her pursue a new career with her national sport's federation.

For now, Fasungova said she is enjoying spending time with



Athletes from Argentina and Germany enjoy themselves in a bus. PHOTO COURTESY OF NANJING2014.ORG

young athletes and encouraging them to take advantage of everything the Youth Olympic Games has to offer.

"At the Olympics every athlete

just focuses on sports and on their own results. Here as well, but it is also about the CEP (Culture and Education Program) and making friends."

In badminton that is particularly important in the new mixed doubles event, where players from different countries and regions are paired up.

REINHARDT VAN ZYL,

trampoline player from Namibia

"Of course I want to make it to the national team and participate in the Olympics but I know I need to further hone my skills for it. I'm a trampoline gymnast but I just love cricket and hockey as much. So maybe I can be selected as a national hockey or cricket player one day, which is also good enough."

JOSH LEVIN,

high school student from the United States, cultural representative at the Sports Lab sports climbing showcase.

"My dream is simple, to conquer as many mountain peaks as possible while encouraging more youngsters to get to know and grow fond of the sport. There are voices suggesting the sport will be listed as part of the Olympic Games but it's a shame that I will likely have passed my golden age when that day comes."



QIN JINJING,

18, female badminton player from the Bayi army sports club

"As an athlete, if I can achieve good results with high-level performances at international tournaments, I can show the prowess of Chinese badminton and a positive image of my country as well. That will be how I could be part of the realization of the Chinese Dream."



TRAE WILLIAMS,

17, 100-meter sprinter from Australia

"My dream is obviously to go to the big Olympics, to win the gold medal and to break the world record. This experience (in Nanjing) definitely helps me to get myself ready for something big in the future. When I get older and recall what happened here, I am gonna be like 'wow'."



TAVONTE MOTT,

16, 110-meter hurdler from Bahamas

"My dream is to make it to the Olympics and set a world record like Chinese hurdler Liu Xiang did. I would also like to meet him. I have only seen him (in the village) but it has been really cool to see the best guy in your event. This experience (in Nanjing) will help me to gauge my future opponents. These guys are going to future Olympics."

SUN JIANZHONG,

student from the Tagou Martial Arts School in Henan province

"My passion for martial arts is beyond words. In addition to aerobic performances, I want to apply martial arts to the nation's defense. That's why I want to become part of the special troops in the country. They might need talent like me."

PHILIPPE GAGNE,

Canadian diver who finished fifth in the men's 10m platform

"My biggest goal in life at the moment is to balance my training with school. I am in a special school where my classes are built around training. I hope I can keep up with study and later in life I want to be an engineer."