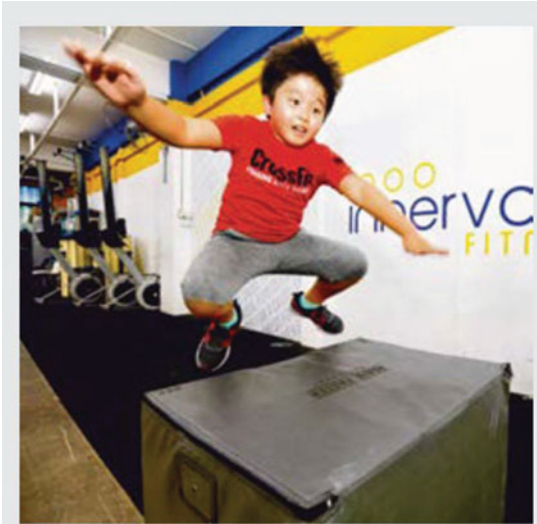


Headline	This kid does CrossFit		
MediaTitle	The Sunday Times (Life)		
Date	08 Jul 2018	Color	Full Color
Section	Go	Circulation	393,300
Page No	C1,C6	Readership	1,179,900
Language	English	ArticleSize	1535 cm²
Journalist	Venessa Lee	AdValue	S\$ 25,787
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	S\$ 77,361



No kidding
CrossFit and fencing
for kids
C6

This kid does CrossFit

Parents are signing their children up for unusual sports enrichment classes, which can range from fencing to CrossFit sessions



Venessa Lee

Six-year-old Max Cheong used to play with foam swords as a toddler. Now, he has taken up fencing instead.

When he was younger, he would watch his sister, who is 12 years old, at fencing classes, mimicking her moves as he peered at the action from behind a glass wall.

“He kept asking for lessons,” says his mother, Ms Angela Low, 44. She and her husband, a 45-year-old lawyer, have another daughter, aged 14.

Headline	This kid does CrossFit		
MediaTitle	The Sunday Times (Life)		
Date	08 Jul 2018	Color	Full Color
Section	Go	Circulation	393,300
Page No	C1,C6	Readership	1,179,900
Language	English	ArticleSize	1535 cm²
Journalist	Venessa Lee	AdValue	S\$ 25,787
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	S\$ 77,361

Max has been taking fencing lessons at Z Fencing for the past two years, since he was four.

Ms Low, a stay-at-home mum, says her son was ready at that age as he was able to follow instructions.

She sees the benefits of the sports enrichment programme and will let Max keep at it as long as he remains interested.

She says: "Fencing involves fine motor skills, agility and hand-eye coordination and the children do a lot of fitness work, which is important for their development."

In the last five years, Z Fencing, which runs the fencing school that Max attends, has seen a 50 per cent increase in the number of young children, aged four and up, enrolling in fencing classes, says Z Fencing's director and principal Teo Ah Heok.

Young children use fencing foils and masks made of plastic, instead of the heavier metal masks and weapons adults use, Ms Teo adds.

Parents in Singapore are increasingly enrolling their young children in sports enrichment programmes, according to service providers interviewed by The Sunday Times.

Pre-schoolers and toddlers, some as young as 1½ years old, are taking part in sports that are less common for this age group, such as rugby, cricket, volleyball and capoeira, a Brazilian martial art.

Taking part in sports enrichment classes "encourages children to be active", says Dr Tammy Lim from the Child Development Unit of National University Hospital.

"Not only does this contribute to physical wellness – a healthy weight, cardiovascular fitness, bone health and reduced risk of myopia – children also develop social skills when playing with other children," she says.

"Children who are physically fit are also more likely to do well academically."

But some medical professionals question the need for young children to take part in formal sports.

Mr Micheal Lim, head and senior clinical exercise physiologist, Family Medicine Service, KK Women's and Children's Hospital, advises that children "should accumulate at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily".

However, he cautions that children should "avoid early specialisation in sports".

He says: "Specialising in a single sport and starting intensive training too early can result in the risk of overuse injuries, mental stress and burnout."

An overuse injury is a muscle or joint injury caused by repetitive strain.

Dr Natalie Epton, a paediatrician and neonatologist at SBCC Baby & Child Clinic at Mount Elizabeth Novena Specialist Centre, says parents have to observe their child in sports enrichment programmes to assess whether the child is enjoying the activities.

Increasing frustration at being unable to perform a particular physical task in a sports enrichment class indicates the child may not be ready for it, she adds.

Dr Epton says that outdoor play can be as beneficial.

"It's great to start to do different activities but you don't need to do something that is particularly structured (like sports)," she says.

"Give your child space to explore something with his imagination; go to the park for a run. You don't have to spend money on enrichment for the same benefits."

Sports enrichment programmes can cost several hundred dollars a term.

The vendors emphasise, however, that their programmes are modified to age-appropriate levels for the little ones and that children learn general physical skills relating

to motor skills, balance and coordination, for instance.

"All our activities, equipment, language and objectives are age- and developmentally appropriate," says Mr Alpesh Puna, director of Sport at Shaws Little League.

Shaws Little League offers sports programmes for children from two to 12 years old, including a multi-sport programme for under-fives, which exposes the youngsters to volleyball, tennis, basketball, baseball, rugby, hockey, cricket, soccer, golf and athletics.

The two-year-olds use smaller, lighter equipment, such as hockey sticks or baseball bats, compared with the three-year-olds, says Mr Puna.

Since 2008, Shaws Little League has seen an average increase of 10

Headline	This kid does CrossFit		
MediaTitle	The Sunday Times (Life)		
Date	08 Jul 2018	Color	Full Color
Section	Go	Circulation	393,300
Page No	C1,C6	Readership	1,179,900
Language	English	ArticleSize	1535 cm²
Journalist	Venessa Lee	AdValue	S\$ 25,787
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	S\$ 77,361

to 15 per cent in the number of children enrolled each year.

"I think that more and more parents have realised the benefits that sports and physical activity can provide a child," he adds.

Mr Tay Yu-Jin, 43, and his wife, Mrs Rachael Tay, 38, enrolled their two young children at the beginning of the year at Ready Steady Go Kids, a multi-sport programme for children aged 1½ to six years old.

The children are exposed to sports such as football, golf, tennis, basketball, cricket, hockey, athletics, rugby, T-ball – a game based on softball and baseball – and Australian Football based on Australian rules.

Mr Tay, a partner in an international law firm, says he and his homemaker wife did not want to steer their children – Nicole Elizabeth Tay, 4½, and David James Tay, 2½ – towards any particular sport.

He says: "Multi-sport programmes are great because our kids are exposed to more than one sport, which is changed every two weeks. They have no time to get bored.

"Also, at this age, kids absorb skills quickly. They are not self-conscious and the skills they pick up in one sport can be applied to other sports. They develop their own views about which sports they like."

Mr Chua Wee Lee, managing director of RSGK Singapore, which runs the Ready Steady Go Kids programme, says that in sports as in academics, children need to acquire a broad-based education before pursuing specialised knowledge.

Some sports enrichment classes for young children emphasise their inclusive nature.

Innervate Fitness, which offers CrossFit classes for adults, children, seniors and persons with disabilities, has seen a 30 per cent in-

crease in demand for its programme for children aged four to 12, says its co-founder and Head CrossFit Kids Coach Lionel Choong.

CrossFit is a strength and conditioning programme with elements of weight lifting, gymnastics and circuit training.

But Mr Choong says that, far from being the preserve of fans of high-intensity workouts, CrossFit is "universally scalable".

"We can adapt the movements such that everyone can perform them. The only difference is the change in the range of motion or intensity," he says.

"For example, a kid might be able to do a 'deadlift' with a water bottle... an adult may do so with a heavier weight."

For eight-year-old Ted Ng and his family, doing CrossFit at Innervate Fitness, which is in Bendemeer, is a way to bond.

His father, Mr Ng Eng Chuan, 43, says: "It's another platform where we can relate to each other."

Ted sometimes talks about hitting new PBs (Personal Bests) during his CrossFit sessions.

Mr Ng and his 36-year-old wife, who run a beauty and wellness business together, also do CrossFit, as does Ted's grandmother.

Since Ted started doing CrossFit in June last year, his fitness has improved.

Previously, he did not like walking long distances but, in the past year, he has signed up for a few mass children runs.

Mr Ng says: "Ted used to be very shy and not that willing to try new things. Now, he's more confident about how his body works and what his body can do."

venessal@sph.com.sg

Headline	This kid does CrossFit		
MediaTitle	The Sunday Times (Life)		
Date	08 Jul 2018	Color	Full Color
Section	Go	Circulation	393,300
Page No	C1,C6	Readership	1,179,900
Language	English	ArticleSize	1535 cm²
Journalist	Venessa Lee	AdValue	S\$ 25,787
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	S\$ 77,361



Nicole Elizabeth Tay and David James Tay are enrolled in Ready Steady Go Kids, a multi-sport programme for children. PHOTO: AZIZ HUSSIN FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES

Headline	This kid does CrossFit		
MediaTitle	The Sunday Times (Life)		
Date	08 Jul 2018	Color	Full Color
Section	Go	Circulation	393,300
Page No	C1,C6	Readership	1,179,900
Language	English	ArticleSize	1535 cm²
Journalist	Venessa Lee	AdValue	S\$ 25,787
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	S\$ 77,361



(From left) Six-year-olds Sabari Naidu, Max Cheong and Wan Deming are students of Z Fencing.

ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Unusual sports programmes for kids

CAPOEIRA KIDS SINGAPORE

Children, from 2½ to 12 years old, learn capoeira, a Brazilian martial art that incorporates music, dance and acrobatics. Fees start at \$460 for 12 classes.

Facebook page: Capoeira Kids Singapore

READY STEADY GO KIDS

This multi-sport programme offers 10 sports – athletics, basketball, cricket, football, golf,

hockey, rugby, Australian Football, tennis and T-ball, which is based on softball and baseball. It is for children from 1½ to six years old.

A term of 12 weekly lessons cost \$350.

Website: www.readysteadygokids.com.sg

Z FENCING

Z Fencing offers a structured fencing programme for children

from the age of four, and also adults. Lessons for a term cost \$740 for children.

Website: www.zfencing.com

INNERVATE FITNESS

It has CrossFit programmes for adults and children from four to 12 years old. The children's fees are \$150 a month or \$400 for three months.

Facebook page: Innervate Fitness

Headline	This kid does CrossFit		
MediaTitle	The Sunday Times (Life)		
Date	08 Jul 2018	Color	Full Color
Section	Go	Circulation	393,300
Page No	C1,C6	Readership	1,179,900
Language	English	ArticleSize	1535 cm²
Journalist	Venessa Lee	AdValue	S\$ 25,787
Frequency	Weekly	PR Value	S\$ 77,361



Eight-year-old
Ted Ng goes to
the same
CrossFit gym as
his dad Ng Eng
Chuan.
ST PHOTO: ZHANG
XUAN