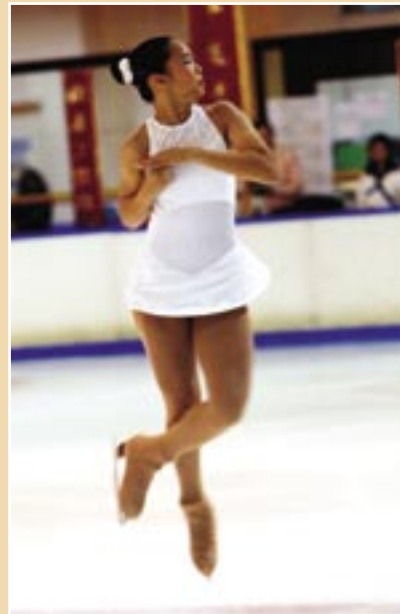


WHEN TOUGH ISN'T ENOUGH



“I’m pretty tough, and I have fallen thousands of times on jumps, says ice skater Lydia Leung, a former Prenovice Champion in Singapore. A strong jumper, 17 year-old Lydia was a favourite with her coaches, in part because she never complained during training. No matter how hard the falls, “I am immune to pain,” says Lydia. “At least, I was.”

In Perth to attend junior college, Lydia wasn’t training for an immediate competition when she was first injured in April 2004. She wanted to nail her double axel and triple salchow jumps. She had the full in-air rotations but she wanted to perfect the landings by the Australian National Championships in August.

So, Lydia didn’t think twice when a simple collision with another skater knocked her down hard on her left knee. “The coach was saying ‘get up, get up and keep going’ so I did.” Not only did Lydia finish the 90-minute session, she continued to train on ice on a daily basis, supplemented by weekly running and off ice training. “It hurt, but I really didn’t think the injury was that bad,” she says. “I kept thinking I could work it out.”

As minor as it seemed to Lydia at the time, the tumble was one too many for her knee. Two weeks after the original accident, the worsening pain finally made her pick up the phone and call a doctor. The news wasn’t what she wanted to hear: stop skating and begin physiotherapy. When she returned to Singapore for school break, she continued treatment and gradually resumed skating but too late for the Australian Nationals.

“If I had gone to a doctor immediately, things probably would have been different,” she says now. ▲