

sports star

For the love of rugby

For two West Island School students, rugby isn't just a sport - it's practically a way of life. Here's what they had to say to **Kelly Ho** about why they love playing it

Tackles, scrums, and the roar of the crowd echoing in their ears ... these are just some of the reasons why Lucia Bolton and Hana Lane love rugby as much as they do.

The duo, both 17, made their first appearance on the international rugby stage late last month, when they played on the U18 Hong Kong rugby team at the Asia Rugby Under-18 Girls Sevens in Bhubaneswar, India. The team reached the finals, where they lost to China. Despite losing, though, the Year 13 students from West Island School said that their trip to India was one they would never forget.

"It was a fantastic experience," Hana said. "We don't normally get to play in front of such a large crowd. We could also see where we're at, skill-wise, when compared to other teams."

It wasn't just the sport itself that they would remember the trip for, either. The team's old rugby kit was taken to an orphanage, where the students got to speak to the young people staying there.

"We gave the kits to the boys there, who were clearly very passionate about rugby," recalled Lucia. "We shared some of our knowledge with them, too. It is great to get to see how truly global this sport is, and how big the rugby community is."

Both Lucia and Hana said they had picked up playing rugby from an early age, and their love of, and respect for, the game has only grown.

Hana said her fondness for the sport is - in part - thanks to her father, who is a former rugby player. She also said one of the reasons she dedicates so much of her time to the sport is because she loves the teamwork involved in rugby. "It teaches me values such how to work with others toward a common goal," she said.

Lucia, meanwhile, said she enjoys how rugby allows her to experiment with sporting techniques that are about as far away from netball - another passion of hers - as she can get. Lucia's cross-sport skill set is what makes

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her such a good utility player. In sports, a utility player is one who can play several positions competently. She said she likes the creativity that is needed in setting up opportunities for her teammates to score.

Hana, on the other hand, plays as a hooker in a forward position. As one of the shorter

members of the team, she is perfectly placed to be the player that hooks, or gets possession of, the ball during a scrum.

Hana's height has not always been an advantage for her. At one point, she was considered taller and stronger than others her age. When they started to surpass her in height and strength, though, she realised that she was no longer able to rely on her natural abilities.

"I realised I had to start putting in the hard work just to be on the same level as everyone else, and to be the best that I can be."

The two students don't just play for their city, though. The duo, who are taking the IB exams next year, also play for their school, which leaves them little time to study. Lucia said that they will simply have to organise their lives so that they can play rugby and also keep their grades up.

"We must stay committed," she said. "We will have to prioritise our tasks, and accept that sacrifices must be made."

Both rugby players plan on going overseas for university. Hana said she is looking at institutions in Australia, and Lucia is looking at New Zealand.

"We're looking forward to experiencing new things," Hana said. "We want to get a taste of the type of rugby played in those places, and play in more high-level competitions."

Lucia (left) and Hana (right) reached the final of the Asia Rugby Under-18 Girls Sevens in October. Photo: SCMP / Kelly Ho



Edited by Ginny Wong