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SWIMMING

# MINAMI'S IN THE SWIM

## Impressive times see 12-year-old Japanese on course to fulfil Olympic dream

Report by HARESH KUMAR RAMANI  
harethkr@sph.com.sg

**It is every athlete's ultimate dream to participate in the Olympics.**

Japanese junior swimmer Minami Takahashi harbours that ambition. And her age-group times point in that direction.

The precocious 12-year-old is one of 430 juniors participating in the inaugural Super Junior Swimming Invitational 2016 which starts at the Chinese Swimming Club today.

And she has been made the top seed for both the 50 metres and 100m back-

stroke with impressive submitted times of 29.82 seconds and 1:03.69 respectively.

The Asian age-group records for girls aged 14 and under are held by China's Wang Xingyun with times of 29.20sec for the 50m and 1:02.49 for the 100m backstroke events.

The meet is endorsed by the Singapore Swimming Association and will feature swimmers from local as well as regional clubs from Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Japan.

Japanese Kambe Daisuke, 39, who has been mentoring Minami for the past two-and-a-half years, said: "For her, the

target has always been the Olympics.

"She is fast and she trains hard, we are really hoping for her to get the chance to compete at the highest level.

"She also likes to go to international meets so that she is able to see how she fares among swimmers in her age group from all around the world."

The meet aims to provide additional racing opportunities for young swimmers as well as to raise the bar for junior meets in Singapore.

Among the nine junior swimmers from Japan, Minami is the only one from A&A Nishi Tokyo Swimming Club, which is directed by Daisuke.

Daisuke hopes that she will be return to Japan with a new personal best.

"I am confident that she will grab both gold medals," he said.

When asked what got her into the sport, Minami shyly replied: "I've always liked being in the water.

"When I started to swim competitively, I wanted to be like Ikee Rikako (Japanese national swimmer who competed at the Rio Olympics).

"Her achievements are a huge motivation to me.

"I will work hard, so that I can make it to the 2020 or 2024 Olympics alongside her."

