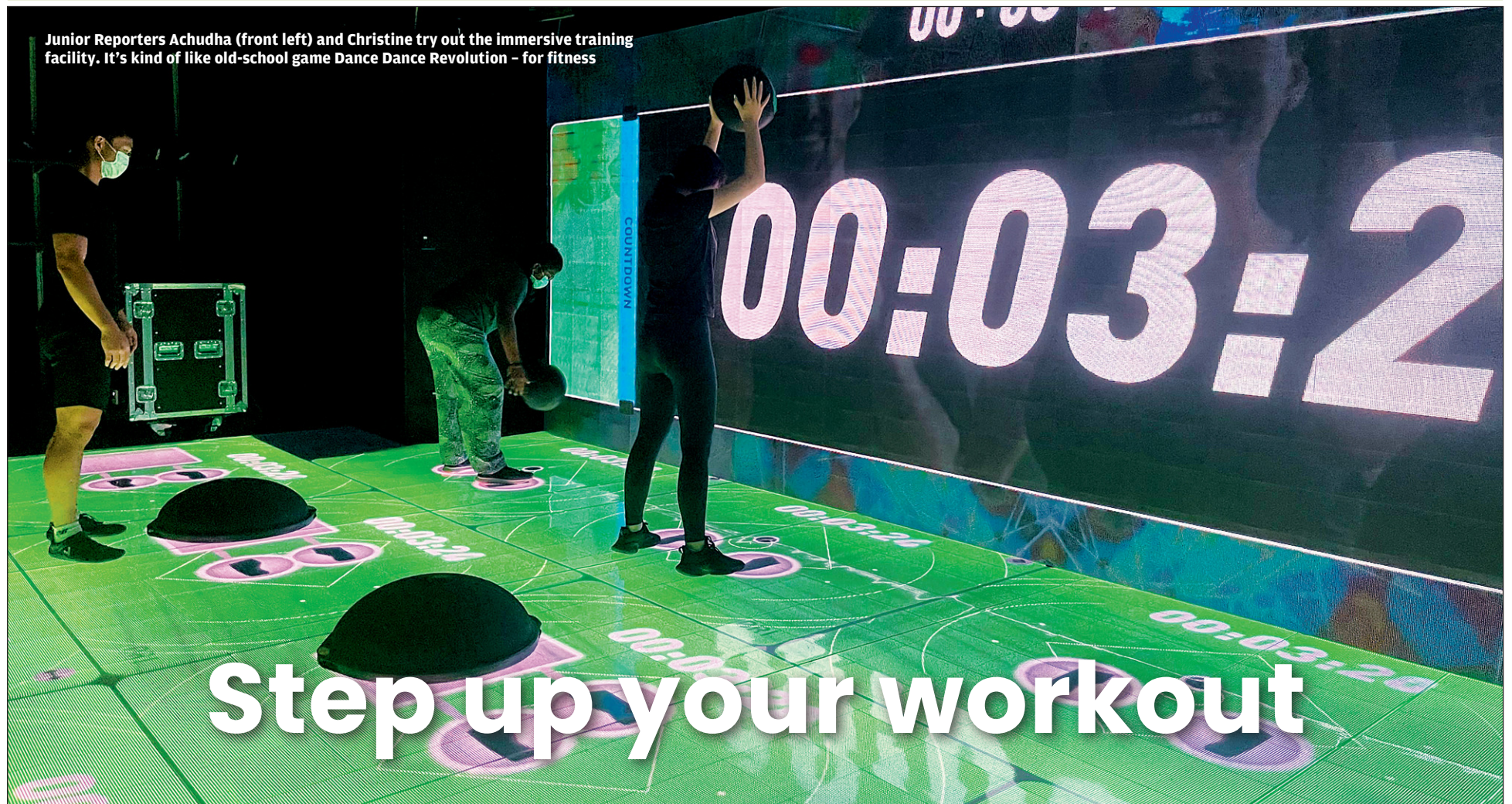


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Edited by M. J. Premaratne



Junior Reporters Achudha (front left) and Christine try out the immersive training facility. It's kind of like old-school game Dance Dance Revolution - for fitness

Step up your workout

A new fitness centre in Tseung Kwan O is dedicated to young people's health and fitness, so Junior Reporters **Christine Ling** and **Achudha Bala Selva Sathish** went to check it out for themselves

Low-up pictures on Instagram can inspire us to want to get fit, but it can be hard to exercise with social distancing and online classes. Gyms aren't traditionally teen-friendly places, but a new facility in Tseung Kwan O promises innovative courses tailored for young people, in a hygienic and unique environment.

AlphaStep, which opened late last year, boasts the latest fitness technology and friendly English-speaking trainers. During our session there, we took part in three different activities: a sports-specific training class, the Ninja Warrior course, and immersive training. Prices range from HK\$260 to HK\$490 per session, which may not be affordable long-term for everyone.

AlphaStep's Operations Director, Agnes Liu, said: "Our mission is to cultivate a lifetime habit of fitness for children at an early age."

Trainers Calvin Au Yeung and Keith Chan spoke of the long-term benefits of starting guided training when you're young. Au Yeung says, exercises like the Ninja Warrior obstacle course helps maintain your "sixth sense", also known as proprioception.

This is how you sense your body's position and where your limbs are - it's how you can touch your nose with your eyes closed. It helps your coordination so you can jump and run without tripping. Children are naturally very good at this, but you start losing your proprioception as you get older and become more inactive.

AlphaStep offers an array of programmes designed to help you improve



Achudha (left) and Christine focus on strengthening the muscles needed for golf.
Photos: Christine Ling

at specific sports including basketball, rugby, football, volleyball, badminton, swimming, and tennis; we chose golf.

The goal was to complete a series of strategic strength training exercises. After a quick warm-up, Yeung and Chan immediately identified problems with our posture. So they devised some sets of exercises, including

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variations of the Romanian dumbbell squat (a workout that engages your hamstring muscles).

We struggled to keep our backs straight, but our coaches gave us some great tips about how to do it right. They also made us do an arm-strengthening exercise using elastic sports bands.

Next, we headed to the Ninja Warrior programme. It was tempting to dive directly into the obstacle course and compete for the

quickest completion time. However, with safety being a priority, our two trainers first taught us how to fall properly so we would avoid injuries. From there, we navigated through a whirlwind of obstacles, including the warped wall (climbing a steep ramp), balance logs (rolling logs that test your agility), and monkey bars.

Finally, we finished our trial session at AlphaStep's state-of-the-art immersive training facility. When we stepped into the room, we were surrounded by bright LED screens covering the walls and the floor. We soon learned that these screens would display workouts for us to follow.

The innovative LED floor offered specific markings that guided us through a series of high-intensity moves. We did some very challenging exercises such as repeatedly throwing a 2kg ball, and jumping back and forth over a Bosu ball, (a half ball that helps improve balance). But we soon forgot about the gruelling aspects of the workout as we were immersed in the electric atmosphere.

AlphaStep is packed with engaging facilities guaranteed to make you sweat while being thoroughly enjoyable. Catering to children and teenagers aged three to 17, it provides a safe, exciting environment for participants to explore fitness and sport.

You don't need to do sports regularly or be on a school team to enjoy this place, but motivation and enthusiasm are key.