

General Information

Country:	EST
Gender:	F
Height:	168
Weight:	60
Handedness:	Right-handed
Date of birth:	1990-07-24
Education:	pupil
Profession:	pupil
License:	24071990002

Further Personal Information

Other names	Nelli Paju
Residence	Haapsalu, EST
Occupation	Athlete, Physiotherapist
Languages	Estonian
Higher education	Physiotherapy - University of Tartu: Estonia

Sport Specific Information

When and where did you begin this sport?	She began fencing in 2000.
Why this sport?	Her mother Leelo was a physical education teacher. She initially practised athletics with Leelo before switching to fencing at age 10. "My mother was an athletics coach and at the beginning I trained with her in Haapsalu. I could be four or five. At age six I started attending an athletics camp and I trained for two or three years. Later I took part in an inter-school competition and I think I had won a medal in each field, except for shot put. When my mother had to stay at home for my little brother, a question arose as to what sport to do for me next. A fencing club in Haapsalu celebrated its 50th anniversary and there was a big gathering, a fencing camp where my father and uncle also went. They had once fought and returned from the reunion with souvenir medals. I remember looking at those medals and thinking I wanted to get medals too. So basically I went to the fencing training knowing that there was a chance to get medals."
Club / Team	Vehklemisklubi En Garde: Haapsalu, EST
Name of coach	Helen Nelis-Naukas [club]; Kaido Kaaberma [national], EST
Training Regime	She trains six days a week.
Handedness	Right

General Interest

Hobbies	Cooking. (Instagram profile, 03 Apr 2022)
Most influential person in career	Her mother. (laanesport.ee, 02 Dec 2020)
Hero / Idol	Estonian cross-country skier Kristina Smigun-Vahi. (laanesport.ee, 02 Dec 2020)
Injuries	In October 2020 she underwent surgery on her left knee. She returned to competition in August 2021. (Facebook page, 02 Aug 2021, 06 Jan 2021) In May 2020 she broke the big toe on her right foot and was unable to train for six weeks. (Facebook page, 06 Jan 2021, 31 May 2020)
Sporting philosophy / motto	"I don't think I'm talented [in fencing]. Hard work is my talent." (laanesport.ee, 02 Dec 2020)
Awards and honours	She was named Female Fencer of the Year for 2023 by the Estonian Fencing Association. (online.le.ee, 16 Jan 2024) She was named the 2022 Best Female Fencer in Estonia. (sport.tv3.ee, 06 Jan 2023) She was named the 2019 Female Athlete of the Year in Laane County, Estonia. (Facebook page, 02 Dec 2020)
Ambitions	To win a medal at the Olympic Games. (laanesport.ee, 02 Dec 2020)
Other information	OCCUPATION She works as a physiotherapist at Laanemaa Hospital in Haapsalu, Estonia. "Fortunately, I don't work full-time. I have a contract that allows me to regulate my working hours, otherwise I would not be able to go to camps and competitions. In some ways [being both a physiotherapist and elite athlete] has its own advantages and disadvantages. It is very difficult to treat yourself. I can advise others, but it is very difficult for me to give myself adequate advice. The advantage is that I may have a better understanding of my body." (holmbank.ee, 23 Nov 2023; Facebook profile, 11 Feb 2022, 06 Apr 2020; laanesport.ee, 02 Dec 2020) FURTHER EDUCATION She has studied for a master's degree in physiotherapy at the University of Tartu in Estonia. (Facebook profile, 13 Feb 2021)