

General Information

Country:	FRA
Gender:	F
Handedness:	Right-handed
Date of birth:	1991-08-22
License:	22081991001

Further Personal Information

Family	Partner Race Imboden
Occupation	Athlete, Model
Languages	English, French
Higher education	Economics - University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne: France

Sport Specific Information

When and where did you begin this sport?	She began fencing at age seven in Guadeloupe. She moved to mainland France to join the national youth training hub [Pole Espoir] in Aix-en-Provence at age 17, and a year later she joined the national team training base at the National Institute of Sport, Expertise and Performance [INSEP] in Paris.
Why this sport?	"My mother took my brother and me to discover fencing. At the time, I was doing classical dance. I was truly a little princess. Initially, this introduction to the sport was intended more for my brother. It turned out I liked it straight away, and I quickly got a taste for competition. It became an addiction. Making a hit, defeating my opponent, I was no longer a ballerina but a fighter. In Guadeloupe, I got to a point where there was no more opposition, so I had to leave [for mainland France], to keep growing as a fencer. The federation put a little pressure on me on the subject. They said, 'If you do not take the step to come to France, you are putting your career in danger'. I wanted to be the best, so I left when I was 17. I had no family in mainland France."
Club / Team	AS Bourg-la-Reine 92: France
Name of coach	Giulio Tomassini [personal], from 2022
Training Regime	She trains at the National Institute of Sport, Expertise and Performance [INSEP] in Paris, France.
Handedness	Right

General Interest	
Nicknames	Ysa (ouest-france.fr, 09 Jan 2019)
Hobbies	Travelling, spending time with friends and family. (marieclaire.fr, 12 Dec 2022)
Memorable sporting achievement	Winning gold in individual foil at the 2022 World Championships in Cairo, Egypt. (ouest-france.fr, 30 Jul 2022)
Most influential person in career	Her family. (la1ere.francetvinfo.fr, 16 Mar 2022)
Hero / Idol	French fencer Laura Flessel-Colovic, Guadeloupean fencer and composer Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges. (la1ere.francetvinfo.fr, 16 Mar 2022; franceantilles.fr, 25 Jun 2013)
Injuries	She injured her hamstring during the 2015 Montreux Masters in Switzerland. (lequipe.fr, 08 Jun 2015)
Sporting philosophy / motto	"Work hard and dream big." (Twitter profile, 28 Mar 2016)
Awards and honours	She was named Female Fencer of the Year for 2022 by the French Fencing Federation [FFE]. (escrime-ffe.fr, 18 Nov 2022) In 2021 she was named a Knight of the National Order of Merit in France. (legifrance.gouv.fr, 08 Sep 2021) In 2013 she was presented with the Bernard Destremau Award by the Institute of France. The honour was in recognition of the way she had balanced her studies alongside her career as an elite athlete. (escpeurope.eu, 21 Nov 2013)
Famous relatives	Her partner Race Imboden has represented the United States of America in fencing, and won gold in team foil at the 2019 World Championships in Budapest, Hungary. (Instagram profile, 17 Mar 2022; SportsDeskOnline, 01 Apr 2021)
Ambitions	To win gold at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. (la1ere.francetvinfo.fr, 16 Mar 2022)
Other information	<p>RETURN TO FRANCE After several years living in Los Angeles, CA, United States of America, she returned to France in 2022. She began splitting her time between Paris and Avignon and started working with coach Giulio Tomassini. That year she went on to win her first world championship gold medal in Cairo, Egypt. "I had several meetings with the French Fencing Federation and the National Sports Agency. I wanted to be heard and they finally accepted my project in France. It had to be accepted the way I wanted in order for me to continue with my career. I managed to build a competent team around me with a psychologist at the National Institute of Sport, Expertise and Performance [INSEP] with my partner [US fencer] Race Imboden as manager and my new coach Giulio Tomassini. I also did several trips to Avignon where I trained with younger athletes which helped me a lot. It was very enriching. The world title confirms that when an athlete is listened to and is surrounded by a solid structure, it can lead to great things." (ouest-france.fr, 30 Jul 2022)</p> <p>POST-TOKYO BREAK While she won a silver medal in team foil at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, she was eliminated in the second round of the individual foil event. This disappointment led her to take a four-month break from training after the 2020 Games, during which time she focused on her mental health. "When I lost in the second round, having won silver at the 2018 World Championships, it was a punch in the face. I was alone, I cried, and I asked myself if this five-year commitment for Tokyo was worth it. I did not want anything to do with fencing. I tried to return to training several times. It took me four months. I listened to myself, took care of my mental health, and assumed this period of fragility. Mental health must not be a taboo any more, neither in sport nor in society. Athletes are only praised because of their medals. They have to be strong, determined and motivated. They are presented to us as flawless people. But that's not true, an athlete also has weaknesses. There are moments in which athletes just don't want to do it and it's only their capability to manage these moments that makes the athlete a role model. It took me some time to heal this mental injury. But it made me realise that I need to talk about it. You should not be ashamed. We have to take care of ourselves on a daily basis." (francetvinfo.fr, 26 Nov 2021)</p> <p>FENCING COUPLE She met her partner, US fencer Race Imboden, at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. "If he offers me advice, I am always ready to listen. After all he is world number one [speaking in May 2019] so I imagine his advice is not bad. In general we make a good couple, in sport and in life." (Instagram profile, 17 Mar 2022; rtl.fr, 09 May 2019)</p> <p>GENDER EQUALITY She says she wants to inspire young girls and use her platform to push for greater gender equality in sport. In 2020 she launched EssentiElle Stories, an online space for female athletes around the world to share their stories. "Whenever I have the chance, I highlight women's sport around me, other female athletes because I think we all lack recognition and visibility. I denounce the injustices that still exist between women's and men's sport. What still displeases me is the vision we have of women in sport and in society. I've been told many times that I can't do it. When I decided to go to the United States, I was told that I was too sensitive, that with my emotions I would crack under the pressure, or that a man could do it but I couldn't. In the end, it motivated me even more and I have had the best results of my career since. Elite sport does not encourage solidarity among women. When we are young we are taught to be rivals but I am convinced that e</p>