

WIND IN ATHLETES' SAILS

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BENTAN, Singapore Sailing Federation president, highlighting the need for the private sector to play a part in supporting athletes.



National windsurfer Amanda Ng recently became the first recipient of the Deloitte Singapore Scholarship, which will support her training and competition needs to the tune of \$20,000. Ng, who competed as a sailor at the Rio Olympics, will also become a Deloitte employee after her studies. PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA NG

SCHOLARSHIP BOOST FOR NG

Windsurfer is first recipient of award from Deloitte, aiding her in Asiad qualification bid

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Switching from windsurfing to sailing is no easy feat but Amanda Ng decided on the move at the end of 2014 in her bid to qualify for her first Olympics.

And it was a proud moment for the 23-year-old Singaporean when she and partner Jovina Choo qualified and competed in the women's 470 event at last year's Rio Games, never mind that the pair finished last among 20 teams.

But, soon after that experience, Ng found herself starting "from zero". She decided to switch back to RS:X windsurfing.

This meant that she lost her carding as a national athlete, which offers access to medical assistance and allowances to defray training costs. She had to pay out of her own pocket for physiotherapy sessions and new windsurfing equipment which cost about \$8,000.

Then came the good news last month. She received \$20,000 as the first recipient of the Deloitte

Singapore Scholarship for elite athletes. The Singapore Management University accountancy undergraduate can now use the money to fund her qualification bid for the Aug 18-Sept 2 Asian Games in Indonesia.

"I am currently not carded because I switched classes from 470 to windsurfing after the Olympic Games. I am now self-funded so this scholarship comes in handy," she told The Straits Times (ST) yesterday.

She will use a significant portion of the scholarship for new equipment, while the rest will cover training and physiotherapy costs, as well as overseas training stints and competitions.

She plans to compete in Thailand twice and in Jakarta in April at a pre-Asian Games competition. She has also pencilled in another meet in Spain in March.

She is yet to earn her ticket for the Asian Games, but has three qualifying events from now till June to do so. She said the scholarship has given her a huge boost.

"I have been using old equipment to train and it was not ideal when I raced in the World Championships in Japan last September," said Ng.

"With the Deloitte Scholarship, I can now invest in new equipment that will serve me well in my Asian Games campaign."

Deloitte has also assured her full-time employment as an audit and assurance associate once she completes her degree in December. ST understands that this move by Deloitte is the first of its kind by any company in Singapore.

"The Deloitte Scholarship is just the start and I have to put in a lot of effort into my sports and studies. That being said, knowing I'll have a job waiting for me upon graduation allows me to focus on the job at hand," said the former Deloitte intern.

Over 40 current and retired Team Singapore athletes are em-

ployed by the accounting firm and services provider, including netballers Charmaine Soh and Kimberly Lim, pole vaulter Rachel Yang and retired shuttler Derek Wong.

Singapore Sailing Federation president Ben Tan hailed Ng for her "resilience in overcoming multiple obstacles", and lauded Deloitte for its proactive move to support local sports.

"There is no question that Olympic and other campaigns require funds," added the former Olympian.

"Sports funding should not come solely from the Government, or taxpayers. In a healthy ecosystem, the private sector is usually the dominant contributor.

"Hence, it is heartening to see Deloitte step forward as a shining example for other private sector firms to follow."

Seah Gek Choo, talent partner at Deloitte Singapore, said: "We hope that with this scholarship, Amanda and future athletes who become Deloitte scholars, will be financially worry-free and be able to dedicate their time to excel in their sports and studies, and subsequently in their careers, in equal measure."

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