

'RELAXED' PEREIRA SETS RECORD

Training adjustments and better conditioning help her shave 0.15sec off 100m national mark

Nicole Chia

A different training approach, attention to little details and a renewed love for the sport have led to a stronger and faster Shanti Pereira, who rewrote her own 100m national record yesterday.

In her first official 100m race of the year at the Asian Athletics Championships in Doha, she clocked 11.58 seconds in the heats to rank eighth overall and qualify for today's semi-finals.

The record is pending ratification by Singapore Athletics.

The 22-year-old's previous national mark of 11.73sec was set during the heats of the 2017 SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur, where she clinched bronzes in the 100m and 200m. She also equalled that time at last year's Singapore Open Track and Field Championships.

A cheerful Pereira told The Straits Times: "I'm just damn happy. Training was good leading up to it and I was doing timings that would reflect this kind of timing for the 100m... but you never know when it comes to a race, I just really wasn't sure what would come out of this in terms of an exact time."

"Before the race started, I was relaxed - my mind was blank and I was just ready to go. I didn't think about what timing I wanted to run, I just knew I was ready to hopefully get a good time in."

This year, Pereira has adopted a different training approach under the guidance of her long-time coach Margaret Oh.

Instead of instructing Pereira to run at 90 per cent during training, Oh has been setting specific times for her protegee to hit for each training session.

She believes this has pushed Pereira to go faster and the latter agreed, adding that she can better keep track of her training progress.

Oh, who was not surprised by Pereira's feat due to the improve-



ments she had been making during training, said: "She's much faster and stronger now, with the help of staff from the Singapore Sports Institute (SSI) who have helped her improve her strength and technique."

"Now, her start is much better... she can really burst out much quicker."

Pereira said she has been working with a strength and conditioning coach who incorporates ele-

ments of speed and reaction into her workouts. "On the biomechanics side, they always do tests for me to check all the small details, like how high my leg is and how far I'm pushing," she added.

After her injury woes last year, when a grade two hamstring tear in April recurred two months later, the Singapore Management University undergraduate has been excited to compete again.

Her 11.58sec effort currently

ranks her top in the women's 100m in South-east Asia this year, with Kristina Knott of the Philippines posting 11.64sec last month and Malaysian Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli clocking 11.65sec in February.

Defending SEA Games 100m champion Le Tu Chinh of Vietnam posted 11.67sec in the heats of the Asian championships yesterday at the Khalifa Stadium.

Pereira, who will also feature in the 200m and 4x100m relay, said:

"Hitting timings like this was a goal for this season, but to lower it so fast was a bit unexpected."

"It's really a major confidence boost, there's still a long way to go this season and, hopefully, it goes up from here."

"I really wanted to build a good base to start the season well, and I feel like that's what I've done well. That's why I'm excited."

cnicole@sph.com.sg

Shanti Pereira, pictured at last year's Asian Games, rewrote her own national record in her first official 100m race of the year at the Asian championships in Doha.

ST FILE PHOTO