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TODAY reports: The winner of 9 SEA Games medals retired after failing to qualify for this year's edition, to be held in Singapore this June.



Russell Ong at the Myanmar SEA Games in 2013. Photo: TODAY/Wee Teck Hian

SINGAPORE: Russell Ong, one of Singapore's most experienced swimmers, has called time on his career with the national side.

The 26-year-old announced his decision on his Facebook page on Thursday night (Mar 19), after he failed to qualify for the South-east Asian (SEA) Games to be held from June 5 to 16 in Singapore. He made the announcement after failing to dislodge Joseph Schooling and Clement Lim as the event's two fastest swimmers.

Ong came in second (23.67 seconds) in the final at the Singapura Finance Singapore National Age-Group Swimming (SNAG) Championships at the OCBC Aquatic Centre on Thursday, missing the qualifying mark of 23.41s.

The SNAG is the final local qualifying meet for the SEA Games, and the SSA is expected to select the top two swimmers in each event.

"I tried my best this season given the circumstances, but will make no excuses and am sorry to have disappointed family and friends who have supported me all this while," he wrote, adding: "Swimming is a cruel sport. She demands perfection. Prepare as you will, but a minor slip-up come race day and she is unforgiving."

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Thanking team-mates and coaches for their support, he added: "Upon asking myself if I have accomplished all I've wanted to, the simple answer is yes. With support from my parents, I have had a beautiful 11-year career as a national swimmer, and am walking away with that cap, together with nine SEA Games medals in the bag."

The nine SEA Games medals include the bronze at the 2011 SEA Games, and silver at the 2013 SEA Games where he was the team captain.

Ong, a final-year business student at the Singapore Management University, will serve out his role as chairman of the Singapore Swimming Association's Athletes Commission.



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