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TODAY reports: Kimberly Chan, 21 and Jonathan Chan, 18 are among Singapore's medal hopefuls for diving at the upcoming SEA Games.



Jonathan Chan, 18, will feature in the men's 10m individual platform while his sister Kimberly, 21, is set to compete in the 10m women's individual platform. The pair initially trained as gymnasts. (Photo: Jaslin Goh / TODAY)

SINGAPORE: Every evening at 8.30pm, the Chan family sets aside time from their hectic schedules to sit down for dinner. It is typically a boisterous affair for the family of five as dad Kenneth, mum Yan Nuen and siblings Kimberly, Jonathan and Colette chat about work, school and sports - school gymnastics for youngest child Colette, and diving for the other two who are part of the national team.

This time of bonding is a special one for Kimberly, 21, and Jonathan, 18, as it is the only time they get to catch up with family members after a long day juggling the demands of university, classes and gruelling training sessions.

The two divers have been selected to represent Singapore at the 28th South-east Asian (SEA) Games as the team aims for a record haul of seven medals. They, along with team-mates Timothy and Mark Lee, swimmers Shana and Darren Lim, and the Quahs - Ting Wen, Zheng Wen and Jing Wen - are some of the unique sibling pairs set to feature at the biennial event.

Kimberly and Jonathan initially trained as gymnasts before taking the plunge and joining the national diving team in 2010. This year's SEA Games, though, is the first major competition the pair will be participating in together.

At the 2013 Myanmar Games, Kimberly and her partner Arizir Fong finished fifth in the women's 10m synchronised platform. She is set to compete in the women's 10m individual platform this time around, while Jonathan will feature in the men's 10m individual platform.

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“It’s quite cool we get to train together and we are in the same team, and we sometimes give each other suggestions on how to improve based on what we’ve seen during training,” said Kimberly, who is pursuing an economics degree at Singapore Management University.

Aside from a shared love for their sport, the siblings, along with sister Colette, also share a close relationship as Kimberly related a training incident that saw her landing face first in the pool after a botched dive from the 10m platform.

“It hurt really badly and my entire face ended up completely bruised after that,” she said. “Jonathan wasn’t there at training so he was really shocked when he first saw my face at home. But his (and Colette’s) immediate reaction was to ask if he could take a picture of my face!”

Jonathan, a student at Anglo-Chinese School (Independent), expects a “fun and exciting” Games debut, particularly with the Chan clan making plans to turn up in force with the other athletes’ parents to cheer on the eight-member national diving team.

The 18-year-old is happy to be back in the fray after suffering a spate of injuries: A tricep injury at Nanjing Youth Olympic Games last year and a recent lower back injury incurred during training.

“There is no fighting (in the team), although we do tease each other a lot,” said Jonathan. “Timothy often teases Kimberly by imitating her mannerisms in an exaggerated way, while I also joke with everyone in the team as well. As for my hopes at this SEA Games? I’m just going to try and get a medal.”

At the last Games, the national divers returned from Naypyidaw with a haul of two silver and two bronze medals. Team manager Damien Ler has set his sights on a bigger haul on home soil, with a goal of clinching a medal in each of the seven events.

“Everyone selected is considered a medal prospect, and all eight should be getting at least a bronze in their respective events if they perform to the best of their abilities on the day of competition,” he said.

Regional diving powerhouse Malaysia, which boasts the likes of Olympic bronze medallist Pandelega Rinong Pamg, are again favourites to complete a clean sweep of all eight gold medals at stake. Despite the fierce competition, Ler is hopeful the men’s and women’s 3m synchronised springboard divers can spring a surprise.

“We actually beat Malaysia once during the (2014) FINA World Cup in Shanghai, so it is possible to do so again,” he said.

“What we need to do is ensure we keep close enough to the Malaysians so that we’ll be able to capitalise if they happen to slip up. That’s our strategy in terms of gold medal targets.”