

Yeo returns favour, hosts Japanese

IT IS the off-season. Most athletes are enjoying a well-deserved break.

But unlike his team-mates, sprinter Gary Yeo is still getting out of bed early every morning – despite not needing to head to the track or school for lessons.

The 26-year-old Olympian has been busy hosting Japan's former sprinter Nobuharu Asahara and a team of three runners who are in town for a 10-day training stint.

A typical day for Yeo starts at around 8am, when he picks up the four from their hotel in the Clarke Quay area and takes them to one of their training venues.

It usually ends when he drops

them back at the hotel at around 2pm, although it sometimes stretches into the night when he becomes a "tour guide" by taking them to the Republic's must-see places such as Sentosa.

But Yeo, who clocked 10.44sec at the Asean University Games last month for the Republic's fastest 100m timing since U.K. Shyam's national record (10.37) in 2001, does not find it a chore.

"I'm free anyway," said Yeo, who has deferred his business management studies at the Singapore Management University for a year to train full time.

"When I was in Japan training

for a month before the Olympics, they also took care of me. I'm returning the favour now."

The relationship between the two sides actually goes back to 1996, when veteran Singapore thrower James Wong was rooming with Asahara during a training camp in Namibia.

Yeo does not usually join the Japanese during their training sessions, although he does jog alongside them sometimes.

When asked if he had received any pointers from Asahara, he said he had not but added: "I'm free to ask them for advice if I want to."

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