

HIGH HOPES FOR TEAM SINGAPORE TO REPEAT EIGHT-GOLD FEAT FROM 2006

DIVERS GET NOD FOR ASIAD FOR FIRST TIME

Myra Lee, Fong Kay Yian and twins Timothy and Mark Lee create local sporting history

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SINGAPORE—National diver Myra Lee had just boarded an MRT train at Toa Payoh for a late-night birthday celebration with friends when she received her present for her 20th birthday via a text message from Singapore Diving General Manager Damien Ler.

It said that Lee and Fong Kay Yian — her team-mate in the women's 3m synchronised springboard — and twins Timothy and Mark Lee (men's 3m synchronised springboard) had just been given the green light by national selectors for this September's Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea, making it the first time that Singapore's divers have qualified for the Asiad in the event's 63-year history.

"This is the best birthday gift ever. Nothing will top this," said the Singapore Management University undergraduate.

"I wasn't 100 per cent sure we would make it and I didn't think we would get the answers so quickly. I was on the train when I heard and I just couldn't stop smiling. The Asian Games is our main focus for the year and we are excited to just be able to go."

Lee, Kay Yian, Mark and Timothy made a splash at last year's SEA Games in Myanmar, winning two silvers (men's 3m individual springboard, men's 3m synchronised springboard) and two bronze medals (men's 10m synchronised platform and women's 3m synchronised springboard) to end a 28-year medal drought at the regional event.

Said Ler: "It feels good to hear this because they have been working very hard for the Asian Games. The SEA Games was their first major Games and they coped well there, so I hope for them to do better at the Asian Games.

"We are definitely looking at the



(From top left clockwise) Myra Lee, Fong Kay Yian, as well as twins Mark and Timothy Lee — seen here with two other divers — have been given the green light for the Asian Games in Incheon. TODAY FILE PHOTO

top six, but our target is still to deliver medals at the SEA Games here in 2015."

A total of 210 athletes from 18 sports earned the nod from the Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) after a selection meeting at Sports Singapore yesterday, with national sports associations given until April 11 to submit their appeals.

The SNOC must submit the final list of names to the Games' organisers by Aug 15.

Top swimmer Joseph Schooling — Singapore's most bemedalled athlete at the Myanmar SEA Games with six golds — and two-time Asian Games champion (women's 50m butterfly) Tao Li are expected to do double duty at the Commonwealth Games (July 23 to Aug 3) and Asian Games.

While United States-based swimmers like Joseph, Quah Ting Wen and Lynette Lim have yet to qualify due to the lack of long course meets there, the Singapore Swimming Association said it will be aiming to qualify at various meets from now till May, while local swimmers will have a final chance at the South-east Asian Swimming Championships in June to qualify for the remaining events.

“The SEA Games was their first major Games and they coped well there, so I hope for them to do better at the Asian Games. We are definitely looking at the top six, but our target is still to deliver medals at the SEA Games here in 2015.

Damien Ler
SINGAPORE DIVING
GENERAL MANAGER

Hopes will be high for Team Singapore to repeat their eight-gold medal feat from the 2006 Asiad. They had won four in sailing (2), bowling (1) and swimming (1) for a 4-7-6 medal haul at the 2010 edition in Guangzhou.

Other notable new entries in the 210-strong contingent include the men's sepak takraw regu team and 15-year-old shooter Martina Lindsay Veloso, who booked her place at both the Asiad and Youth Olympic Games after claiming top spot in the 10m air rifle in a YOG qualifier at last month's Asian Championships.

However, the national men's under-23 football team and national men's hockey team were not given the green light.

A total of six athletes from sailing, shooting and taekwondo have earned their spots at the Nanjing YOG in August.

There was also good news for weightlifter Lewis Chua, gymnasts Aizat Muhammad Jufrie and Timothy Tay, and the women's artistic and rhythmic gymnastics teams, as 11 athletes won their appeals to compete as part of the 82-strong contingent at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.