

## 2012 Olympic Profile: Gary Yeo

With the London Olympics fast upon us, SEA Real Time introduces the athletes who will represent the region at the 2012 Summer Games. Come back regularly for our profiles of the Olympians.

By Shibani Mahtani



Singaporean sprinter Gary Yeo. - Singapore Sports Council

### **Gary Yeo**

Event: 100-meter sprint

Born: Aug. 30, 1986

### **Career**

Gary Yeo once entertained thoughts of joining Singapore's armed forces or police force. But he decided otherwise in favor of athletics after two years of mandatory conscription, a requirement for all males living in the city-state once they turn 18.

Now 25, Yeo is considered one of the fastest men in the region, with two silver medals from last year's Southeast Asian Games to his name. Currently training in Japan, he is about to make his Olympic debut, representing Singapore in the 100-meter sprint.

Having first competed in regional sporting events in 2004, Yeo didn't always have dreams of competing in front of stadiums full of cheering supporters. In Yeo's school in Singapore, many of his classmates were athletes and happened to "rope [him] into the sport." His coaches along the way saw potential and convinced him to pursue athletics competitively.

Now at the Singapore Management University studying business management, Yeo still does not consider himself a "professional athlete." But he has participated in regional competitions for years and strives to improve his own personal best time (10.46 seconds) in Singapore. Bettering this time—ideally going below 10.40 seconds—is his key goal at the upcoming games.

Singapore's record (10.37 seconds) in a men's 100-meter sprint is held by celebrated athlete U.K. Shyam from 2001 – still the fastest-ever Southeast Asia Games silver medal timing.

Having trained in Japan for the past month, Yeo says he has been soaking up all he can from professional athletes, learning how he can prepare himself mentally for the Olympics. "The atmosphere would be more charged up [than other competitions], with the whole world looking on," he said, adding that the biggest challenge would be London's cool weather – even in the summer months – compared to Singapore's tropical heat and humidity, as well as the time difference between the two countries.

Yeo notes that pursuing athletics, particularly for Singaporean males, isn't always the easiest path, particularly with a gap in training created by two years of military service, which he says is "unkind to athletes." He credits his success to the support of his coaches and his family, as well as the flexibility of his university to plan his lessons and examination dates around his training schedule and competitions.

Besides fulfilling his own personal goals in London, Yeo also hopes to meet global sporting stars and looks forward to the thrill of competing in front of a full stadium.

**Memorable quote:**

"I am thankful for all the coaches that I trained under as I learned a lot from all of them. Each of them has affected me along the years I have spent in the sport and I still keep in



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touch with them... It is an honor and a dream to be chosen to represent Singapore for the Olympics.”