

LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

National sprinter Gary Yeo is eyeing international honours, not national records

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SINGAPORE – It is a benchmark that has stood for 11 years and counting.

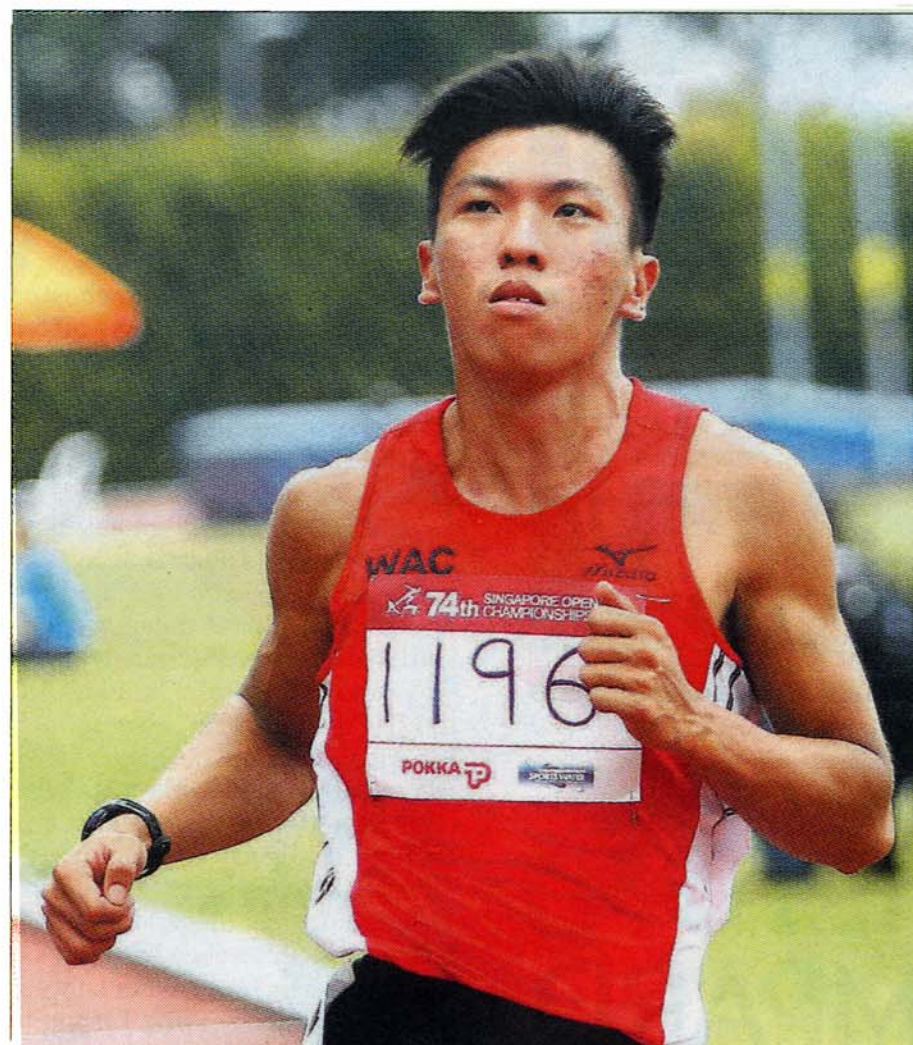
But after posting the fourth-fastest time by a Singaporean in the men's 100m, expectations are growing that national sprinter Gary Yeo (picture) may eventually crack U K Shyam's electronically-timed national record of 10.37sec set in 2001.

Yeo, who clocked a personal best of 10.44 to win the event at the 16th ASEAN University Games in Laos on Saturday, revealed that he is aiming to better that mark next year. However, he also insisted that becoming Singapore's fastest man is not the most important thing to him.

"Next year is probably the best opportunity for me to achieve it as I will be training full-time," he said in a phone interview from the Laotian capital of Vientiane yesterday.

"But I won't pressure myself into it. If it comes, it comes. I'll take it a step at a time.

"Also, the national record is just another milestone for me to aim for



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to help me improve. I have to look at the bigger picture.

"There are several big and important meets and targets next year, such as winning the (men's 4x100m relay) gold at the SEA Games."

Yeo, who is coached by Melvin

Tan, added that he has to work on several areas if he is to break the record. "My starts are pretty slow and I'm still weak in my overall body strength," he said.

Until Shyam's feat, C Kunalan had held the previous record of 10.38 —



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Gary Yeo
 NATIONAL SPRINTER

set at the 1968 Mexico Olympics — while retired sprinter Muhd Hosni once posted 10.41.

Yeo's result on Saturday bettered his previous best of 10.46 which he clocked en route to winning silver at last year's SEA Games. It also met the qualifying time of 10.47 for next year's SEA Games in Myanmar.

The Singapore Management University student is set to train full-time next year with team-mates Calvin Kang, Muhd Elfi Mustapa, Muhd Amirudin Jamal, Lee Cheng Wei and Lim Yao Peng to prepare for the World Athletics Championship in Moscow in August, and to achieve their SEA Games gold medal target.

Last month, TODAY reported that the Singapore Athletic Association (SAA) have offered Amirudin, Kang, Lee and Yeo a monthly allowance of S\$2,000 each, while Elfi, who works for SAA President Tang Weng Fei's Seven Seas Oil Trading, would be on a flexi-hour scheme.

And according to The New Paper last week, the SAA are close to securing sponsorships for the team.

Meanwhile, Yeo will be racing in the men's 4x100m relay, with Kang, Lee and Amirudin as the anchor, but he insists that he is not getting carried away after his performance on Saturday.

"What happened on Saturday won't really have an impact on how I run in the relay," he said. "I'm just happy to be able to run."