

SAILORS CLOSER TO MEDAL

CDM Tan urges Lim and Low to stay on track though they're unsure of Paris 2024



Sazali Abdul Aziz
In Tokyo

Singaporean sailors Kimberly Lim and Cecilia Low are "within striking distance" of a historic Olympic medal, says Benedict Tan, chef de mission for the Singapore contingent at the Tokyo Games, and he hopes that the pair will stay the course and work towards Paris 2024.

Tan made the comments after watching Lim, 24, and Low, 30, place 10th in the 49er FX medal race at the Enoshima Yachting Harbour yesterday afternoon.

The Singaporean duo were 10th out of 21 boats overall, which is the Republic's best finish in the sport at the Olympics. They had already made history as Singapore's first sailors to qualify for a medal race at the Games.

The previous best performance by a Singaporean sailor was Colin Cheng's 15th-place finish out of 49 boats in the men's Laser at the 2012 London Games.

A former national sailor who competed at the 1996 Atlanta Games, Tan said he had told the pair after their race what he thought of their chances of a podium finish in Paris, saying that they are on a "faster trajectory than the average medallist" in the sport.



Kimberly Lim and Cecilia Low in yesterday's 49er FX medal race at the Enoshima Yachting Harbour. They were 10th out of 21 overall. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

"I told them to keep it up," he told The Straits Times. "Very few people do well at their first Olympics (in sailing). So in that regard, they've already done very well... So my message to them was that they are on the right track, and I also told them to make sure they are focused and finish the job."

But Lim and Low, who spoke in the media mixed zone before their chat with Tan, said that they have not decided whether to pursue another Olympic campaign. Both have taken significant amounts of

time off from academic pursuits for the Tokyo Games.

They have also spent most of the last five years training abroad, estimating they spend only about two months each year at home.

Saying they wanted to take "a month or two" before plotting their next move, Lim explained:

"For sure the performance at the Olympics has an influence on how we feel. But because the intensity is always on and it never stops until we really get to rest, I think the best time to internalise and think

what we want to do is when we have time to relax and rest our minds from all of this."

However, Tan, 53, who was president of the Singapore Sailing Federation (SSF) from 2010 to 2018 and is now its adviser, is already looking ahead.

"To be in the top 10 means we are in the striking range (to medal) already. Now we need that finishing touch, and of course it is not easy," he said.

"We are definitely not going to take it for granted... I've already

given (the SSF) a heads up and they are going to draw up the plans and there are going to be specific targets based on all our learnings."

Under an unforgiving afternoon sun at Enoshima, Brazilian duo Martine Grae and Kahena Kunze won gold with 76 points, followed by Germany's Tina Lutz and Susann Beucke (83), and Annemiek Bekkering and Annette Duetz of the Netherlands (88). The Singapore pair accumulated 117 points.

Lim and Low said they were "super happy and super proud" of

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KIMBERLY LIM, on Covid-19 giving her and Cecilia Low added preparation time for the Games.

their debut Olympic performance in Tokyo, although they admitted they could have finished higher in the medal race – they were fifth at one point in the 10-strong field – with a strategy change.

Low said: "We're normally quite conservative... and we didn't change our mindset to fit the racing conditions (for a medal race). We still sailed the normal way and instead of gaining from the edge of the course, we lost out a bit in the middle."

Still, Lim said: "We are so grateful to all the people who have been behind us, supporting us, who believed in us... That's what kept us going all this time."

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