

# THE STRAITS TIMES ATHLETE OF THE YEAR



PRESENTED BY 100 PLUS

Jowen Lim practising what his coach Zhang Feng preaches: Trust the process and enjoy the journey. In 2023, the mantra helped the wushu exponent win several medals, including a historic Asian Games silver in the combined daoshu and gunshu event. ST PHOTO: LIM YACHUI



## FOLLOW YOUR HEART, BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

The Straits Times celebrates outstanding Singaporeans selected for the 2023 ST Athlete of the Year award, backed by 100Plus. We asked our nominees what music or movies inspire them, which books or memorable quotes have left an impression, and their sporting moment of 2023. This is what wushu exponent Jowen Lim told David Lee.

### ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

- 1 gold, 1 silver at World Wushu Championships
- 1 silver at Asian Games
- 1 gold, 1 silver at SEA Games
- 1 bronze at World Combat Games

**Q What are three movies that are meaningful to you?**  
**A** Mr Vampire. This is a 1985 Hong Kong comedy that started the vampire genre. I found myself loving old movies about Chinese vampires when I was young, and I liked this film because there were hints of martial arts in it. I don't really listen to music and read books but I do enjoy watching movies. My favourite martial arts stars are Donnie Yen, Jackie Chan and Jet Li, who has more of a martial arts background like me. Heart Of Dragon. This is another 1985 Hong Kong film directed and co-starring Sammo Hung. Chan plays the lead character Tat Fung, who does anything and everything to protect Dodo (Hung), his brother who has special needs. I really respect how Tat Fung is so loyal and protective of those close to him, and this is how I want to treat my teammates and people in general. Kung Fu Cult Master. Loosely based on the novel The Heaven Sword And Dragon Sabre, this 1993 Hong Kong film is again choreographed by Hung, and features Li. While there are some exagger-

ated qinggong (pugilistic art of flying) special effects, I loved the action scenes. I was very obsessed with these films and would rewatch them on TV until I was in secondary school. I would try to copy the more realistic moves like aerial cartwheel, back handspring and jumping kicks. **Q A book or quote that you like?**  
**A** "Trust the process and enjoy the journey." This is what my coach Zhang Feng often tells me, and it was very applicable in 2023 when there were so many competitions. I took leave of absence after one semester into my business management degree course at the Singapore Management University. At the start, there was a lot of self-doubt, and I would get very frustrated when I could not master or complete a move. But I realised that we can worry about the outcome so much that we get overwhelmed. This makes the journey more difficult than it should be and we miss the fun in between. So, I learnt to be less harsh on myself. I found myself happier

and enjoying training more than before, and that also helps me train and compete better. **Q Your favourite sporting moment of 2023?**  
**A** Winning the daoshu and gunshu all-round silver at the Asian Games. This was significant because my parents and grandmother were in Hangzhou to support me again for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic. It meant a lot to have them in my corner as I have been living with my grandparents since I was born. My grandfather practised traditional Shaolin wushu and that may have influenced me to practise wushu since I was six. They would pick me up from training every day and I really appreciate their support. **Q What advice would you give your younger self in January 2023?**  
**A** Follow your heart and believe in yourself. I wasn't sure if I was ready to pursue wushu full time. But ultimately, I followed and trusted my instincts and passion, and it paid off. davidlee@sph.com.sg

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