

# Stoelwinder: Tao Li can be world-class

AUSTRALIA is not a big country like the United States or China, but it has produced world-class swimmers over the years.

So can a small country like Singapore produce world-class swimmers like Australia?

Grant Stoelwinder definitely thinks so.

The Australian, who has coached former world record holders and Olympic medallists, said: "I think Singapore has got some of the right coaches. It's more of identifying the talent and supporting them.

"The pool of talent is probably going to be small. But exposing them to international events on a regular basis is important."

## Obstacles

Stoelwinder noted how academic achievement could prove to be one of the Singaporean athlete's biggest obstacles.

He said: "There is no formula for success that Singapore can adopt. But the strategy is to keep the swimmers and support them in their studies in any way possible."

Who does he think has the potential to become a world-class swimmer in Singa-

pore?

"Tao Li was so close to getting on the podium at the Beijing Olympics. She has got a great coach, who is Australian, of course," said Stoelwinder with a grin.

He has only praises for Tao (above), who finished fourth behind Australian Libby Trickett in the 100m butterfly at the Beijing Olympics.

Trickett, 24, who remembered Tao as "the girl in the butterfly final", agreed.

Trickett, who won four medals in five finals at the Beijing Olympics, said: "She did fantastically well last year. I'm amazed at her ability to learn in Singapore. She should also learn from others around the world. It's important to share information. I don't believe there are any limits in anyone or any country."

Asked how Tao could beat her, Trickett replied: "I shouldn't be telling you this, should I? I am not invincible. I am also not a 10-foot tall superwoman. Anyone can be beaten, absolutely. But I am doing everything I can to be the best that I can be."

— JOYCE LIM



*"I think she is a very strong and determined person and that shows up in her racing."*

— The New South Wales Institute of Sport sprint squad Grant Stoelwinder's (left) assessment of Singapore's Tao Li (above)