

# Tao Li cracks 100m back record

■ BY MAY CHEN

NEVER mind that her priority for now is her studies, not training.

Forget that the last time she competed seriously in this event was when she struck gold in 2007 at the South-east Asia Games in Thailand.

Tao Li is still in good shape – she swam 1min 2.72sec in the 100 metres backstroke at the National Swimming Championships yesterday, rewriting her own national record of 1:03.17 set in the meet's 2007 edition.

She also met the SEA Games qualifying requirement (1:06.03) for the event with her record-breaking time at the Singapore Sports School.

Three races later, the 19-year-old clocked 1:00.62 in the 100m butterfly, also meeting the cut (1:02.25) for the December Games in Laos.

Said the Swimfast Aquatic Club swimmer: "I was expecting to make a bit of an improvement at the meet, but I haven't been doing a lot of hard work, so I wasn't really expecting to break a record."

Coach Peter Churchill, however, was less surprised at his charge's feat.

"She told me she wanted to do her best timing today, and when she says that, it's usually a record," joked the Australian.

On Wednesday, Tao Li had made it to the freestyle relay team after finishing fourth in the 100m freestyle.

"It's a good sign. I guess my shape is still good," she quipped.

Singapore, however, are currently without a confirmed representative in the men's 400m freestyle, in which they won the silver in 2007.

None met the Category A (3:59.81) or Category B (4:01.01) qualifying marks.

Category A marks are the bronze-medal timings of the previous Games.

Marcus Cheah, 21, the 2007 silver medalist, came closest with his 4:03.69 – almost 4sec behind his national mark of 3:59.61.

The Singapore Swimming Association's high performance manager Aloysius Yeo said the association would monitor the swimmers' form as the Games near, before deciding if it will nominate anyone for the 400m freestyle.

In other events, Joel Ching, 13, set a national Under-14 record in the 100m backstroke with a time of 1:02.51, erasing Rainer Ng's 2006 mark of 1:02.66.

Others who made the Games cut yesterday included Shana Lim (1:03.66, 100m back), Rainer (59.10sec, 100m back), Nicholas Tan (55.54sec, 100m fly) and Yeo Jia Chen (59.86sec, 100m back, Category B).

## **TAO LI SETS NEW RECORD**

Meanwhile, on the third day of the Singapore National Swimming Championship at the Singapore Sports School on Friday, Tao Li met the SEA Games “A” qualifying mark in the women’s 100m backstroke in a new national record of 1:02.72 – re-writing her own mark of 1:03.17 set in 2007 – and the 100m butterfly in 1:00.62.

“It got really difficult after 75m in the 100 fly, as I’ve not trained much in the past few months because of my studies,” said Tao Li, who has the 200m freestyle and 200m butterfly races left this weekend.

“But I’m really glad to have come through.”

Another record that tumbled on Friday was the national boys’ under-14 record in the 100m backstroke, where Joel Ching re-wrote the mark in 1:02.51, breaking the previous time of 1:02.66 set by Rainer Ng in 2006.