

PROMISING TEENAGERS

The Straits Times 26 Mar 2010 © Singapore Press Holdings Ltd



Shanti, Eugenia set to break national sprint records after Perth runs

BY GERARD WONG

SPRINTERS Shanti Pereira and Eugenia Tan have emerged as the athletes to watch at next week's 51st Schools National Track and Field Championships, following their stunning displays at a Perth age-group meet last weekend.

The Singapore Sports School (SSP) students did not win their respective events at the West Australian Little Athletics (Wala) Championships. But their personal bests suggest they could set national age-group records at the Choa Chu Kang Stadium next week.

Shanti, 13, won the Girls' U-14 200m bronze in 25.84sec. That is not only 0.19sec faster than the national U-15

record of 26.03sec she set last August, but also is the first time since 2008 that an U-18 girl has breached the 26sec mark.

The last person to do that was Shanti's older sister, Valerie, who clocked 25.98sec in May 2008.

Eugenia, 13, finished fourth in the U-14 100m in a new personal best of 12.23sec - a time that is faster than the national U-15 (12.74sec), U-17 (12.39sec) and junior (12.26sec) records.

However, both timings will not be recognised as national marks because wind gauges were not employed at the Wala meet. Still, it means the duo could well do it in their C Division events at the Schools Nationals (April 1-14).

Said SSP athletics coach Pedro Acuna: "I wasn't surprised because they have been running well in training. So, I knew they were capable of these times.

"Whether they can do it again next week depends on the weather and themselves. But they will be racing together in both events and can push each other."

The Chilean, a qualified International

Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) coach who guided U.K. Shyam to a national 100m record (10.37sec) and the 100m silver at the 2001 SEA Games, also feels the two girls can become SEA Games medallists within 10 years if they are properly groomed and developed.

The last time Singapore won medals in the women's sprints was at the 1973 SEA Peninsular Games through Eng Chiew Guay (100m) and Glory Barnabas (200m).

"In my 10 years here, I have not seen such outstanding female sprint talents, except for Valerie Pereira," said Acuna. "All credit to their primary school coaches, Lim Tiang Quee and Mok Chok Sun, for getting their basics right."

The 12 secondary students in the Singapore team won a gold, a silver and five bronzes at the Wala meet. The gold came from Catholic High's Kenzo Tan in the Boys' U-15 discus (1kg).

"They all surpassed our expectations by also setting new personal bests in their events," said team manager Thurai Raja.

gerard@sph.com.sg



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

"In my 10 years here, I have not seen such outstanding female sprint talents... All credit to their primary school coaches, Lim Tiang Quee and Mok Chok Sun, for getting their basics right."

PEDRO ACUNA on Shanti Pereira and Eugenia Tan's potential to become top sprinters in South-east Asia

Shanti Pereira (top) and Eugenia Tan recorded their fastest times in Perth. PHOTOS: ST FILE, SINGAPORE SPORTS SCHOOL