

Rainer, Amanda a plunge away

Duo are the only S'pore swimmers to meet tough Fina standards so far

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SINGAPORE — Swimmers Rainer Ng and Amanda Lim are a touch away from representing the Republic at the Aug 14-26 Youth Olympic Games here.

The duo, among Singapore's brightest talents in the pool, are the only juniors so far to meet the "A" qualifying standards set by aquatics world body Fina for their respective events.

Rainer, 17, dipped below the boys' 100m backstroke mark of 57.07sec with his time of 56.73s en route to the silver medal at December's SEA Games in Laos.

South-east Asia's fastest girl, Amanda, also 17, nipped the 50m freestyle standard of 26.32s with her winning time of 25.38s at last year's Asian Youth Games here.

Each National Olympic Committee (NOC) may name four boys and four girls swimmers for the Youth Olympics, and Singapore Swimming Association (SSA) president Jeffrey Leow said this posed a unique challenge.

"This is an unusual selection process because of the restriction," he told MediaCorp yesterday.

"In other major meets like the SEA Games and Olympics, whoever qualifies goes ... whereas in this case, no matter how many qualify, we're stuck with four (boys) and four (girls).



Amanda met the qualifying standard thanks to her winning time of 25.38s set at last year's Asian Youth Games. AFP

"(So) we will have to make some judgment calls as to the relative potential that each individual has in helping to us get a podium finish."

The year-long qualifying window closes this Sunday.

After this weekend's 41st National Age Group Champion-

ships at the Singapore Sports School, the SSA will nominate a provisional squad of eight boys and eight girls to the Singapore National Olympic Council.

Come June, the SSA will trim the squad to four boys and four girls.

"At their age, youth swimmers can improve a lot in four months," said Leow.

"We will look at their overall positions, rankings in the world and figure out who among the lot have the best podium potential ... If our best podium potential happens to be in the relays, then the decision will depend on what contribution each swimmer makes to the relay."

For the Youth Olympics swimming competition, to be held at the Singapore Sports School, only boys born between Jan 1, 1992, and Dec 31, 1993, and girls born between Jan 1, 1993, and Dec 31, 1994, are eligible.

Backstroke specialist Rainer is hoping to get the nod.

"I'm actually pretty anxious about it, as this is a historical occasion, it being the first Youth Olympics and Singapore's hosting it," said the Raffles Institution student,

"Like everyone else, I have a fighting chance to get selected, and I'm sure I can do the country proud if I'm given the chance."

The Youth Olympic Games will feature over 200 events across 26 sports, with an estimated 3,600 athletes aged 14 to 18 from 205 NOCs participating.

Due to the IOC's policy of a more equal representation at the Youth Games, each NOC can send up to 70 individual athletes and two teams.

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