

Men's pairs come unstuck

VIENTIANE — Dinh Qung Linh's roar yesterday said it all: There will be no clean sweep by Singapore in table tennis.

Dinh and compatriot Doan Kien Quoc destroyed the dream of the Republic's top seeds, Gao Ning and Yang Zi, trouncing the pair 3-1 triumph in the men's doubles semi-final. Pang Xue Jie and Cai Xiao Li surrendered 3-0 to another Vietnamese duo — Tran Tuan Quynh and Nguyen Nam Hai — in the other semi-final.

There was some consolation for Singapore as Wang Yuegu and Yang held off compatriots Gao Ning and Feng Tianwei 3-2 in the mixed doubles to make it three golds in four events.

Singapore Table Tennis Association president Lee Bee Wah seemed to take the loss in the men's doubles in stride, when she told MediaCorp: "We will go back and analyse this defeat and see where we can improve, but just because we lost this match does not mean that we need to go back to the drawing board.

"These players are still the best we've got and I don't think this shows that our Foreign Sports Talent scheme has failed. (China-born Gao and Yang) are still better than our own (Singapore-born) players.

"Table tennis is a fast game, and in any competition sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. Vietnam played better today ... I am pleased with the team's performance at the SEA Games so far, and I hope the players put this out of their mind and focus on the singles." SHAMIR OSMAN



GLADIATORS

Sweetenham's message propels women's relay quartet to gold No 12

TAN YO-HINN

yohinn@mediacorp.com.sg

VIENTIANE — They were expected to strike gold for Team Singapore for the 12th time at the National Sports Complex' aquatic centre. But as an expectant 800-odd crowd waited in the main arena, Bill Sweetenham pulled Quah Ting Wen, Shana Lim, Roanne Ho and Tao Li aside.

Sensing the unease among the four swimmers, the Australian swim guru sat them down and told them to swim like "Gladiators".

The pep talk worked a treat, as the women stormed to victory in the 4x100m individual medley with a new SEA Games record of 4:10.38sec on the penultimate night of the swimming competition.

Malaysia took the silver (4:13.18), with Thailand claiming the bronze (4:19.89).

The win pushed Singapore's medal haul from swimming to 12 golds, five silvers and nine bronzes, after Ting Wen clinched the women's 400m freestyle earlier with another SEA Games record of 2:00.57.

With one day to go, the swimming team have already surpassed the haul of 11 gold medals garnered in 2007.

"I took them aside and actually said they are not expected to win, which was of course reverse psychology," said Sweetenham, a consultant with the Singapore Swimming Association. "But I made it clear they had to swim with courage, the right attitude and a commitment to work for

each other. And they delivered it to the letter with a tremendous race."

Singapore led after the opening backstroke leg (1:03.37sec) through Shana Lim, 16. Although Siow Yi Ting put her country ahead in the breaststroke, Roanne, 17, kept close to the Malaysian star after 200m.

There was little doubt when Tao Li took over for the butterfly leg.

The Olympic finalist pulled away from Malaysia and freestyle specialist Ting Wen duly secured victory, sparking jubilant scenes in the Singapore camp.

"It's a reflection that we're a really strong team, despite missing the likes of Bryan (Tay), Nicholas (Tan) and Parker (Lam)," said head coach Ang Peng Siong.

"We should expect maybe three more golds, but we need to keep this momentum going because the likes of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia are catching up fast and if we relax, we're in trouble."

After suffering the most in the build-up to the race, Roane was a relieved figure

after the win was secured.

"I was worried that I'd let the team down and cause them to finish second," said the 1.78m tall student of St Peters Lutheran College in Australia. "But my coaches and team-mates helped me and I'm glad I was able to do it."

The Republic's swim team will be looking to surpass their best SEA Games showing of 13 golds from the 2005 Games today. The swimmers are in line for at least three more gold medals from the six events on the final day of competition tonight, including what will be a hotly-contested men's 4x100 medley relay.

Gold for Rabiatul

VIENTIANE — SEA Games rookie Rabiatul Adawiyah continued her year-long streak, taking the women's artistic singles gold in the silat competition here last night. The 20-year-old Singaporean scored 471 points, to edge out her opponents from Vietnam and Indonesia.

Speaking to MediaCorp shortly after her victory, she said: "I'm feeling all mixed up, but I'm really excited. I will always remember the moment when the head referee announced the result. And when my head coach (Sheikh Harun) hugged me, I just burst into tears."

In May, she also emerged tops at the Sijori Pencak Silat Championships, repeating the feat at the Asian Indoor Games (Oct 30-Nov 8).

SPORTS ON TV

TODAY

9am	NFL	Eagles v Giants, Ch 117
7pm	SEA Games	Football: Singapore v Vietnam, Ch 5
7pm	SEA Games	Swimming & table tennis finals, Okto
10pm	SEA Games	Today at the Games, Ch 5

TOMORROW

3.40am	Football	West Brom v QPR, Ch 115
--------	----------	-------------------------

SPORTS ON RADIO

6.35am-11.35pm	SportsZone Minutes	Hourly Sports updates live on 938Live
----------------	--------------------	---------------------------------------

SEA GAMES MEDAL TALLY

COUNTRY	G	S	B	Total
Thailand	29	39	40	108
Vietnam	25	24	27	76
Singapore	24	12	24	60
Malaysia	20	22	27	69
Indonesia	16	18	28	62
Philippines	12	16	19	47
Laos	11	4	20	35
Myanmar	6	8	22	36
Cambodia	2	4	9	15
Brunei	1	1	5	7
Timor Leste	0	0	3	3

Visit www.laoseagames2009.com and www.teamsingapore.com.sg for details