

Hail the record-breakers

Singapore swimming eyes a bright future after a stunning SEA Games harvest

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VIENTIANE — As rookies, they had to eat fried grasshoppers and jump off a 10-metre diving platform in an initiation ceremony.

But there was no denying that the 11 newbies in Singapore's 23-strong swim team played a big role in helping the Republic to their best showing in a SEA Games pool away from home.

Singapore finished the swimming programme here with 14 gold, eight silver and 11 bronze medals, after Amanda Lim's win in the women's 50m freestyle and Tao Li's triumph in the women's 200m butterfly at the National Sports Complex' aquatic centre last night. It eclipsed the previous best haul of 13-9-11 from the 2005 SEA Games.

With less than a year to go to the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou, China, head coach Ang Peng Siong believes the team are in good shape.

"This team are showing a lot of promise," said Ang. "To achieve 14 gold medals here makes us very happy.

"Based on their SEA Games performance, we have a good chance in the women's relays at the Asian Games, but competing against the likes of China, Japan and even Hong Kong will be very difficult.

"I won't discount the men's freestyle relay teams either, because we're not far off the third best times from the last Asian Games, and if they can keep a 49-second



Tao Li (above, right) and Amanda (inset) both set new marks on their way to victory. **DON WONG**



average, they have a chance."

Indeed, over the last five days of competition, despite missing the likes of Bryan Tay, Nicholas Tan and Parker Lam, who recently set two national records in the 100m and 200m breaststroke, Singapore's swimmers here set 13 national records, 27 personal bests and rewrote 12 SEA Games marks, the final two of which came last night.

Amanda became the region's fastest female swimmer when she touched the wall first in 25.82s in the 50m freestyle, re-writing compatriot Joscelin Yeo's Games mark of 26.13s set four years ago.

Later, Beijing Olympic Games 100m fly finalist Tao Li scorched the field to clinch the women's 200m fly, edging out Malaysia's Khoo Cai Lin when she clocked 2min 13.49s, surpassing her own mark of 2:14.11 set in 2005.

"The past few days have been difficult

as I came down with mild diarrhoea, but fortunately I managed to pull through," said Amanda, who turns 17 on Jan 8.

"When I was standing on the blocks, I thought of all the hard work during the year and this being my last race of the year, so I had to give it my all."

Her best friend and Singapore Sports School team-mate Tao Li, who turns 20 two days after Amanda, added: "I knew it was going to be difficult against Khoo, but I didn't realise it was that difficult. I almost died in the last 50m!"

Singapore's 11 rookies, among them 12-year-old Samantha Yeo, Koh Hui Yu, 14, and Koh Ting Ting, 18, came through in style.

Cheryl Lim, 15, who had to eat fried grasshoppers before coming to the Games, said: "They tasted weird and salty! But I'm really proud to be part of the team and look forward to competing with the national side for years to come."

Added Samantha, the youngest Singaporean at the Games: "We're like a big family."

S'POREANS IN ACTION TODAY

ARCHERY

Men's compound individual semi-final and final: Adriel Chua



ATHLETICS

Men's long jump finals: Matthew Goh (above)

BADMINTON (quarter-finals)

Men's singles: Ashton Chen v Sony Dwi Kuncoro (Ina), Simon Santoso (Ina) v Derek Wong; Doubles: Hendra Wijaya/Jeffrey Wong v Koo Kien Keat/Tan Boon Heong (Mas), Mohd Fairuzizuan/Mohd Zakry Lati (Mas) v Jonathan Tang/ Terry Yeo

Women's singles: Lydia Cheah (Mas) v Zhang Beiwen; Doubles: Chin Ee Hui/Wong Pei Tty (Mas) v Frances Liu/Vanessa Neo, Chong Sook Chin/Woon Khe Wei (Mas) v Shinta M Sari/Yao Lei

Mixed doubles: Hendra Wijaya/Vanessa Neo v Songphon A./Kunchala V. (Tha)

CUESPORTS

Men's English Billiards Singles s-finals: Peter Gilchrist v Prapurt Chaithanasakum (Tha)

9-Ball Pool Men's Singles round of 16: Toh Lian Han v Ricky Yang (Ina), Chan Keng Kwang vs Hongsavade Kongsaise (Lao)

Women's Singles round of 16: Charlene Chai Zeet Huey vs Duong Thuy Yi (Vie)

JUDO

Women's Jyu-no Kata prelims and final: Ngo Yee Ling, Cai Renjun

SHOOTING

Men's 50m rifle 3 position final: Ong Jun