

# Liu and Cheng set for history

## Sailors on the verge of being crowned 420 world champions

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**SINGAPORE** — The Republic's sailing team of Justin Liu and Sherman Cheng look set to win the country's first world title in the 420 class.

On the penultimate day of competition on Friday, the pair kept their noses in front of the chasing pack at the International 420 World Sailing Championship in Haifa, Israel to lead the 42-strong men's gold fleet with 21 points after nine races.

They maintained a 16-point lead over second-placed Edoardo Mancinelli and Leonardo Cucchiara of Italy, with another Italian pair in Francesco Falcetelli and Gabriele Franciolini third (54). With two races left on Saturday, Liu and Cheng are on the verge of a historic title.

SingaporeSailing president Dr Benedict Tan is already looking ahead.

"Frankly, even if they finished second or third, I won't be disappointed as the standard among the top three is very close, and an affirmation that you're already of a very high standard," he told MediaCorp.

"The support for Justin and Sherman will always be there. They've progressed very well from the Optimist up to the 420. But as the 420 is not an Olympic class, they have to make the transition to the Olympic



470 class, where they'll have to start climbing the 470 ladder again to the top.

"But I'm not satisfied just to have them. We need to produce more Justins and Sher-mans as we cannot afford to put all our eggs in one basket."

Liu, 19, and Cheng, 18, requested not to be interviewed on Friday to maintain their focus, but team manager Serena Wong, speaking from Haifa, said the signs are positive.

"Normally, they would be very quiet and keep to themselves after races," she said. "But after they came off water today,

they were in very high spirits, unusually chatty, talking to the Italians about the race. They have been in such situations before and will know how to get the job done."

Tan — he took over the helm of SingaporeSailing from Low Teo Ping on June 28 — and his management committee have been holding discussions with various stakeholders, including club commodores, coaches, technical staff, parents and sailors to map out a strategic blueprint for sailing.

One crucial target is to increase the base of sailors and keep producing results at elite level.