

KOH KEEPS IT SIMPLE

Strategy helps him claim Laser Radial gold as Liu, Cheng win 420 crown

BY FABIOUS CHEN

GOING into the penultimate day of the Asian Sailing Championships at the Guangzhou Ocean Sports Training Centre, Koh Seng Leong had the gold medal in the Laser Radial Open category within his grasp.

All he had to do was to stick close to Malaysia's South-east Asia Games gold medallist Muhamad Romzi, who was trailing him by 13 points.

He did just that, finishing sixth in yesterday's first race - one place behind Romzi - and winning the second to claim the gold medal with a day to spare.

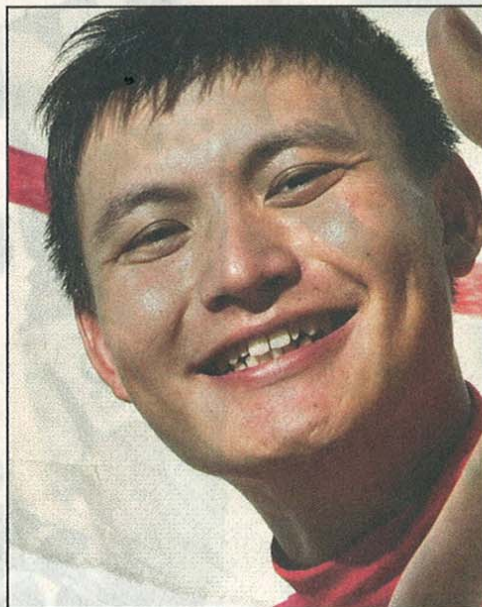
The men's 420 pair of Justin Liu and Sherman Cheng won both their races to take their regatta record to nine wins in 11 races.

With this year's Asian Games to be held at the same venue, the Asian Championships are being taken as a test event for the Singapore sailors.

While the qualifying process is still two months away, Koh is already looking ahead to the November Asiad.

The 26-year-old took silver at the 2006 Games and is hoping to go one better this time around.

"This win is a good confidence booster for me," he said. "It's about time for me to display everything I've learnt over the years. I believe that with more training, I can do even better."



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Liu and Cheng, both 18, were in similarly buoyant mood following their comprehensive win.

"We looked at these Championships as a test event while most of our competitors were here to race, so it certainly bodes well for our Asian Games preparations," Liu noted.

His partner, Cheng, added: "We sailed pretty conservatively but achieved quite consistent results. We're very happy that our training programme has started to pay off."

The only concern, according to team manager Mark Robinson, is that the Asiad is still some eight months away.

"The signs are promising but we have to be careful that the sailors aren't peak-

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KOH SENG LEONG (left)

ing too early," he pointed out. "We don't want them to peak now but in November.

"Also, history suggests that the conditions will be windier in November, so that could twist the results a little - some in our favour, others not so much."

Robinson also warned that a good performance at these Championships does not automatically guarantee a ticket to the Games.

He said: "Here, we were allowed two entries per event but at the Asian Games, it's only one, so there's still quite a bit of work to be done."

That work will include today's final day of racing in Shanwei, where another seven medals could be forthcoming.

Singapore will come up against Japan in the grand final of the keelboat event, while the men's 470 pair of Roy Tay and Terence Koh, and the women's 420 pair of Rachel Lee and Benita Chua lie second in their respective categories with a race to go.

Also looking for a spot on the podium will be Dawn Liu and Siobhan Tam (women's 470), Daniella Ng and Cheryl Yee (women's 420), Teo Wee Chin and Justin Wong (Hobie 16) and Kimberly Lim (women's Optimist), who are currently third.

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