



FENCING TARGETS A MEDAL AT ASIAN GAMES

TODAY FILE PHOTO

Fencing Singapore are aiming to make the leap from SEA Games wins to glory at the Asian Games, starting with this year's edition in Guangzhou, China, from Nov 12-27.

They are eyeing at least one medal as part of their five-year plan — a requirement now for all national sports associations (NSA) seeking funding from the Singapore Sports Council (SSC).

Among the smaller NSAs also hoping to make headway is boxing, which is targeting a gold at the 2011 SEA Games in Indonesia. If they are successful, it will be the first medal for the sport in the biennial Games in 18 years.

Despite Fencing Singapore's bold target in the face of Asian powers South Korea, China and Japan, the association's president, Nicholas Fang, believes his charges can make the grade.

The 34-year-old is hoping to boost their chances by increasing the NSA's coffers by about 40 per cent from their current \$500,000, through grants from the SSC and sponsorship.

"More money in the bank will help us a great deal in our plans to develop fencing in schools," he told MediaCorp on Friday.

Fang is also preparing athletes for the inaugural Youth Olympic Games, which will be held here from Aug 14-26, but the big target is the 2010 Asian Games. Singapore's fencers have won medals at the SEA Games, including gold from the women's individual epee in 1989 and foil teams in 2005 and 2007 — but not at the Asian Games.

"Our women's foil and sabre teams have consistently been ranked among the top six nations in Asia and with some 20 regional and international events we plan

to compete in before Guangzhou, we can push for at least a bronze in China," said Fang. "We hope to double that tally at the 2014 Games in South Korea."

Fang is also president of the Singapore Modern Pentathlon Association, formed in March last year to prepare athletes for the Youth Olympics. The sport's annual grant is less than \$40,000. Naturally, the association's targets are far more modest. Fang hopes to at least double funding in the next financial year to carry out his plans.

The sport, consisting of horse riding, swimming, running, shooting and fencing, is new here and he is looking to increase its popularity over the next five years.

"We need to build the sport first and get it included in the school curriculum. When we have a healthy base of pentathletes, we can map out a strategy for more realistic targets," he said.

The priority for Singapore Amateur Boxing Association (Saba) president Syed Abdul Kadir is to make the sport a regional player again. Boxing used to deliver a clutch of medals in South-east Asia, but strife within the NSA saw the medals dry up after the 1993 SEA Games.

Saba were kicked out of the Singapore National Olympic Council fold in 2001, and was only reinstated a year ago to prepare boxers for the Youth Olympics.

Saba receive about \$30,000 in annual funding. While Kadir wants more, he agrees boxing has to prove itself first.

"We have promising boxers in the national squad of 28 now and if we get gold at the next SEA Games, it will attract others and also prove we are on the right track," he said. IAN DE COTTA

Elite sports embrace new funding model

SSC adopt American system, which calls for multi-year battleplan from NSAs

SINGAPORE — Bowling, sailing and swimming are three sports that have consistently produced results for Singapore at major meets.

Bowler Remy Ong won three gold medals at the 2002 Asian Games, Tao Li became the first Singaporean swimmer to qualify for a final at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and Today Athlete of the Year, 2009, sailor Elizabeth Yin, finished at the head of the pack at the 2009 Laser Radial world youth championship.

The three sports are expected to deliver the bulk of Singapore's medals at the Asian Games in Guangzhou, China, from Nov 12-27.

As they continue to strive to produce champions, building a base to ensure long-term results is the main goal of the three national sports associations (NSA), as the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) tweaks their outcome-based funding requirement from an annual to multi-year programme, starting this year.

The changes, explained to NSAs last September by the SSC's sports development group chief Bob Gambardella, is modelled upon the United States Olympic Committee's (USOC) system.

The new model seeks to encourage NSAs to plan for medium and long-term goals. NSAs will also have to create a development pathway for young athletes and embrace "uncompromised professionalism".

All 64 NSAs had to submit their plans to the SSC by Dec 31 as part of the SSC's Annual Grant Exercise.



SingaporeSailing outlined seven targets, including targeting medals at major meets like the world championships and Olympics. TODAY FILE PHOTO

SingaporeSailing will build on their Athlete Development Pathway, the Singapore Swimming Association (SSA) aim to expand their base of athletes, coaches and officials, and SingaporeBowling will fine-tune their talent identification and training programmes.

SingaporeBowling president Jessie Phua said: "Increasingly, our bowlers' shelf-life is shortening to six to eight years as they will go on to pursue their studies and careers, like (2006 Asian Games gold medallists) Michelle (Kwang) and Valerie (Teo). So our programmes must be spot-on in tapping their full potential during their short shelf-life."

For the fiscal year 2009, a total of \$58.8 million — \$34.1 million in direct grants and \$24.7 million in indirect grants — was disbursed to NSAs, up from \$47.33 million for

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[SBF CHIEF JESSIE PHUA]

ciation aim to at least match the one gold and one bronze from the 2006 Doha Games at this year's Asiad.

But secretary-general Oon Jin Gee said: "Our biggest challenge lies with the expectation to attend to the multi-farious needs of our aquatic disciplines with limited resources.

"Our purview includes a mixture of individual, team and team sport compositions, and the same approach cannot be used across the board."

He added: "There is a concerted focus on development for athletes, coaches and technical officials and to incorporate sports medicine and sports science, and apart from swimming, we're also extending it to the other four disciplines (open water swimming, diving, water polo, synchronised swimming)."

All three NSA chiefs lauded the SSC's move towards a multi-year funding programme, but Phua said: "The funds aren't disbursed until around June, and many NSAs spend the first half of the year not knowing what's in store," she said.

"So it would be useful if we knew the minimum level of support that we can expect, so that we can plan better." TAN YO-HINN

LeBlanc the main man for Slingers

Asean Basketball League
Singapore Slingers v KL Dragons
Monday, 8pm, Indoor Stadium

SINGAPORE — Michael LeBlanc is not the tallest in the Singapore Slingers squad. Nor is he the heaviest.

That honour goes to Kyle Jeffers, the other American import on the roster.

But at 31, LeBlanc is the oldest and most experienced member of the team, and his average of 17.36 points per game makes him the Slingers' principal attacking weapon.

If the Slingers are going to win the ABL Championship in their inaugural season, LeBlanc's performance will be key.

With four games to go, the Slingers can still pip the Philippine Patriots to top spot in the regular season, which will set them up nicely for the playoffs.

Right now, LeBlanc is not even thinking of finishing top in the regular season.

"Every game from here on in is going to be a dogfight. Every team's vying for playoff

position, so we have to keep fighting no matter what the scoreboard says," he said.

While he is a points-scoring machine, Slingers head coach Frank Arsego insists the Texan contributes much more to the team.

"The younger players look up to Michael because he's the most well-travelled, and he's always obliging with his comments and pointers. He's got what it takes to carry the team, the key is making sure we're working collectively to make that happen," Arsego told MediaCorp on Friday.

Arsego pointed out that LeBlanc's 32 points against the Brunei Barracudas earlier in the season won the Slingers the game 82-80.

His loss of form contributed to the mid-season wobble that saw the team drop four games, including three straight in December.

"Michael was struggling with tendinitis in his knee, among other distractions, but he didn't make that his excuse and that's a credit to him," said Arsego. PHILIP GOH



GOI BOON KEONG

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[SLINGERS COACH ARSEGO, ON LEBLANC]

Coffee to go with Friendship Games

SINGAPORE — Shoppers and office workers at Suntec International Convention Centre will have more to do besides shopping and eating this month.

A sports feast awaits them, with boys and girls in tights, gloves and swords from sports such as wrestling, boxing and fencing showing off their skills during the Friendship Games, which is scheduled from Jan 7-28. Some 600 athletes from 20 National Olympic Committees will be competing in six sports.

Wrestling kicked off the Games on Thursday with the two-day Commonwealth Youth Wrestling Championships. Singapore was represent-

ed by six wrestlers, who took on top wrestlers from countries like India and Canada.

None of the local athletes won medals, but Wrestling Federation of Singapore managing director Brent Sheldrake said that was expected.

"A lot of these kids are only between 15 and 17 years old. Some of the competitors from the other countries have been wrestling for 12 years, while most of ours have only been wrestling for 12 weeks," he told MediaCorp on Friday.

Singapore's Natasha Puteri Erna came close when she finished fourth in the Girls' 60kg category, and the 16-year-old from Assumption Eng-

lish School was disappointed. "I don't feel so great. I was hoping for a medal. I will train more and compete more to improve on my technical skills and stamina," she said.

Besides giving athletes exposure, the Friendship Games will be used as a test run for the Youth Olympic Games, which the Republic will host from Aug 14-26.

"Everything from the seating arrangements for spectators to the competition facilities will be tried out, with no detail left unchecked," said Patrick Lee, director for sport and venues division at the Singapore Youth Olympics Organising Committee, PATWANT SINGH

Bodybuilding chief in the news



TODAY FILE PHOTO

SINGAPORE — Former bodybuilder Chan Yun-to was in court in Hong Kong on Friday, after being accused of conspiring to offer US\$10,000 (\$13,962) in bribes to former Singapore Bodybuilding Federation president Paul Chua (picture).

The Hong Kong athlete, who at the time was serving a two-year suspension after failing doping tests at a South Korean event, allegedly offered the bribe because he wanted to compete in the 2006 Doha Asian Games.

Chan went on to win the men's 75kg class in Doha.

Chua, who is secretary-general of the Asian Bodybuilding and Fit-

ness Federation, told MediaCorp on Friday that he has been cleared of any wrongdoing.

"My name's cleared," said Chua, who was not charged. "Those people can say anything they want, but it is all hearsay. I have nothing to do with this."

"I am clean. I have legal letters from Drew and Napier and you can contact them."

Chua said he has not considered the next course of action as the trial is still on-going, but has not shut the door on a civil suit against those who he believes have tarnished his name.

IAN DE COTTA

SPORTS BETTING			
League	Home Team	Away Team	Match Kick-Off (Singapore date/time)
A League	Wellington	Brisbane Roar	Sat, 09/01/10 2.00pm
A League	Central Coast	Queensland Fury	Sat, 09/01/10 4.00pm
A League	Gold Coast Utd	Adelaide	Sat, 09/01/10 6.00pm
A League	Newcastle Jets	Melbourne Vict	Sun, 10/01/10 2.00pm
A League	Perth Glory	Sydney FC	Sun, 10/01/10 4.00pm
Angola 2010	Angola	Mali	Mon, 11/01/10 3.00am
E Premier, E League Champ, Spanish and Italian League matches are also on sale. For more details, please check Singapore Pools website.			
LIVE TELECAST AT SPORTSBUZZ@PARADIZ & KRANJI			
E Premier	Hull City	Chelsea	Sat, 09/01/10 8.45pm
E Premier	Burnley	Stoke City	Sat, 09/01/10 11.00pm
E Premier	Fulham	Portsmouth	Sat, 09/01/10 11.00pm
E Premier	Arsenal	Everton	Sat, 09/01/10 11.00pm
E Premier	Sunderland	Bolton	Sat, 09/01/10 11.00pm
E Premier	Wigan	Aston Villa	Sat, 09/01/10 11.00pm

Always play with care. Do not bet illegally. No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize. Visit our website at www.singaporepools.com.sg