



SAILING

TOP DUO:
Justin Liu (far left)
and Denise Lim
becoming the first
Singaporean sailors
to win an event at
the Isaf World Cup
after coming out
tops in the Nacra 17
in Qingdao, China,
yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNATIONAL
SAILING FEDERATION

Report by LIM SAY HENG
sayheng@sph.com.sg

Liu and Lim gain S'pore spot for Olympics

They have had to fork out more than \$30,000 from their own pockets to chase their dream, scrimping and saving during overseas trips, while not always having a coach to oversee their progress.

All their sacrifices paid off when sailors Justin Liu and Denise Lim overcame the odds to gain Singapore a spot at the 2016 Rio Olympics in the new mixed gender Nacra 17 multi-hull event, which will make its debut in Brazil next year.

The Singaporean duo were the top sailors in the event at the Isaf World Cup in Qingdao, China, going into the medal race yesterday.

While they had a 14-point lead before the race, Liu and Lim, both 24, had to ensure that they finished

ahead of nine other boats in the medal race, as it offers double the points and the results were not discardable.

But the Republic's tandem won their 10th race of the week in style, finishing 51 seconds ahead of Japan's Hiroki Goto and Wakako Tabata.

FIRST

In doing so, they became the first Singaporean sailors to win an event at the Isaf World Cup.

With the result, they also clinched the lone Olympic spot for Singapore in the event at the regatta, which was their last chance to do so after failing to make the grade at the Nacra 17 World Championships last year and this year.

"It's amazing," said Liu, a third-

year business and economics student at the National University of Singapore. "There were so many challenges to make it here and to try and qualify. To be able to do it is amazing. There is so much to look forward to."

Lim added: "We sailed the conditions quite well and our coach helped us a lot with the current and the wind changes. I think that gave us an advantage over the rest."

The Republic are now confirmed in four sailing events in Rio – men's Laser Standard, women's Laser Radial, women's 470 and the Nacra 17.

While Liu and Lim clinched Singapore the Olympic spot, they are not assured of their places in Rio next year as they still have to go through Singapore Sailing's internal trials.



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— Denise Lim

As they have spent most of their savings on the make-or-break Qingdao regatta, which was "50 to 60 per cent funded by Singapore Sailing", Liu said the pair are unsure about the road ahead, towards internal trials and Rio.

QUALIFY OR NOTHING

He said: "We have budgeted all our money to compete until Qingdao; it was either to qualify here, or we'd stop."

"I guess we will have a talk with the federation soon, hopefully we will get some support – a full-time coach and opportunities to race against the best in the world in the European circuit, as well to train at the actual competition venue in Rio."