

A TRIP INTO THE UNKNOWN IN SWEDEN

S'pore women floorballers excited for world c'ship even as pandemic has hit preparations

Kimberly Kwek

The upcoming Women's World Floorball Championship (WFC) will be Mindy Lim's third, but the lead-up to the Nov 27-Dec 5 event in Sweden has been drastically different from the previous two.

The team have had to grapple with the uncertainties and challenges that came with the pandemic as team sports like floorball were hit hard by the safety measures that limited the number of people for group sports activities.

But with their last competition coming at the 2019 WFC, where they achieved a historic 12th-place finish, Lim is raring to go.

She said: "I'm thrilled and excited because it's been quite a while since we've played at such a high level."

"But at the same time, I'm anxious because the training has been very moderate in terms of intensity, I don't know how the team and I will react when we're playing at high intensity."

The 24-year-old still has fond memories of her last WFC outing two years ago as they overcame higher-ranked opponents to come in 12th. But she is not placing too much pressure on herself and her teammates on matching the result given the challenges they have faced in the past two years.

For their group-stage games in Uppsala, world No. 14 Singapore are grouped with Norway (No. 9), Estonia (11) and Russia (17).

Lim mainly sees this tournament

as a chance for the younger players to learn from the top teams in the world and for the team to prepare for the major competitions in 2023, such as the Women's WFC in Singapore, and the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games.

She hopes that she can use her experience at previous WFCs to help new players navigate a competition of this stature.

Lim, an auditor at KPMG, said: "I want to play my best and not have any regrets. Team-wise, because of Covid, there are a lot of things that could be affected like team cohesiveness. We used to have bonding sessions but we haven't had these because of Covid."

"So this World Championship is a good platform for those who are new to be exposed to a higher level of play. The next World Championship is in Singapore and we want to be ready for that."

The changing Covid-19 measures and lack of competitions have posed difficulties for the coaching team as well, but they have tried to adapt and keep players motivated.

During periods when the team were not able to train in person, national coach Lim Jin Quan would conduct training sessions over Zoom, going through different match scenarios.

In training, they have also replicated the routine players follow during competitions such as the one-hour court session before games.

Lim said: "The other European teams have been training as per usual, their lives have been back to normal. The struggle is that we



Mindy Lim training with the Singapore women's floorball team at Our Tampines Hub earlier this month. She is not putting too much pressure on herself and her teammates to match their best-ever 12th-place finish from 2019 but hopes younger players can learn from facing the world's top teams. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

don't have the environment that they do, so we try to mimic it as much as we think and assume it to be.

"For everything we do, we want to make sure we are prepared so we can fully utilise the experience when we're there."

Given the circumstances, Lim said that if the team managed to match the result of the previous WFC, he would consider it progress.

The national team were in Finland for a training camp, where they played friendly matches against local club teams.

Newcomer Heng Ying Ying, who will be getting her first taste of international competition in Uppsala, enjoyed her experience in Finland.

A typical day for the team started with a walk before breakfast, followed by training and stretching

BIG QUESTION MARK

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MINDY LIM, who will be playing in her third World Championship, on the pandemic curtailing their training.

between meals.

At the end of the day, the athletes were given time to relax and also review their training and game footage.

The main highlights of the training camp for the 22-year-old included getting the chance to bond with her teammates and play against foreign teams.

The National University of Singapore undergraduate said: "In Singapore, we don't have the opportunity to play against female teams of this skill level."

"It has been an excellent opportunity to test our system and play, seeing how well it works out against the new set of opponents."

"It has been a great learning experience, to find out what works and what does not, especially after two years of no five versus five games."

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