

# SILVER BUT A GOLDEN EXPERIENCE

## S'pore's 49er duo have belief in their 'process' as they set sights on an Asian Games medal

Kimberly Kwek

Four years ago, sailors Koh Yi Nian and Tan Jen-E were rivals, going head to head in regattas.

Last week, they stood on a podium as a pair after clinching the men's 49er silver medal at the Asian Sailing Championships in Abu Dhabi. They finished second behind India's Tokyo Olympians K.C. Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar, whose compatriots Prince Noble and Manu Francis were third.

While Koh and Tan valued the result, they placed greater store in their performance, for there was proof that their preparations for September's Asian Games in Hangzhou were on the right track.

They had improved in the more technical aspects of racing, like getting their starts right and other areas like learning how to complement each other's sailing styles.

Koh, 21, said: "More than winning a medal, the Asian Championships taught us to believe in our process because we managed to execute the things we were working on before we left."

While the pair had decided to campaign for this year's Asian Games at the end of 2020, they were able to ramp up training on the water only after Koh completed his national service last November.

And while theirs is a relatively new partnership, they have set their sights on winning a medal in Hangzhou.

They have been trying to raise \$20,000 for their Asian Games campaign, which includes plans to travel for competitions and training camps in Thailand, Portugal

and Germany to gain more race experience in windier conditions.

Also hoping to make the Asian Games are windfoilers Marsha Shahrin and Nicole Lim, who bagged a silver and bronze respectively in the women's iQFoil.

This class will replace the windsurfing RS:X class at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

While the field in Abu Dhabi was small – the event was won by Hong Kong's Ma Kwan Ching and featured only three other Singaporeans – both Marsha and Lim believe that there was plenty to take away.

"Given the circumstances like Covid and other hurdles, there are parts of my performance that I can be proud of," said Marsha, who expressed her gratitude to Singapore tycoon Gordon Tang for funding the iQFoil team's trip.

"There are also parts that I know I have to work on, so in that respect it was a good experience overall."

For Lim, there was the challenge of competing in her first overseas competition in four years and in a new class. After the 2017 SEA Games, the 25-year-old took a break from competing to focus more on coaching the local windsurfing community.

She said: "It was rather challenging because this was my first trip in four years. This is the first time I'm going overseas to compete in the iQFoil, which is a new class.

"It's different from your normal windsurfing and to compete in Asia is very different. It was challenging but also a very good learning experience."

The mechanics of windsurfing and windfoiling are different – the latter allows the individual to zoom above the water on a hydrofoil as compared to the former in which the board is in direct con-



Singapore's 49er pair Koh Yi Nian and Tan Jen-E competing in the Asian Sailing Championships in Abu Dhabi last week. They clinched a silver medal. PHOTO: ASC

tact with the water.

Apart from getting used to the new equipment, competing in a new class is also difficult as there is not much existing research on how to improve certain aspects of the sport like increasing one's speed.

This has meant that they have had to figure many things out on their own, but Marsha, 21, is grate-

ful for the support of those like the Singapore Sport Institute (SSI).

The National University of Singapore undergraduate has worked closely with sports scientists from SSI to analyse what top-performing windfoilers are doing to develop a plan that can help to improve their performance.

For example, those sailing the iQFoil typically have bigger

physiques, so Marsha has been trying to gain weight and train certain muscle groups more.

The support of the local and overseas community in terms of exchanging feedback and knowledge has also been helpful in navigating this new class.

Marsha said: "In that respect, it's not like I'm completely floating around aimlessly and there are

things that I have worked on and it's good in that sense."

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• Those interested in contributing to the men's 49er Asian Games campaign can do so at [www.giving.sg/singapore-sailing-federation/road\\_to\\_a\\_medal\\_with\\_ah\\_boys](http://www.giving.sg/singapore-sailing-federation/road_to_a_medal_with_ah_boys)