

Simply 'shiook'

Rookie Lim gets his fix from hitting the bulls-eye, and he's got gold to show for it

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VIENTIANE — While other teenagers were into computer games and football, Nigel Lim got his fix from shooting.

Which is probably why, despite taking up the sport competitively just one-and-a-half years ago, Lim is now a double SEA Games champion.

The 30-year-old has pocketed two gold medals from the men's 10m and 50m air pistol team events here, partnering Poh Lip Meng and Gai Bin to emerge as one of Team Singapore's unexpected heroes.

His rapid rise is already causing ripples in the fraternity, with the Singapore Shooting Association (SSA) rating him among the best to emerge in recent years.

Yet, Lim could so easily have slipped through the net if not for a close friend's advice four years ago.

"I was always interested in the sport," he told MediaCorp earlier this week.

"That was the only reason why I signed up with the National Police Cadet Corps (NPCC) in Chung Cheng High School, as they were the only extra-curricular activity that offered shooting.

"I can't explain exactly why, but it felt 'shiook' each time I fired a gun. But I never took it seriously except as a form of recreation until a good friend said I had potential."

That friend is Ho Tsu Cher, a fellow enthusiast who has known Lim since 2001.

Ho knew Lim shot a perfect score of 90 to attain his marksman badge with a revolver in his first classification shoot while with Chung Cheng High School's NPCC unit. That was his first competitive experience with any weapon.

He then progressed to the .22 rifle at Nanyang Junior College.

Lim has not looked back since. He began training for the 10m and 50m air pistol in mid-2008, and also became a range operator with the Home Team to be closer to the sport.

He finished second in the men's 10m air pistol team at the 2008 Singapore Open Shooting Championships, and followed it up with a personal best of 570 in the event at the 2009 ISSF World Cup in South Korea.

Still, there were fears the inexperienced

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Lim would be the team's weak link next to veterans Gai, 41, and Poh, 40.

Although he did not win individual honours, the SEA Games rookie helped secure the 10m (1,719 points) and 50m (1,646) air pistol team golds with scores that would have secured sixth place at the 2006 Asian Games in Doha.

"Nigel's a natural and very dedicated," said national coach Deng Pei Ming.

"Despite holding down a regular job, he makes the most of training and the rate of his progress speaks volumes."

However, the publicity-shy Lim played down his role in helping Singapore reach a haul of six gold, five silver and four bronze medals here so far.

"I was worried I'd let the team down," said Lim, who recently took up tennis.

"So I kept telling myself to stay calm and not do anything rash that would affect the team's chances.

"It all paid off."



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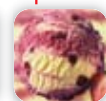


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