

LAST-GASP WINNER FOR BRONZE

Koh is toast of team while Iran take Cup by winning shoot-out against Serbia U-20

Nicholas De Silva

With less than a minute left on the clock and the game tied 6-6, Singapore coach Dejan Milakovic called a time-out.

In came Koh Jian Ying and within seconds, he scored to give the hosts a 7-6 win over the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and the bronze medal in the Singapore Water Polo Challenge Cup (SWC).

The match-winning goal was even sweeter for the 26-year-old as it was his first after seven years with the national team.

On scoring the winning goal, the left-driver said: "I feel happy (to have scored) because I didn't really play much of the game."

Ironically, he had missed the majority of the game due to a double exclusion foul early in the first quarter.

Singapore were leading throughout the game until UNSW levelled the scores at six-all towards the end of the fourth quarter.

The Australians then went on the offensive but the local side's defence stood firm.

Koh's reintroduction was Milakovic's last throw of the dice.

"I told the team to calm down and play their normal game... to carry on doing what they are doing," said the 34-year-old Serb.

The result marked the national team's first taste of victory in the tournament, having narrowly lost all three round-robin matches.

Milakovic, who was appointed in February, was pleased with his charges' performance in their first competitive outing together.

The former Yugoslavian national youth player believes the timing of the victory is crucial given its proximity to the Aug 19-30 SEA Games: "This (the victory) will give them even more motivation because they finally see some results from training... they should be happy that they can play at a high level of water polo."

"If we continue in this manner of training and preparation, these boys will be even better than the performance (shown) today."

Captain Loh Zhi Zhi, 27, agreed: "We are focused on the things we can control such as our training and taking care of ourselves in the run-up to the SEA Games."

There was also drama late in the final between Iran and Serbia's Un-



der-20 side. Four quarters could not separate both teams with the scores tied at seven a piece.

Penalties followed, with the Iranians winning the shoot-out 16-15 to claim the Cup after goalkeeper Shayan Ghasemi Daryan made the

critical save.

When asked for his thoughts on the deciding penalty, he replied: "The flag of my country came to my mind and I just focused on the ball."

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Years Koh Jian Ying has been with the national team.

Singapore's Chiam Kunyang attempting to score against the Australian team during their 7-6 win in the third-place play-off last night. ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

Lee twins off to Budapest for their first world c'ships

Lester Wong

Timothy Lee clinched the gold medal and a personal best when he tallied 383.05 points in the 3m springboard at the National Diving Championships yesterday.

But a bigger prize awaited him at the end of the day – a ticket to his first Fina World Championships.

Lee and his twin Mark were a cut above the competition at the three-day meet, the 23-year-old duo securing one-two finishes in both individual events (men's 1m springboard and 3m springboard) they competed in, and also clinching the gold in the men's 3m synchronised springboard.

Their performances mean that Mark too will be joining his brother in Budapest next month.

"The people we're going to meet at the world champs are going to be Olympic champions, world-class divers," enthused Mark, who is the younger twin.

"Diving with them is going to teach us a lot, especially ahead of the SEA Games."

The World Championships will be the last competition for the twins before August's SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur.

Team-mates Ashlee Tan, Myra Lee (women's 1m springboard) and Jonathan Chan (men's 10m platform) are also headed to the World Championships after meeting their

respective qualifying marks at the national championships.

The twins are hopeful that changes to how they train and prepare will stand them in good stead for the upcoming meets.

"This time round, we're working very closely with SSI (Singapore Sports Institute) – the psychologists there, gym trainers, and nutritionists," said Timothy.

"We can really feel the difference in our diving performances."

Added Mark: "These are things I would say we didn't fully utilise before our previous SEA Games (in 2013 and 2015)."

Mark (367.00 points), who fell behind yesterday owing to a sub-par third dive in the 3m springboard, gave credit to his brother who "nailed all his dives" but said he was viewing his performance in a positive light.

"I still got a pretty high score, and that speaks volumes about what I think I'm capable of," he said.

Ashlee, 17, was the top female diver yesterday, clinching gold in the 3m springboard and in the mixed 3m synchronised springboard with team-mate Joshua Chong, 16.

She said: "There is still room for improvement but I think I managed to dive pretty well today."

"This will help prepare me better for what's coming ahead."

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Timothy Lee on his way to the 3m springboard title, to add to his golds in the 1m springboard and 3m synchronised springboard. His twin and three others will join him in Hungary. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Schooling shapes up well for world meet

Joseph Schooling has maintained that he is happy with his progress ahead of next month's swimming World Championships.

The Olympic 100m butterfly champion was assessing his performance at the Texas Senior Circuit on Saturday, after pulling out of the 200m butterfly final despite being the second-fastest qualifier.

He clocked 2min 0.21sec in the 200m fly heats, some way off his personal best (PB) of 1:55.73, which he clocked at the 2015 SEA Games.

But the University of Texas student, who turns 22 on Friday, said: "I came into this meet with a few objectives and I am happy with my progress so far."

"I managed to clock a couple of top times in the world this year but that does not mean anything to me at this stage because what matters is how you do at Budapest."

"My focus is to continue working on things that I need to improve on and there will be one or two more competitions here in Texas for me to do that, before Budapest."

Results have shown that he is shaping up nicely towards Hungary, where he has qualified for four events – the 50m, 100m and 200m fly, and the 100m freestyle.

On Thursday, Schooling clocked the 12th-fastest 50m fly time in the world this year with his 23.51sec winning effort.

And in his 100m fly victory on Friday, he swam 51.82sec to record the world's seventh-fastest time this season.

Schooling had earlier said he hopes to win more than one medal at the world championships, while also aiming to break Michael Phelps' 100m fly world record (49.82sec).

His PB is 50.39sec, set en route to winning gold in Rio last August, when he beat the legendary American.

Alvin Chia