ATHLETICS

Seng Song may be back in quartet

Good showing in Singapore Open may make SAAA rethink SEA Games 4x100m squad

BY CHAN YI SHEN

SPRINTER Poh Seng Song could make a dramatic return to the South-east Asia Games squad, after an impressive performance in the Singapore Open at the Bukit Gombak Stadium yesterday.

He teamed up with Alex Teng, Lin Jingze and U. K. Shyam under the Wing Athletics Club to win the 4x100-metre local race in 41.08sec.

Five minutes later, the national quartet comprising Alfred Sim, Shameer Ayub, Erzalmaniq Rawi and C. Muthukumarman managed only fourth in the international race in 41.48sec.

Indonesia won in 40.54sec.

Poh, who withdrew from the relay team last week because he was unhappy at being made a reserve, said yesterday: "If the other team can go to the SEA Games, we believe that we deserve to go more than them based on this result."

Last Friday, the 22-year-old told The Straits Times that he should be in the relay team since he was the second fastest in the 100m this year.

In the Singapore Open 100m heats on Saturday, he bettered his season-best of 10.76sec with a 10.65sec effort, which ranks him alongside Shameer as the fastest Singaporean this year. Poh went on to bag a bronze with a time of 10.68sec in the final.

While nominations for the SEA Games are now closed, the latest turn of events appears to have given the Singapore Amateur Athletic Association some food for thought.

The SAAA will hold a meeting tomorrow to reconsider their selection of the 4x100m team.

Chan Chee Wei, SAAA vice-president for training and selection, did not rule out the possibility of reinstating Poh in the sprint relay team.

He said: "We have never closed the door on anyone. We will meet up with the athletes and coaches to review the results of the Singapore Open and to confirm the line-up for the team."

However, the times by the two teams yesterday were well short of the 40.66sec registered by Shameer, Sim, Erzalmaniq and Shafiq Kashmri in June.

Shafiq withdrew from the team earlier this month due to studies and was replaced by Muthukumarman.

For the Singapore team, a poor baton-change between Erzalmaniq and Muthukumarman was the main reason for yesterday's slow time.

However, Shameer was not too down-hearted, saying: "We still have two months to go before the SEA Games. That is when we will prove that we're the best."

The Singapore Open was the last chance for remaining SEA Games hopefuls to qualify for Manila, but none of them managed that.

Despite winning the women's high jump with a 1.70-m effort, Michelle Sng failed to meet the 2003 bronze-medal height of 1.80m.

Solomon Tan (men's pole vault), Anastasia Goh (women's long jump), Ronnie Cai (men's high jump) and the women's 4x100m relay team also fell short of the required marks.

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OFF TO A FLIER: Poh Seng Song (receiving the baton from Alex Teng) and his Wing Athletics Club team on their way to clocking a faster time than the national team at the Singapore Open yesterday.