Sng raises the high jump bar

Michelle’s 1.79m eclipses Yu Long Nyu’s 13-year-old record of 1.74m

By Alvin Foo

HER road was paved with failure and heartbreak, but Michelle Sng’s moment finally came on Monday.

The 18-year-old high jumper broke Yu Long Nyu’s 13-year-old Singapore national record at an international junior meet in Beirut.

She smashed the 1.74-metre mark, recording 1.79m.

Michelle told The Straits Times in a telephone interview yesterday: “Finally.

“I felt my hair brush against the bar as I cleared it but, thankfully, the bar didn’t drop.”

Added Yu, 41: “It’s good news. When I first saw her jump last year, I knew it would be only a matter of time.

“Michelle’s light build, spring in her steps plus gymnast background are ideal physical attributes for the high jump.”

On April 23, an over-eager Michelle was a teary wreck after failing to clear 1.75m at the National Junior Championships. She had been chasing Yu’s mark since May 2004.

Last year, she broke the mark at an all-comers meet in Singapore. However, it could not be recognised as she was the only competitor.

More disappointment came that November when she failed to qualify for the South-east Asia Games.

But, on Monday, she was a picture of joy after finishing second to a Romanian girl. Third was a Swiss.

Said Michelle: “I was relaxed and was competing against two good jumpers.

“That brought the best out of me. Also, I’ve been fully focused on my training since I completed my A levels last November.”

Michelle is due to start school at the Singapore Management University in August.

When she won her first high jump medal in Secondary 1, she had no idea what the event was all about.

Then, her former school – Singapore Chinese Girls’ School – did not have a track and field team. She had no coach.

Instead, she relied on technical notes found on the Internet, cleared 1.51m and equalled the school record.

In May 2004, she rewrote the national Under-20 record with her 1.70m effort.

Said Singapore Athletic Association technical director Ralph Mouchbahani: “This is just a milestone on her long-term journey.

“She’s on course for better things, hopefully a medal at next year’s SEA Games.”

The bronze mark in last year’s Games was 1.83m.

What’s next?

Said Michelle: “Qualifying for the World Junior Championships in Beijing in August, I’ll need 1.82m to do that.”

But first up after the phone interview was a trip to the mall for some last-minute shopping before her journey home.

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