

Koh siblings among four off to Beijing

470 sailor Terence gets nod, will join brother Seng Leong at Olympic Games

BY LIN XINYI

TERENCE Koh and Koh Seng Leong will score a first for sailing at the Beijing Olympic Games.

The brothers were yesterday nominated by SingaporeSailing to represent the Republic at August's Olympics, making them sailing's first and only Singapore's fifth pair of siblings to don national colours at the same Games.

Said Seng Leong, 24: "I think the happiest person would be my mother – after all that we've put in."

Terence, 20, who is competing at the Kieler Woche regatta in Germany, could not be reached for comment.

While the Koh household had little doubt over Seng Leong's nomination – he was the only Laser sailor to attend all three stipulated selection regattas – the fight for the men's

470 berth was less straightforward.

Terence and Xu Yuanzhen, silver medallists at the 2006 Doha Asian Games, were in a three-way battle with Roy Tay and Chung Peiming, and Teo Wee Chin and Benjamin Tan.

They got the nod after topping the double-handed dinghy selection criteria, based on three events, with a 108-point total. That was just two points ahead of 2007 South-east Asia Games champions Tay and Chung (110). The third pair were on 152 points.

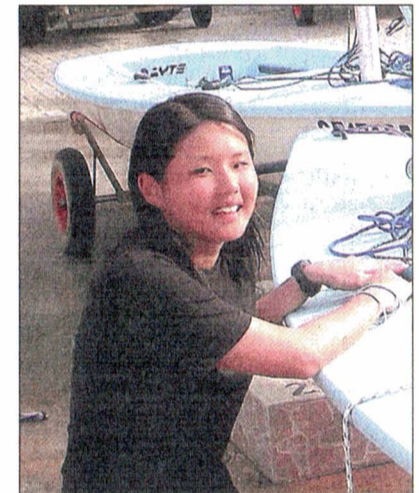
Both Terence and Xu, and Tay and Chung had earned Singapore its Olympic slot in the 470 Men's class at last year's World Championships.

However, Olympic rules allow for each country to field only one boat in each class.

Added Seng Leong: "It's actually hard for me to feel happy (for Terence) because the other pairs are also my good friends."

Tay and Chung lodged an appeal last Friday. But the appeals board upheld the selection panel's decision.

There was also heartbreak for Elizabeth Yin, who finished 19th at last March's Laser Radial World Championships, which



PHOTOS: SINGAPORESAILING, SERENE TAN, ALBERT SIM
BIGGEST SAILING TEAM: (clockwise from top) Koh Seng Leong, Lo Manyi, and Terence Koh (left) and Xu Yuanzhen will form a four-man sailing team at the Olympics – Singapore's largest to the Games.

Other brothers

Other brothers who have participated in the same Olympic Games:

- ✦ 1956 Melbourne: Tan Eng Liang and Tan Eng Bock (water polo), Alexander and Weibe Wolters (water polo)
- ✦ 1984 Los Angeles: Oon Jin Teik and Oon Jin Gee (swimming)
- ✦ 1996 Atlanta: Desmond Koh and Gerald Koh (swimming)

earned Singapore a spot at the Games.

The nod was eventually given to 2005 SEA Games Laser Radial gold medallist Lo Manyi. She emerged tops after a series of three international races, which served as a basis for selection.

The four-sailor nomination has been sent to the Singapore National Olympic Council. The SNOC is likely to endorse the decision before announcing Singapore's Olympic-bound squad today.

Low Teo Ping, who was re-elected as president of SingaporeSailing at its annual general meeting yesterday, said: "There's definite disappointment for some sailors. But I think they've taken it in their stride."

SingaporeSailing has already set goals beyond the Beijing Games.

Low said: "Qualifying for three events is unprecedented. For the 2012 Olympics, we are aiming to qualify in five events."

Seng Leong will captain the sailing team. He is hoping to better his 2000 Sydney performance, where he finished 28th out of 29 boats in the 470 class with Tan Wearn Haw.

He said: "This time, we've had a lot of preparation. We've also had good finishes."

"The Olympics isn't very much different to any of these events – it's just under a different name. We just have to keep our belief."

linxinyi@sph.com.sg