

LIQUID GOLD

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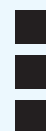
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SMA News speaks to **Dr Lin Diyang (LDY)** and **Dr Nigel Tay (NT)** about their recent SEA Games gold-medal feat in water polo.

In the recent 28th SEA Games 2015, Singapore achieved a record medal tally of 259 medals, including a phenomenal 84 golds. Among the decorated gold medallists, two medical officers (MOs) carried the heavy burden of protecting Singapore's unbeaten gold streak in water polo – Dr Lin Diyang and Dr Nigel Tay. After battling some fierce SEA games rivals, they emerged in glorious triumph, beating Indonesia 15–10 in the final. Having been in the water polo national team for nearly ten years, the two veterans were looked upon to lead the team to victory. As part of our SG50 celebrations, SMA News interviewed our 2015 SEA Games champions.

Congratulations on your magnificent performances at the SEA games. This makes five consecutive SEA Games gold medals in water polo for both of you! Tell us more about your water polo career and some of the highlights.

LDY: My water polo career began at about ten years old. I used to have swimming training at The Chinese High School, where my brothers were also having water polo training. I enjoyed sneaking over to join their training. Finally, their water polo coach relented and let me join the training sessions. I've not looked back since.

The highlight of my career is definitely the most recent SEA games. It was a completely different experience to play before the home crowd, with the support of friends, family and my girlfriend. Because of that, I put in extra effort. *[laughs]* The World Junior Championships was another highlight.

It was such a thrill to spar with the best players in the world, some of whom were already established celebrities in their home countries. I managed to exchange some jerseys and trunks as memorabilia.

NT: Water polo has been a huge part of my life since secondary school. Thankfully, I've managed to cultivate my passion for the sport throughout my university years and career. It certainly hasn't been an easy journey trying to juggle family, friends, work, training and examinations, but I wouldn't give it up for anything in the world. The experiences and memories that this sport has given me are unforgettable and truly priceless.

Some of my highlights include the 2007 SEA games in Korat, Thailand, the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea and the recently





PROFILE



INTERVIEW BY

DR JIPSON QUAH

*Editorial Board
Member*

Legend

1. A formidable attacker, Dr Lin scored seven goals at the 2015 SEA Games

2. Dr Tay proved to be a resolute guardian as Singapore devastated all opponents by scoring 74 and conceding only 18

*Photos courtesy of Byron Wee/
SINGSOC (VOUXphotography.com)*

concluded SEA Games in Singapore. The Korat Sea Games, which was my first international major games debut, was nerve-wrecking yet immeasurably exciting. I really wanted to prove my strength and abilities, and I did. The 2014 Asian games was unforgettable because we came so close to making the Bronze Medal play-offs by a single goal but unfortunately, it was not meant to be. Of course, everyone was crushed, but it gave us the strength to persevere. The 28th SEA Games was especially memorable, since it was my first time competing on home ground with the home crowd rallying behind us. It also gave my grandmother a chance to watch me play for the first time, and that was unforgettable! Winning gold was especially sweet.

What are your training schedules like and how have you been able to juggle your training and career thus far?

LDY: We train every day, including Sundays. From 7.30 pm – 10 pm on weekdays, and 4 pm – 6.30 pm on weekends. Trying to balance training and medicine is very draining, as I have to wake up early to attend work, then immediately head for training before finally reaching home at about 11.30 pm. As such, there is hardly any time to study or socialise. But winning the SEA Games has made it all worthwhile.

NT: It's about prioritising and planning your timetable well. Sacrifices have to be made to accommodate both. We are cognisant of that and so we try our best.

What are your future plans in water polo and medicine? Are you going to continue playing to add to your medal tally?

LDY: I'm planning to apply for orthopaedic surgery residency at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital this year. I've done two MO postings there, and I've learnt a lot and thoroughly enjoyed myself. It helped that the department head was very understanding towards my intensive training regime. As for water polo, I may consider taking a break for now to concentrate on my medical career.

NT: I haven't quite decided whether to continue playing water polo. After all, I've been in the National Team for eight years now, so it may be time to retire to focus on my career and family. But I still have a passion for the sport and wish to continue, if my schedule and career allow. I am doing my National Service as a Naval Diving Unit Formation Medical Officer now and will complete service early next year. Currently, I am working on a few projects in ENT and will be applying for residency. I am also looking forward to going for medical mission trips with my church, to give back to others in the capacity of not only a national water polo player but also a medical doctor.

Both of you must have had some idols growing up? Who are some of your inspirations in both arenas?

LDY: My inspiration is definitely my father. While studying medicine in the National University of Singapore

(NUS), he too continued with his passion for badminton and tennis by representing NUS in numerous competitions while dating my mother! He encouraged me to excel in both medicine and sports; I would not have been able to do it without him.

NT: In water polo, my inspiration is the Italian national goalkeeper, Stefano Tempesti. Watching him play is a spectacle to behold. In medicine, the Dutch Olympic gymnast, Epke Zonderland (aka the "Flying Dutchman"), is one who truly inspires me. There aren't many medical doctors today who have managed to juggle their sport and career well, but Zonderland has perfected the art. An aspiring orthopaedic surgeon and a multiple gold medallist in major international sporting events, he is undoubtedly the most illustrated Dutch gymnast in recorded history.

Thank you for sharing with SMA News your precious personal sporting experiences. ♦