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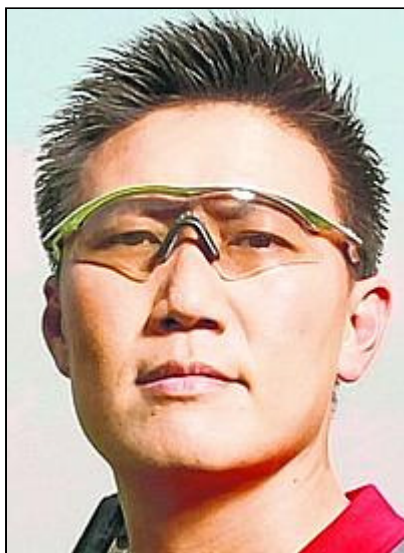
Jan 20, 2007
SHOOTING

Wung Yew fires first Olympic salvos

Full-time shooter meets new coach and seeks ideas from successful sports

By Nicholas Fang

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CLASS ACT: Multiple-SEA Games gold medallist Lee Wung Yew is awaiting approval for his request to take two years off work as a PE teacher.

THE Olympics is just 19 months away. And Lee Wung Yew, who is taking no pay leave, is wasting no time in his bid for Beijing 2008 glory.

A month after the Asian Games, the Singapore trap shooter has already met his new coach Marcello Dradi, who will be working with him in the build-up.

He has also spoken with others in the sports fraternity, who have achieved world-class success, to learn of their methods.

The 50-year-old Dradi, who is based in his native Italy, coaches shooters all over the world.

His charges include India's world champion Manavjit Sandhu, Russia's World Cup finals winner Alexei Alipov and the British national team.

Lee, who has never had formal coaching, worked with Singapore national coach Zhu Changfu occasionally over the past few years.

He believes Dradi is the man to take him to the next level in the sport.

Said Lee: 'He was in Singapore last weekend to review my plans, observe me train and also to understand the conditions that we have here.

'He said that if we want to become a world-beater, I would have to become full-time professional.

'His own coaching base in Italy, where I will get to train at, is one of the best in the world. It is almost three times the size of our national training centre

The two-time Olympian is one of Singapore's most-decorated shooters, having won 15 South-east Asia Games gold medals in a 25-year career.

He was one of the first athletes earmarked for the new scheme announced by the Singapore National Olympic Council, which aims to secure Singapore a medal at the 2008 or 2012 Olympics.

The scheme, expected to be finalised this month, has a war chest of between \$5 million and \$7 million to finance the training and preparation of Olympic

hopefuls.

The 40-year-old is awaiting approval from the Ministry of Education, allowing him to stop work as a physical education teacher at Innova Junior College.

His competition season kicks off in March.

Lee has also been speaking to those who have already achieved success at highest levels.

He said: 'I spoke to SingaporeSailing president Low Teo Ping recently about how to go about preparing a full-time training plan.

'Sailing is a sport which has had great success in bringing Singapore athletes up to a world-class level.

'They have had a lot of experience in working with athletes who are essentially training full-time, so they know what is needed.'

Singapore has produced a slew of sailing world champions since last year, and capped off 2006 with five gold medals at the Doha Asian Games last month.

After Lee met SingaporeSailing executive director Andrew Sanders before the 2004 Athens Olympics, one of the ideas they discussed stuck with him.

He recalled: 'Andrew mentioned the concept of a super-butler. That is someone within the federation who basically takes care of an athlete's every need, even before the athlete realises he needs something.

'That way, all the athlete has to do is focus on training and competing. This is the sort of ideas we are hoping to implement.'

The Singapore Shooting Association has just appointed a high-performance manager, who will oversee Lee's training plans for the next two years, as well as that of air rifle shooter Vanessa Yong.

The 18-year-old, a Commonwealth Games bronze medallist last year, has decided to go full-time to pursue the Olympic dream.

'We are hoping to meet Andrew again soon to share more information,' said Lee.

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