

FEAT FOR S'PORE CHESS

Jingyao tipped to break into top 100 after beating ninth seed at World Cup

Kimberly Kwek

Tin Jingyao's stunning upset over Azerbaijan's world No. 13 Shakhriyar Mamedyarov at the Fide World Cup on Thursday has been hailed as the greatest achievement in Singapore's chess history.

Singapore Chess Federation chief executive Kevin Goh, delighting in the achievement, believed the result will greatly boost Tin's confidence and tipped him to become a world's top-100 player soon.

Goh said: "The local chess community is understandably thrilled and proud of this victory. Mamedyarov has been one of the world's best players for a long time and is, without question, Jingyao and Singapore's biggest scalp in our chess history."

Tin, who became Singapore's fifth and youngest grandmaster in 2022, was seeded 120 in the competition, but rankings mattered little as he defeated ninth-seeded Mamedyarov 1.5-0.5 in their second-round clash at the US\$1.83 million (S\$2.45 million) tournament in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Mamedyarov is a two-time world junior champion (2003 and 2005) and the 2013 world rapid champion. The 38-year-old was also a gold medallist at the 2012 Chess Olympiad on the third board and a three-time European team champion.

Before this, Tin, 23, had defeated American Hans Niemann at the III Ellobregat Open Chess tournament in Barcelona in December en route to a second-place finish.

After the victory on Thursday, Tin told chess media platform ChessBase India: "For me, it was just very exciting to be able to play such a strong player. I think this is the strongest player I've played in a classical over-the-board tournament, so it's a great experience for me and, of course, getting the result



Singapore's Tin Jingyao competing at the Vietnam SEA Games in 2022, when he won three medals on his debut. On Thursday, the world No. 291 among active players shocked the chess community when he defeated Azerbaijan's world No. 13 Shakhriyar Mamedyarov at the Fide World Cup. PHOTO: DYAN TJHIA

feels even better."

His achievement also drew praise from the international chess community, with India's five-time world chess champion Viswanathan Anand tweeting: "Huge upset... Tin Jingyao from Singapore eliminates one of the top seeds Mamedyarov! Best Singaporean performance in history!"

Goh believes that the result is also significant for Tin on a personal level, saying: "This would serve as a huge confidence boost. Jingyao has always been a confident chess athlete, although lately some of his re-

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VISWANATHAN ANAND, India's five-time world chess champion.

sults have not gone exactly to plan. I believe this victory is a timely reminder of how good his ability is."

He feels that the world No. 291 (among active players), who won silver in the men's rapid chess and two bronzes in the standard individual and blitz on his SEA Games debut in May 2022, has the potential to compete among the world's best.

He said: "We all believe in Jingyao's potential and that he could join the world's top-100 players sooner than later. He is so far managing his time between school

and chess very well. This victory against Mamedyarov has demonstrated that his understanding of chess is not far off from the world's elite players.

"At this level, we are generally talking about fine margins. So it would be crucial to understand his weaknesses in the game and how we can help to curate his training to address these issues."

Tin will come up against Denmark's Rasmus Svane next in the third round.

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