

TIN TARGETS GAMES GLORY

S'pore grandmaster wins bronze, scouts opponents before heading for Thailand

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It has been an eventful three years for Singaporean chess player Tin Jingyao since he made his SEA Games debut in 2022, when he won a silver and two bronzes.

Several months after that outing in Quang Ninh, Vietnam, he earned his Grandmaster title – becoming the youngest Singaporean at the time to achieve the feat – and has since claimed major scalps like American grandmaster Hans Niemann and Azerbaijan's Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, while also winning international events.

On the flip side, he also had to grapple with some forgettable results, leading to self-doubt creeping into his psyche.

As he prepares for his second SEA Games appearance in December, Tin believes the experiences have shaped him into a more complete player.

The 25-year-old said: "As compared to then, I'm definitely a much stronger player and the events are also very different this time around, so it will be a fresh experience."

In May, the National University of Singapore computing student became the first chess player from the Republic to win the Asian Zone 3.3 Chess Championship in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

At the event, he also became the first Singaporean to cross the 2,600 mark in Elo rating – a measurement of a player's ability.

With less than a month until the Thailand SEA Games, Tin received a timely boost after wrapping up his campaign at the Asian Mind Sports Conference and Festival on Nov 15 with a bronze medal in the blitz event, where he won nine of 11 rounds.

Vietnamese grandmaster Le Tuan Minh, who also won the rapid title, was top with 10.5 points after winning all but one of his rounds at the Suntec City Convention Centre. His only blemish was a draw with China's runner-up Zhao Chenxi.



Singaporean chess player Tin Jingyao (left) playing against Vietnam's Le Tuan Minh in the blitz competition at the Asian Mind Sports Conference and Festival on Nov 15. ST PHOTO: KIMBERLY KWEK

For Tin, who also claimed a rapid bronze at the tournament, the event served as useful preparation ahead of the Games as he faced some of his regional rivals, including Minh, the blitz winner at the regional meet in 2022, and Indonesia's Susanto Megaranto, the 2019 men's blitz gold medallist.

Against them this week, Tin lost to Minh and beat Susanto in the blitz, while he lost to Susanto and drew with Minh in the rapid event.

He said: "It's good practice because we don't get a lot of blitz and rapid events here in Singapore so this, being just about a month be-

fore the SEA Games, is good timing and of course we get to also scout some of their openings and playing styles."

The Dec 9-20 Games will also feature Makruk (Thai chess) and Asean chess, in addition to standard chess, and Tin is looking forward to the challenge of competing in these new disciplines.

Vietnam's Minh, encouraged by his performance in Singapore this week, is also eyeing a strong showing at the upcoming Games.

He said: "Since I played three years ago, when I won the blitz event, other players also want the

same as me. I just want to play well.

"This event (the Asian Mind Sports Festival and Conference) is nice for me but the events are different, more competitive and everyone is trying their best, so I hope this event will be something that can inspire my play."

Also finishing on the podium for Singapore were Luo Cheng, Fong Kien Hoong, Teo Xueheng, Kelvin Ng, Zhang Yukun and Timothy Wu, who clinched the men's team gold in bridge.

Zhang and Wu had claimed bronze in the men's pair category earlier in the competition.

Singapore's women's bridge players claimed another two silver medals – Yeo Hui Teng, Tan Sock Ngin, Seet Choon Cheng, Chan Yiu Lin, Jazlene Ong and Leong Jia Min in the team event, and Ong and Leong in the pairs.

Wu said: "It's a good result, we're happy with the result, not too far from expectation. The expectation was a podium finish, this is about in line and we're happy with it."

Noting that bridge has been contested at the Asian Games twice and once at the SEA Games, Zhang hopes that staging the Asian Mind Sports Conference and Festival,

which also featured speedcubing, weiqi and xiangqi, will help to drive interest in the game here.

He said: "It's good to have more exposure of this game in Singapore, especially to be in Suntec, at a more public place rather than in just some clubhouse."

"It's good for the game overall, and having this together with other mind sports is good because others who are interested in mind sports may find bridge interesting as well, so it kind of complement each other."

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