

Water ski team gearing up for SEA Games challenge

THE NATIONAL water ski team is making great strides in its preparation to challenge for gold medals at the Kuala Lumpur SEA Games in August.

Under the National Sports Council's (NSC) "Kita Juara Programme", the young team of Aaliyah Yoong Hanifah, her brothers – Aiden and Adam – as well as Syahir Nasir, are undergoing a six-week training stint in the United States at the Cory Pickos ski site in Florida.

The overseas stint is also to prepare the skiers to progress further up to a world class level, especially with Malaysia hosting the 2019 IWWF Waterski World Championship in 2019.

Syahir, 18, in particular has been looking impressive during training and looks to be on course to shatter Alex Yoong's 23-year national record in slalom.

Then 18, Alex had set the record with three buoys on a 13m rope at the Asian Australasian Championships in 1994.

Syahir, who has been regularly skiing on 13m, achieved a personal best in training with a run of four buoys on a 12m rope in Florida.

At 11, Aiden is also showing much potential and well on target to smash his half-brother's 24-year record in tricks.

Aiden, who bagged a bronze at the 2015 SEA Games in Singapore, holds a personal best of 3,770, which is just shy of Alex's record 3,830 set during the 1993 Malaysian Open.

"Aiden is well placed to break the national record in tricks this year as he is capable of doing 4,000 points now," said Malaysian Waterski and Wakeboard Federation (MWWF) head coach Hanifah Yoong.

"In fact he needs to be scoring 4,500 to challenge for gold at the SEA Games and there's a good chance he can achieve that by July."

"The fact that two skiers are well poised to break national records in the Open men's category is also further testimony that our male skiers are coming up," Hanifah said.

In the women's category, 13-year-old Aaliyah is in good shape, having smashed the national tricks record a total of 15 times since 2010.

Her latest feat was a score of 7,600, which was secured en route to winning the Asian Oceania Championships in February.

Aaliyah, who bagged two gold medals at the Singapore SEA Games, also rewrote the record for slalom three times with her current record standing at 3.5 buoys on a 13m rope.

All four – Aaliyah, Aiden, Adam and Syahir – will also compete at the Inboard Records Tournament at the Santa Rosa Beach from May 13 to 14 and the Sunset Lakes Cup in Orlando from May 19 to 21.

Aaliyah will go on to compete at the prestigious US Masters at the Callaway Gardens, Atlanta, from May 26 to 28 before returning home.



Aiden honing his trick moves at the Cory Pickos ski site in Florida in preparation for the SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur in August.