

# Sports

## Out to fulfil Thaddeus' dream

Thomas hopes to compete in SEA Games, as authorities look to make triathlon safer

**TAN YO-HINN**

yohinn@mediacorp.com.sg

IN MARCH, 13-year-old Thomas Cheong won the under-13 category at the Malacca A'Famosa Triathlon, and big brother Thaddeus made it a double for the family when he emerged victorious in the under-16 category.

It was the last time the two brothers would compete together.

On Sunday, Thaddeus, 17, collapsed and died after he came in third in a time trial for December's SEA Games.

Speaking to TODAY at the family home in Jalan Girang, a visibly upset Thomas said: "He was a very good brother and a champion to me. But he was unable to fulfil his dream of representing Singapore at the SEA Games.

"If my body allows it, I want to continue racing in triathlons and one day compete in the SEA Games for Singapore, and fulfil that dream for my brother."

Thaddeus, a first-year science student at Raffles Junior College, was a member of the national training squad and collapsed after his race — 1.5km swim, 40km bike ride, 10km run — at Changi.

He posted a personal best of 2hrs 9mins, going under the SEA Games qualifying mark of 2 hrs 12 mins.

The Triathlon Association of Singapore (TAS) will select four triathletes (two men, two women) for the SEA Games in Korat, Thailand (Dec 6-15).

"My parents, the other triathletes, the officials and I were at the finish line cheering him on," said Thomas, a student at St Joseph's International. "But barely five metres after crossing the finish line, he collapsed. We all panicked. I was very frightened and kept fanning him, but he didn't open his eyes. He never did."

Thaddeus was pronounced dead at Changi General Hospital at 10.55am. The cause of death is still unknown.



**He was unable to fulfil his dream of representing Singapore at the SEA Games. If my body allows it, I want to continue racing in triathlons and one day compete in the SEA Games for Singapore, and fulfil that dream for my brother.**

— Thaddeus' (above) younger brother, Thomas

While it was quiet at RJC's Bishan campus yesterday due to the start of the mid-year common test, it was highly emotional at the Cheongs' residence, where about a hundred students paid their respects.

Jay Fong, a former classmate, placed his school badge in the coffin.

"Although I only knew him for six months, Thaddeus was a great guy who would always crack us up and was always ready to lend a helping hand," said Jay, 17.

"Who would have thought this would happen to him? He was a very fit guy. It's very shocking."

RJC principal Winston Hodge said the school is providing support to the family, students and staff. Students have been given the option to take their tests at a later date.

"We have been keeping in close contact with Thaddeus' family, schoolmates and



PHOTOS BY DON WONG

**EMOTIONAL:** Distraught RJC students pay their respects at Thaddeus' wake as MCYS' Teo (far left) comforts Thaddeus' parents George and Angeline Cheong.



teachers to offer necessary assistance and support during this difficult period," said Hodge.

"Teacher counsellors have been deployed to provide emotional support to students. The students are coping well and we will continue to monitor them closely."

Also present yesterday was Teo Ser Luck, Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), TAS honorary secretary David Hoong and Singapore Sports Council's (SSC) sports management and development chief Eugene Chew.

The incident is the latest to have hit the sport in recent years. Last year, retired Colonel Bernard Tan, 39, collapsed and died near the end of the 10km run in the Singapore Biathlon, while in October 2005, former Hewlett-Packard products manager Ho Wai Piew, also 39, suffered a heart attack and drowned during the swimming leg of the New Balance Corporate Triathlon.

Teo, himself an avid triathlete, said the MCYS, SSC and TAS are already looking into the matter.

"We're giving it very close attention and we'll work on it immediately and not wait until a task force is set up," said Teo, 38. "We'll look into what further precautions and measures to take."

"It's a very emotional time for the triathlon community, but I hope this will not deter anyone from participating in sports. We just need to do it in moderation, know your own strengths and weaknesses. Sports is supposed to be fun."

Thaddeus' mother, Angeline, revealed the family had postponed a holiday so that he could work towards competing in this year's SEA Games.

"We wanted to go for a holiday this month as it was the school holidays, but he told us he wanted to prepare for the trial," said Angeline, 46. "So we planned to go to Hawaii in December, after the SEA Games. Now, we will not be going anymore."

"He was every mother's dream, a go-getter yet someone who did not brag about his achievements."

"He was sharp and decisive."

"Recently, I learnt he was interested in a girl, but he insisted he would only tell me more when it (the relationship) was confirmed. Now, I guess I will never know."

Thaddeus' funeral service will be held at 3pm tomorrow at the Church of St Francis Xavier.

WITH THE  
LEGAL BOOKMAKER

**12 TEAMS FIGHT FOR COPA 2007**

League	Home Team	Away Team	Match KickOff (Singapore date/time)
COPA 2007	Uruguay	Peru	Wed, 27/06/07 6.05am
COPA 2007	Venezuela	Bolivia	Wed, 27/06/07 8.50am
SCORE	Singapore	Saudi Arabia	Wed, 27/06/07 8.00pm
COPA 2007	Ecuador	Chile	Thu, 28/06/07 6.35am
COPA 2007	Brazil	Mexico	Thu, 28/06/07 8.50am

Sales closes 5 minutes before kick-off time, or at the outlets' closing time.  
For PoolzConnect members, sales closes 5 minutes before kick-off time.

Always play with care.  
Do not bet illegally.

Towards Community  
Purpose and Benefit

## Federer's easy Wimbledon start

LONDON — Roger Federer's (picture) bid for a fifth straight Wimbledon title got off to a smooth start, with the Swiss maestro easing past Russia's Teimuraz Gabashvili in straight sets yesterday.

World No 1 Federer won 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 to advance to a second round meeting with either Juan Martin del Porto of Argentina or Italian Davide Sanguinetti.

On a cold, blustery day and with Centre Court left treacherous by the

rain that had delayed the start of the match by 90 minutes, the Swiss would have been keen not to waste any time overcoming an opponent making his debut at Wimbledon in the most intimidating circumstance.

That objective was duly achieved with Federer's 49th consecutive victory on grass wrapped up one hour and 32 minutes after he had begun his bid to emulate Bjorn Borg's five-in-a-row with an immaculate service winner. — AFP



GETTY IMAGES