

ONE DOWN, ANOTHER TO GO

Louis 'really proud' after setting 100m U-20 record, eyes Shyam's 20-year-old senior mark next

Laura Chia

Heading into his final meet this year, sprinter Marc Brian Louis had a clear goal: to break the Singapore Under-20 100m record and possibly even the 20-year-old men's record held by U.K. Shyam.

And as he crossed the line at the Club Zoom Kindred Spirit Series to finish first at the Home of Athletics yesterday, the 19-year-old achieved his first target.

What was more remarkable was his time of 10.39 seconds was just 0.02 off Shyam's mark from 2001, an achievement that put Louis third fastest on Singapore's all-time 100m runners' list. It was also just 0.04sec off the 2019 SEA Games winning time of 10.35sec by Malaysia's Muhammad Haiqal Hanafi.

"I'm really proud of myself and I'm very happy but it hasn't really sunk in yet so I still don't know how I really feel about it," said Louis.

Hailed as one of the young guns of Singapore's sprint team, Louis' record is the second in four months after he smashed the U-20 110m hurdles record with a 13.77sec run at the World Athletics Under-20 Championships in Nairobi in August.

His 100m record yesterday was also his second personal best time in two weeks after clocking 10.60sec in a time trial.

While he did not have any special preparations for the meet, he credited his hurdles training earlier this year for helping him become faster.

He said: "I did a lot of speed work and endurance during that time. One of the main things I focused on was strength because I used to be quite small and weak.

"When I was training for the hurdles, it helped with my sprints as well because even if you can clear

the hurdles easily, you still need basic speed to help you so that's what I've been improving on also."

His coach Benber Yu said he had expected Louis to break the U-20 record, but not by such a huge margin as he finished 0.14sec quicker than Calvin Kang's previous best of 10.53 clocked at the 2008 Asian Junior Championships.

Yu, who has coached Louis since he was in Primary 3, said: "I think if someone had been there pushing him, he would have broken the senior record also but it's okay, he's just 19 and has many more years to go. The most important thing is we're training consistently and having continuous improvement."

Yu, 40, said he was "really proud of Marc" and also paid tribute to Louis' club teammates from Team Cicada Trackers who helped push him during training. He is also hoping for the teenager to compete in a Malaysian meet next week, when he could make another attempt at the senior record.

While a tad disappointed at missing out on that mark, Louis is eyeing a 100m medal, and possibly gold, at the SEA Games in Hanoi next May.

But he was realistic about his chances as he is enlisting in national service next month and is unsure of his training plans next year.

He said: "I'm not thinking much about (the SEA Games) yet because anything can happen in a few months.

"But for now, I'm thinking I can get a better time and maybe even a podium (place) - that's the hope."

With Muhd Amirudin Jamal winning Singapore's last men's 100m medal - a bronze - at the 2013 SEA Games and Gary Yeo clocking the fourth fastest time of 10.44sec in 2012, which was also the last time a sprinter came closest to Shyam's record, the athletics fraternity is understandably excited by Louis' achievement.

Shyam, 45, was heartened to see Louis come close to his record and hopes to see a "consistent and upward trajectory with his performances".

He said: "It's high time the



GREAT ACHIEVEMENT

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MARC BRIAN LOUIS, 19, also the 110m hurdles Under-20 record holder, who credits his hurdles training for helping him pick up speed.

SINGAPORE'S 10 BEST MEN'S 100M TIMES

- 10.37sec U.K. Shyam (Aug 27, 2001)
- 10.38 C. Kunalan (Oct 13, 1968)
- 10.41 Muhamad Hosni (Aug 22, 1994)
- 10.44 Gary Yeo (Dec 15, 2012)
- 10.46 Muhd Amirudin Jamal (Oct 19, 2013)
- 10.47 Calvin Kang (June 9, 2015)
- 10.56 Muhd Elfi Mustapa (July 25, 2010)
- 10.57 Tang Ngai Kin (Sept 27, 1980)
- 10.57 Haron Mundir (Sept 16, 1987)
- 10.57 Mohammad Naqib Asmin (June 12, 2014)

record is broken because it's been 20 years. Global standards have moved on.

"I hope for the future of the sport that our young sprinters continue

to clock fast times to bring Singapore up to regional and global standards."

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Marc Brian Louis is 0.02sec off the 100m open mark. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO