

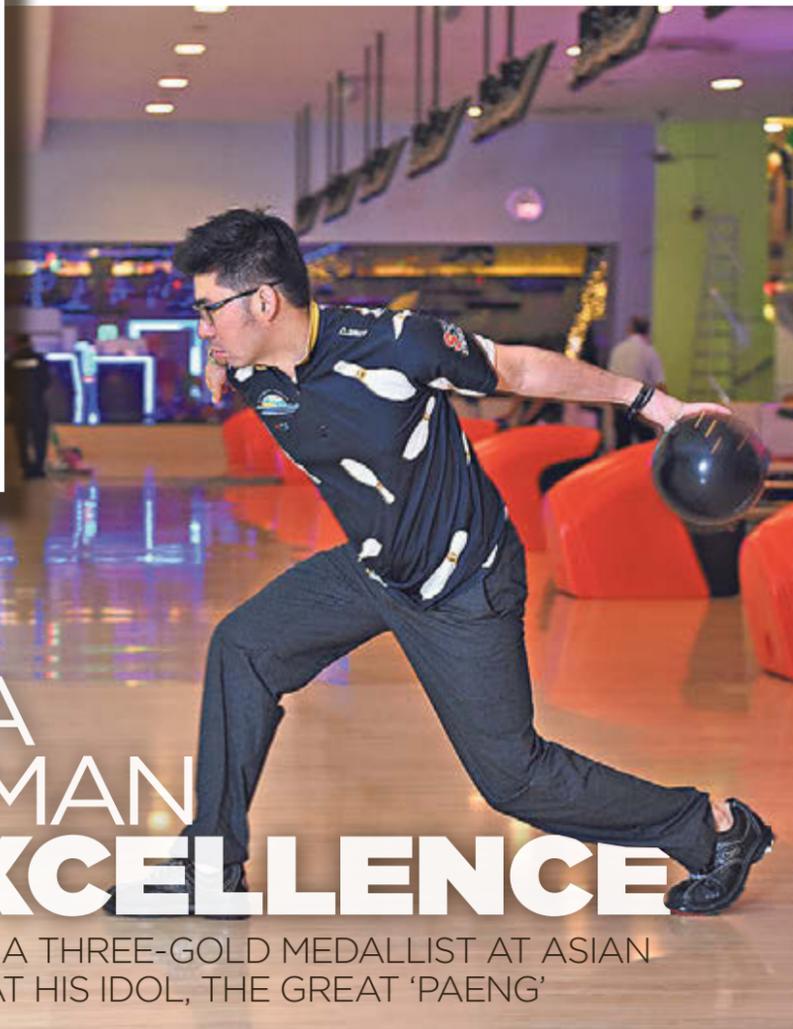
ATHLETES AND GOLF
BY GODFREY ROBERT

SWING AND AUDI PRESENT A TRIO OF FORMER ATHLETES WHO PERFORMED AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THEIR SPORT AND ARE NOW HONING THEIR SKILLS AT GOLF

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REMY'S A SPORTSMAN PAR EXCELLENCE

A WORLD CHAMP AND A THREE-GOLD MEDALLIST AT ASIAN GAMES, ONG EVEN BEAT HIS IDOL, THE GREAT 'PAENG'



He has seen it, done that, and is recognised as the greatest bowler the Philippines – probably even the region – has ever produced.

By 2013, he had won a phenomenal 131 career titles, six of which were world crowns. In 2011, he became the oldest winner of the Philippine International Masters, at age 54.

Rafael "Paeng" Nepomuceno, 62, who switched to coaching after that, was a World Cup winner four times (1976, 1980, 1992 and 1996), having secured the World Invitational Tournament crown in 1984 and the World Tenpin Masters Championship in 199.

Such was his lofty global reputation that when Remy Ong, 40, eclipsed him at the Asian Games in Busan, South Ko-

rea, in 2002, the Singaporean felt over the moon about reaching a pinnacle he had always dreamed about.

"He was my greatest hero, and I idolised him for his impeccable skills, great

personality and an admirable demeanour that bowled me over when I started playing for the national team.

"And I had set a goal, to beat him at least once although he was so much senior to me. And when I did that in Busan, my long cherished dream came true," said Ong at a recent interview at Bugis Junction.

That was possible because Ong himself is a determined, focused and goal-achieving personality who "breaks walls" to fulfil his dreams.

And one of the "walls he broke" was when against family and friends' objections he made the bold decision to put his two years of polytechnic studies on hold and immersed himself in bowling full-time.

Now he is among an elite group of Singaporean world champions, joining, amongst others, badminton's Wong Peng Soon, bowling's Adelene Wee, Jasmine-Yeong Nathan and Shayna Ng, and fencing's Lau Ywen on the illustrious list with his WTBA World Tenpin Bowling Championships title.

A natural sportsman, Ong, 40, dabbled in badminton, basketball, football, squash and softball in his youthful years and seriously settled with bowling, a sport introduced to him by his

uncle Vincent and auntie Annie when he was only 10.

And he gained instant "success", almost falling down with his first attempt and the bowling ball veering towards knocking all the pins down for a strike at the Kallang Bowlerdrome.

It was uphill all the way for the Catholic High School student after that and he became a national bowler when he was only 16.

Ong, a southpaw who did most things with his left hand except when playing golf, roller hockey and ice hockey, said at a recent interview at Bugis Junction: "Sport is all about focus and discipline. You have to work hard, follow a strict training schedule, and look at each tournament as a stepping stone to the next.

"Mistakes happen in sport. But you must work towards not repeating the mistakes. You cannot afford to choke at the crunch time."

He made his biggest push first at the 2002 Asian Games in Busan as captain of the men's team, winning three gold medals – in the Singles, Trios and the Masters events. He also clinched the All-Events, a non-medal event.

That feat gave him the Sportsman of the Year award for 2002, and a year later, he was given the Singapore Youth Award. He was also conferred a Public Service Medal by the Government in 2003 for his yeoman service to bowling.

Currently, Ong runs two bowling outfits, as co-founder of National Service Resort and Country Club Bowling Academy and the other at Temasek Club, making his imposing presence at both venues on a regular basis to supervise his coaches and bowlers.

A co-founder of a digital and interactive sponsorship outfit, named Sponzer Group Pte Ltd, Ong, with buddy Raymond Teoh (also experienced in digital media), the duo are trying their best to help budding athletes seek sponsorship in their pursuit of glory.

The pair are also into a new food channel venture called My Food Society that works with FB outlets to organise food events and activities.

Whenever he finds time these days, Ong plays golf, a sport he picked up as a teen and improved when he was with the Celebrities Group, playing regularly in corporate and charity events.

Once a 10-handicapper who could drive 250 metres, Ong played a round with me at Tanah Merah Country Club's Tampines course recently and I was deeply impressed by his smooth swing and short game.

After all, excellence seems to be Ong's middle name. An Excellence for Singapore award winner in 2003, Ong truly is an excellent sportsman and an acclaimed personality who should be a role model for many athletes.

photos by Larry Lim and courtesy of Audi



SPECIFICATIONS & FEATURES

Model name: Audi A7 Sportback
Engine: V6, 2995cc, turbocharged
Power: 340hp
Torque: 500Nm
Top speed: 250km/h
Consumption: 7.3L/100km
Price: \$380,500 inclusive of COE

Features:

- HD Matrix LED headlights with digital running lights signature
- MMI touch response: two touchscreens with haptic and acoustic feedback
- Audi virtual cockpit with full HD resolution
- Natural-language voice control with onboard and cloud search
- 48-volt electrical system with mild hybrid technology
- quattro all-wheel drive with ultra technology