

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT REPORT

### SENIOR STATE TEAM 2016



Back Row: Kevin Khaw (Manger), Ena Chen, Chad Whitehead, Stuart Rowlands, Teng-Wei Khoo, Tristan Edison,

Front Row: Lee-Yen Khoo, Talia Saunders, Lionel Seah, Keith Edison, Leanne Choo, Malvika Hemanth

This year's Li-Ning Ede Clendinnen Shield and Li-Ning Australian Championships were held at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre in Melbourne city itself. It was definitely a new experience for the team both on and off court as the new format for nationals was introduced. Individuals were to be played before the team's event this year and so forth hence the fitness of the players and mental strength had to be equally as strong leading up to the team's event.

However it was very fortunate that the past few years of strong team spirit and bonds continued to flow through the entire team.

#### **Li-Ning Australian National Championships**

Although faced with a different format, the team was excited to kick start the week in the individual events with pride. Lionel Seah unfortunately injured himself in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the Men's Singles. This already made a dent in our hopes for a successful team event as the initial strategies would be affected. Stuart Rowlands lifted SA spirits up by fighting all the way to the semi finals where he lost to eventual champion Anthony Joe in three sets. Young Keith Edison made it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of the Men's Singles but lost to eventual finalist Ashwant Gobinathan; 17-21, 14-21.

In Men's Doubles, Lionel and Stuart started off strong to reach the quarterfinals but due to Lionel's injury, they had to pull out when they were due to face eventual champions and Olympic hopefuls Matthew Chau and Sawan Serasinghe. Teng Wei Khoo also made it to the quarterfinals with Ashwant Gobinathan from Victoria.

In Women's Doubles, Talia Saunders with her Victorian partner Ann-Louise Slee performed exceptionally well to reach the finals only to go down to Setyana Mapasa and Gronya Somerville; 14-21, 15-21. Malvika Hemanth was also outstanding with her NSW partner Tiffany Ho as they reached the semifinals on the back of some strong results. They however lost to eventual champions Setyana and Gronya; 13-21, 13-21. Lee-Yen Khoo and her NSW partner Janet Son although lost in the first round of Women's Doubles, bounced back to win the consolation round beating Victorians, Nhi Phing and Valencia Wu; 21-17, 21-11.

In Mixed Doubles, Talia and her partner Eric Vuong from Victoria reached the quarterfinals but went down to Matthew Chau and Gronya Somerville of Victoria. Olympic hopefuls Leanne Choo and her partner Robin

Middleton from Victoria cruised through to the finals with great results. They unfortunately lost to Sawan Serasinghe (VIC) and Setyana Mapasa (NSW); 22-24, 12-21. The whole team had mixed feelings about their individual results at the end of the championships but the usual team bonding at dinner showed that spirits were high. The best was yet to come out of everyone in the team's event.

Team's event started the day after the individuals. That meant that some of the players were well rested while those who made the semis and finals had to prepare themselves through proper recovery exercises the day before. The team welcomed back Leanne Choo who added experience and fire power as this year we faced teams that boasted Australian National Players in their ranks. The first day went very well as the team members' encouragement for each other and high spirits never really disappeared from our last Clendinnen outing in Tasmania. After so many years of meeting Tasmania in the first round, we finally didn't get them. South Australia faced The Territories in the first round which boosted confidence and tested new strategies due to Lionel's injury. We won the tie 13-0 while 12 of those matches were won in straight sets.

Next up on the same day was Queensland. In the past Queensland was always a team to be wary of, and this year was no exception. Keith and Ena opened the tie with their respective 2<sup>nd</sup> Singles wins. Chad came in at 3<sup>rd</sup> Men's Singles and won easily with a 21-11, 21-2 win. Doubles specialist Leanne opted to have a go in 3<sup>rd</sup> Women's Singles and took her opponent down 21-13, 21-7. Ena and Lee-Yen lost their 3 setter to Queensland at 2<sup>nd</sup> Women's Doubles while Tristan and Teng Wei played a nail biting 2<sup>nd</sup> Men's Doubles losing to their opponents; 21-23, 21-15, 11-21. From then on, South Australia stepped up a gear and performed extremely well in the remaining games especially in the Mixed Doubles which was always our forte. South Australia won the tie 10-3. Our strategies and team selections started to gel. We became more confident of each other.

The next day we faced Victoria's second team. Although it was their second team, we always made it a point to never underestimate our Victorian opponents. Still buzzing from an excellent result against Queensland, South Australia continued playing with confidence and pride taking the tie 13-0. The final result however did not reflect the intensity of the games especially when there were 5 matches that ended up with very close 3 setters. Except for Stuart and Chad winning their 3 setter in 1<sup>st</sup> Mens Doubles; 22-20, 19-21, 21-6 the other matches were won having lost the first games and coming back from behind to win them. This win meant we were already in the medals round. We were happy that we made it this far under the unique circumstances we found ourselves in this year with the new format. We wanted to really go all the way with no fear even though the odds were against us on paper. We said to each other, "one step at a time to the finals".

NSW was up next on the very same day. In the last 3 consecutive years, NSW was always our greatest challenge because of the close matches and ties that went down to the wire. This year for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in the row, we faced each other for the chance to at least win Silver. Strategies were changed and risks were calculated as Lionel made a return from injury even though he wasn't 100%. We lost the opening singles and were down 3-0. Stuart scored a win for us at 1<sup>st</sup> Men's Singles beating his opponent; 21-14, 21-18. Chad made it 3-2 when he won his 3<sup>rd</sup> Men's Singles; 21-8, 21-19. Leanne came from one game down to give us hope at 3<sup>rd</sup> Women's Singles with an 11-21, 21-18, 23-21 win. At that point it could have gone either way with the tie at 3-3. Our different combinations for doubles and mixed doubles proved to be fruitful as Teng Wei and Chad won their 2<sup>nd</sup> Mens Doubles; 21-15, 21-17. The tie finally came to 6-6 and it was déjà vu as we relied on our last match yet again. The last match was the 1<sup>st</sup> Mixed Doubles with Leanne and Chad winning a nerve wrecking 22-24, 21-14, 21-10 match. We did it! We got a result that was testament to our teamwork and support for each other. Now we prepare for Victoria's first team. For Gold!

Finals day did not damper our moods even though on paper Victoria had at least 5 national players who had various international tournaments under their belts before playing this team's event. We were ready to do our best to play them with no pressure. In the last 3 years we lost the tie midway through. This year however we proved to be more determined. In the opening matches, we each took a singles off each other that brought the tie to 3-3. Ena made a tremendous effort in winning her 2<sup>nd</sup> Women's Single match; 16-21, 21-19, 22-20. Stuart fought hard to beat last year's National Champion Ashwant; 21-23, 21-11, 21-15. While Leanne again at 3<sup>rd</sup> Women's Singles gave us a big win; 21-13, 21-14. Towards the end of the tie, we had mixed results in both Women's Doubles and Men's Doubles. It literally came down to the Mixed Doubles as we trailed 6-4. Stuart and Lee-yen gave us more hope when they beat their opponents 21-14, 21-17. That made the tie 6-5. Unfortunately

we lost the remaining Mixed Doubles. We were actually not disappointed losing the tie 8-5 as we knew we gave it our very best. We were not disappointed because we came all the way to finals as a team.

I personally congratulate the entire team as each member played a part in securing a fantastic result. Each senior member played a coaching role and motivated the younger players in their games. Special mention goes to Chad, Stuart, Lionel, Teng Wei and Leanne for working together with me to formulate strategies and discuss team selections while displaying outstanding cohesion and attitude in a badminton team environment. Well done to Tristan and Malvika who played when they were called upon and supported the team from the sidelines when they were not playing. Thanks to Tristan and Ena as well for helping me prepare team dinners. Thanks to Talia for always being there for the team. As a manager I am very proud of the entire Silver Medalist team.

Kevin Khaw  
Senior Team Manager



Senior Team getting some positive energy