

PURSUING A FREEDIVING DREAM IN ROATÁN, HONDURAS



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Freediving is a sport that involves holding your breath as you challenge your personal limits of depth, distance, and duration. I discovered freediving accidentally at a dive fair in 2017 and became hooked to this sports that is a curious combination of control and freedom, relaxation and focus, and grace and adrenaline.

Freediving was a form of therapy to me that helped me unwind after a hard day's of work. I did it recreationally and though I have had experiences with competitions from my past, competitive freediving was not something I was particularly drawn towards.

When Anqi, a fellow freediver, first broach the idea of us forming Team Singapore to participate in the CMAS Freediving World Championships in Roatán,

Honduras; I was apprehensive. I am a relatively new freediver and compared to the top freedivers in Singapore and other world-class athletes who attain depths of 60 – 130 m, I am an unimpressive 'shallow' diver of 30 m.

However, I became open to this idea as Anqi told me about her dream of seeing Team Singapore represented at these world-class events and the challenges she has faced forming a team. Over the years, she had reached out to other Singaporean athletes to join her in her endeavor but was always met with rejections.

Soon, I started to understand her dilemma, as I realized her decision to give up her job and invest time and money to train in a sports that few Singaporeans have even heard of was an unconventional move that was often met

with snide remarks from those who do not understand her and her wanderings around the world in pursuit of her dream.

Even Singaporeans who are financially stable and have few obligations in their lives would rarely dare make such a move.

We tend to give excuses –

The air tickets and registration costs are too high!

How am I going to fund myself?

My boss wouldn't give me this much time off work!

I would be losing too much in potential earnings if I took no-pay leave or leave my job!



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There's no chance of me winning, why should I even participate?

For Anqi, she was going to do it any way. She started a GoFundMe campaign to fund herself, despite her hesitations of doing so, in hopes of making up for what she lacked.

And as for me, meeting someone so passionate about the sports and willing to go all out for the glory of Singapore, moved me to join her in her endeavor.

Early July 2019, we met up in Roatán, one of the three Bay Islands of Honduras, where the competition would be held. This island is popular with scuba divers and tourists who come on big cruise ships. It is a tropical paradise with its coasts lined with sea grapes and coconut trees and with its gentle lapping waves and sea grass carpeted shallow waters where crabs and fishes skirted around your legs as you move through its cool waters.

Though we had done our own depth training over the month of June, we did most of our training over the month in Roatán. Being two, rather than one, also helped us save on the cost of accommodation and food. Being a popular tourist destination in the Caribbean, the cost of living in Roatán was not cheap. We cooked most of our meals to keep our expenses down.

We hung out in the evenings to watch the sunset with other competitors and gave each other physical and moral support. This was important as training can take a

toil on the mind and body. When I fell ill from an allergic reaction that caused my body to itch and skin to swell, Anqi helped me obtain medication and looked out for me. We also discussed strategies for training and competition.

And we fared well as Team Singapore! For Anqi, she managed to set new national records in all of the disciplines, with her deepest dive to 65 m. She was also featured in the media and was on the front pages of the Straits Times, twice! This gave our sports the much-needed publicity that we sorely lacked.

And as for myself, I deepened my personal record in one of the disciplines by 20 meters over the course of a month of training. I was now a 50 m diver! This shocked many of my family and friends back home, and even myself! A few of my friends congratulated me and told me



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that I had inspired them and my example has shown them that investing in dreams can pay off tangibly.

Besides these personal achievements, we both gained much from the international experience and exposure. We interacted with the world's best and gained much knowledge and tips for ourselves. In addition, we forged friendships with athletes from all over the world.

In our lives, sometimes opportunities arise for us to make a decision in the direction of our dreams. The steps that we must take often go against the grain of what society considers logical and acceptable. Even so, remember, only you get to decide for yourself whether something is worthwhile or not. And if it is important to you, go for it!



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