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physically and mentally."*

— Shanti Pereira on the recurrence of her hamstring injury

# Shanti's 'looking good to race'

Recurrence of hamstring injury in June almost put paid to her hopes of competing in the Asian Games

✶ NARENDAREN KARNAGERAN

National sprinter Shanti Pereira's Asian Games hopes were in jeopardy when she suffered a recurrence of a hamstring injury in June.

She had been on her way to a full recovery after injuring her left hamstring in April's Singapore Open Track and Field Championships, but a repeat injury nearly ended all hopes of her participating at this month's Asiad in Indonesia.

However, with the Games starting in 10 days, coach Margaret Oh rates Pereira's chances of competing in the three events – 100m, 200m and the 4x100m relay – that she has been pencilled in for as "looking good".

Oh told The New Paper yesterday: "We will monitor her progress and see if she is fit to race. We must keep in mind her race schedule, which is tight."

"We were told to make the final decision when we are there, but that wouldn't be right. So we will decide before we leave."

Pereira and her team are scheduled to leave for Jakarta on Aug 23, two days ahead of the athletics competition at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium.

Oh added that she is proud of the way her protege, who is on course to take part in her second Asian Games, has battled through her injury.

She said: "Based on current form, condition and training, Shanti is progressing well. She is looking good to race."

"It has been a tough period. After getting injured the first



Shanti Pereira is scheduled to compete in the 100m, 200m and the 4x100m relay at the Asian Games. TNP PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

time, she was not handling it well.

"But, over time, she has managed to take it in her stride and has been pushing herself since."

Pereira, who turns 22 next month, also admitted that her grade-two hamstring tear left her in despair and, crucially, facing a huge mental block.

## BREAK

"After I injured myself at the Singapore Open, I took a break for a week before I started training again," Pereira told TNP.

"I started very slow... I didn't even use my spikes for more than a month. I focused on my rehab, building my strength."

"I also tried to adjust to the rest of my season, trying to pick

up, going faster and faster.

"Unfortunately midway through (in June), I injured my hamstring again."

"It took a toll on me, physically and mentally. I couldn't believe I had to go through the whole process over again."

"It took a while to gain back the motivation."

Pereira, who had to cope with the pressure of being the reigning 200m champion going into 2017 South-east Asia Games while also contending with Singapore Athletics' internal spat that rocked preparations ahead of that meet in Kuala Lumpur, felt her injury has been the only distraction of this season.

However, the Singapore Management University account-

tancy undergraduate managed to overcome the adversity and challenged herself to put herself in the running again.

She said: "I was scared of running, of pulling my hamstring again. But, because it happened again, I knew what went wrong."

"I had a lot of help from the sports biomechanists from SSI (Singapore Sport Institute) and my strength coach. They helped me regain my motivation and slowly built my confidence."

However, no amount of motivation and confidence could signal to the sprint queen that she was truly ready in the way a competitive race could.

"Recently, I went for my first competition since April, the Vietnam Open (July 26-27) where I competed in the 200m."

"It wasn't the best race (she finished 6th in 24.92sec, far from her national record of 23.60), but it was the first time running again and it was pain-free. So I was really happy."

"Now, I'm preparing properly for the Asian Games, back to 100 per cent training."

"The Vietnam Open helped me a lot because now I know I can compete without pain, that I don't have to be scared any more. Mentally, it helped tremendously."

Pereira is thrilled at making her comeback, but remains grounded about her targets for Jakarta.

She said: "My main goal for all three events is to be able to run pain-free and, hopefully, clock a season best or personal best."

narenk@sph.com.sg