

A MILESTONE WIN FOR VETERAN ONG

His Saudi Open triumph is his first successful defence of a trophy

■ BY TERRENCE VOON

IN A glittering career spanning two decades, Remy Ong had been dogged by one statistic – his failure to retain a title.

All that changed on Wednesday night, when the Singapore keglar powered home to win the 5th Saudi International Open in Riyadh, a tournament he won the year before.

Top pros from the American Professional Bowlers Association and Europe had been lured to the US\$110,000 (S\$139,000) event, but Ong was equal to their challenge, beating Shaker Al-Hasan of the United Arab Emirates 475-390

in the title match.

“To win this title back-to-back is amazing for me,” he said yesterday. “And to defend it against high-calibre opponents is very satisfying.”

His road to the final was by no means easy.

Having squeezed into the top five on Monday following the qualifying rounds, Ong proceeded to pick off his illustrious rivals in the knock-out stages.

His first victim was American Tim Mack, whom he defeated 403-401 over two games.

Another PBA pro, Josh Blanchard, was crushed 466-382, while top seed and former USBC Masters champion Sean Rash was beaten 439-421.

Ong booked his place in the final by beating Asian Championship Masters gold medallist, Khaled Al-Dubyyan of Kuwait 420-389 in the semi-finals.

With the US\$25,000 top prize in his



Singapore bowler Remy Ong proudly showing off his trophy after retaining his title at the 5th Saudi International Open. He also won US\$25,000. PHOTO: SINGAPORE BOWLING FEDERATION

sights, the Singaporean was in irresistible form in the final, which pitted two left-handers against each other.

Ong was clearly in better form, stringing six strikes in a row to take the first game 236-202.

He sealed the title with another six-strike blitz in the second game, winning 239-188.

“The oiling patterns and lane conditions were a little tougher this year compared to last year,” he noted. “But it feels great to show that Singapore athletes can compete with the best anywhere in the world.”

Ong’s next assignment is the Thailand Open in two weeks’ time, but the big question is whether he will be in the Singapore squad for November’s South-east Asia Games in Indonesia.

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REMY ONG, who is ready to answer the SEA Games call if he is needed

The Singapore Bowling Federation has indicated that it intends to field a young team, which means that the 32-year-old could miss out on a chance to retain the two gold medals he won when bowling last featured at the SEA Games in 2007.

Singapore’s top male keglar did not want to speculate on his participation, but stressed that he would be ready to answer the SEA Games call if he was needed. “Some people consider the SEA Games a small competition, but it’s still a chance to sing the national anthem if you win,” he said.

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