

• Hong Kong team 'can make their mark' like me: Siobhan Haughey

- The 17-year-old history-maker hopes she can inspire her teammates to achieve the same Olympic A qualifying standard she set in Kazan
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Siobhan Haughey has complete faith her Hong Kong teammates can do what she did - reach the Olympic A standard. Photo: Kevin Kung
Siobhan Haughey returned from the world championships confident of attaining a second Olympic A qualifying standard and hoping the Hong Kong team would be inspired to attain the same target.

The swimmers returned home yesterday after 17-year-old Haughey made the A mark in the women's 200-metre individual medley in Kazan, Russia, where she reached the event's semi-finals by clocking two minutes 13.07 seconds.

She also became the first Hong Kong swimmer to reach the A standard since Hong Kong first participated at the Olympic Games in Helsinki in 1952.

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SIOBHAN HAUGHEY

And Haughey, who will leave for the United States later this month to start campus life at the University of Michigan, has set sights on a second A standard in the 100 metres.

"It was my target to achieve the A standard in the World Championships and the mission is completed," she said. "Now I will look for the second one as I am about to start new training in a new environment.

"I have liked the 100 metres freestyle ever since I first started swimming at the age of nine and am pretty confident the swimming team in Michigan University can help me achieve my target.



Hong Kong

team members arrive home after competing in Kazan, from left: Sze Hang-yu, Lau Yin-yan, Siobhan Haughey, Stephanie Au Hoi-shun and Kong Man-yi. Photo: SCMP Pictures

"The coach has done a great job for the men's team before taking over the women's team and we had some discussions before I decided to join them. I am sure their training style and methods fit me well."

Haughey said she had learnt a lot at the World Championships as she took part in an eight-day long event for the first time.

"You have to learn how to keep your form during a long period of competition, how to conduct training and adjust to the conditions. This will help me when I take part in the Olympic Games next year as it is also eight days long," she said.

"A lot of medal winners in Kazan were not from the traditional heavyweights such as the United States and some of them were even younger than me. If they can do it, I have to start to think why not me?"



Training has paid off for Siobhan Haughey. Photo: May Tse

However, she said it was too early to talk about winning Olympic medals in Rio.

"The Kazan event is just over and every swimmer has an idea of where they rank among the best. From now, everyone will work very hard during the next 12 months to stay competitive at the Olympics and I just have to take the same approach by working step by step," she said.

Claudia Lau Yin-yan, another member of the women's team who spent four years at Michigan University, said Haughey would have little problem adjusting to her new environment.

"Siobhan's arrival means we can form a small Hong Kong base in the university as our men's teammate, Geoffery Cheah is also training there," said Lau, who set a B qualifying standard in the women's 200m backstroke in Kazan.

"The university life is not easy as she has to take care of both studies and training, but I know she can manage it well and settle in very soon."

Stephanie Au Hoi-shun, who moved a step closer to the A standard after bettering her Hong Kong record in the women's 100m backstroke in 1:00.95, is also confident of achieving the A mark set at 1:00.25.

"Siobhan's success has set a good example for the team," said Au. "There are still 10 months to go for the qualifying period. Our 4x100 metre freestyle relay also stands a good chance as the top 12 teams have qualified now," she said.