

Ben Tan to head S'pore's bid for Olympic glory

■ BY LEONARD LIM

THREE-TIME Sportsman of the Year and Asian Games gold medallist Dr Benedict Tan is set to chart sailing's next wave.

He was the sole nominee for the presidency of SingaporeSailing when nominations for executive committee positions closed on Thursday ahead of the June 28 annual general meeting.

His top priority will be to achieve Olympic glory at the London 2012 Games.

The 42-year-old doctor, who raced at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, yesterday paid tribute to past presidents like Ng Ser Miang and outgoing president Low Teo Ping.

Dr Tan, who is currently a deputy president in Low's committee, added: "Sailing got to where it is today because of the tireless effort and capabilities of countless sailors before me.

"I intend to carry on that tradition of tapping on the best minds the sailing community has to offer, to ensure the



Former top sailor Dr Benedict Tan is set to chart the sport's next wave as president of SingaporeSailing. ST FILE PHOTO

long-term success of the sport."

Low, who is also the chief of the Singapore Rugby Union, announced on May 17 that he would not be seeking re-election

after 12 years at the helm.

When nominations opened on June 5, five of the national body's nine affiliate clubs – including Changi Sailing Club – nominated Dr Tan for the top post.

Said Dr Tan, who is the head and senior consultant of Changi Sports Medicine Centre: "When the rest of the clubs offered to send in their forms as well, I politely reminded them that it was not necessary.

"I am touched by the pledge of support from all nine voting clubs – it is a demonstration of the unity that is characteristic of Singapore's sailing community. It is this unity that will see us through future challenges."

During Low's tenure, local sailors won numerous world youth championships, Asian Games and South-east Asia Games medals.

Their success is partly due to Dr Tan's work. When Singapore's sailors returned without any medals from the 2002 Asian Games in South Korea, he was asked to es-

tablish and chair a High Performance Sailing Committee.

With his technical knowledge of the sport, along with his formal training in sports science, the sailor who once trained among the rocky outcrops of Pulau Ubin and Changi to hone his boat-handling skills carried out a major overhaul of the high-performance framework.

Subsequently, Singapore went on to win five golds at the 2006 Asian Games in Doha to emerge as the continent's top sailing nation.

The sailors are set to be the Republic's top medal hopes at this year's edition in Guangzhou in November.

Former sailing president Peter Lim said of Dr Tan: "I noticed Ben the kid growing up.

"What made the strongest and a lasting impression was the dedication he put into his sport, the consideration and civility he extended to both peers and elders, and his willingness to share what, selfishly, he could have kept to himself to excel and stay ahead."