

If S'pore wants an Olympic medal ...

SHOUT! (And hide in the bathroom)

SINGAPOREANS will never win an Olympic medal until they learn to grunt like two mating gorillas.

Sporting excellence is not about talent, training, technique or the taxpayer's dollars that pay for all of that — it is about the grunt.

The bigger the grunt, the better the chances of professional and financial success, which I believe is also the motto in parts of Geylang and Batam.

But did you hear that squealing machine take on Li Jiawei in the women's table tennis singles in Athens last weekend?

If you didn't, let me describe its aural qualities.

You know that sound a pig makes when you pin its ears to a bamboo pole and hang it outside your HDB window?

Well, North Korea's Kim Hyang Mi made exactly the same sound each time she served.

After eyeballing Li, she'd throw the ball up in the air and then, in a high-pitched nasal whine that suggested she'd borrowed a nose clip

from a synchronised swimmer, she'd scream: "ACAR CHA CHA!"

Sometimes, the Korean was slower and more deliberate, screaming: "ACAR, ACAR, ACAR", which made her sound like a woman with a speech impediment ordering pickles from an

Indian stall.

The Korean's epic battle with Li went to seven games. By the fifth game, all the stray cats in Toa Payoh were wailing pitifully and the dogs were throwing themselves off the top of HDB car parks.

Critics have suggested Singapore's Li lost the match because she was focusing on the mental

images of making the final and collecting a silver medal and the \$500,000 that comes with it.

She didn't. She lost her concentration because she was focusing on the mental image of shoving her table tennis bat into her opponent's mouth.

In the end, her sense of decorum prevailed, which is more than can be said for my wife, who kept threatening the Korean with a screwdriver because she was holding one at the time (my wife, not the Korean).

Ultimately, Li lost in the screaming stakes, which is rather disappointing because Singaporeans would never be off the medal podium if shouting was an Olympic sport.

Rather than spend countless hours with some western-educated sports psychologist she can't understand, Li should take tips from a coffeshop drinks seller.

Imagine the Korean's reaction if Li had bounced the ball three times, thrown it up in the air and shouted: "KOPI-O!"

The stunned opponent wouldn't know whether to return the serve or order a coffee.

Even a little Singlish might have sufficed.

Each time the orgasmic screamer chanted, "ACAR CHA CHA", Li should have retaliated with a "LAH, LAH, LAH!"

One lah is not emphatic enough and two sound like one of the Teletubbies.

But a resounding "LAH, LAH, LAH," on the key points, would have silenced the serial screamer.

Of course, the whining alone didn't cause Li's downfall. It would be naïve to make such a supposition.

No, the real reason why Li fell at the final hurdle was me.

I should not have left the bathroom.

Before the match started, I was desperately trying to assert my masculinity by fixing a blocked sink using only a toothbrush and a screwdriver, which my wife held whenever she wasn't throwing it at the TV.

Within minutes, the plughole was clear and Li was 2-0 up. But then, just moments after joining the missus in front of the TV, the Singaporean dropped a game.

"Get back in the bathroom!" My wife ordered. "It's your bloody fault she's losing. You're a jinx."

"Oh yeah, like the poor girl is thinking, 'I bet Neil has unblocked the sink now', I'd better drop a game."

Naturally, as the words left my lips, Li missed a simple forehand and I shuffled back to the bathroom like a guilty schoolboy.

"How's she doing?" I shouted through a crack in the bathroom door.

"She's doing well, she's about to go 3-1 up," my wife replied. "And while



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you're there, you might as well scrub the floor."

In the end, curiosity took its toll and I raced back into the living room. Besides, there was nothing left in the bathroom to clean.

What happened? The Korean won the next three games and Li lost the match. So my superstitious wife and I would like to apologise to the nation for costing them an Olympic medal.

It was foolish of me to leave the bathroom; I realise that now.

But if it's any consolation, we're no longer having any problems with our bathroom sink.

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