

SETTING HER SIGHT ON SCIENCE



Keeping a cool head is her craft, especially when the stakes are high.

That was how sharp shooter Teo Shun Xie secured the gold in the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Tough competitors, a foreign shooting range and immense pressure to win were but mere distractions. She set her sight coolly on target, and walked away the winner of the Women's 10-metre air pistol, clad in national colours.

"Shooting, I would say, is a very unique sport. Unlike other sports, this is one where you really need to control your thoughts and emotions," analysed Shun Xie. "You can't let adrenaline take over your body. You have to keep as calm as possible during competition and go into an almost 'zen-like' mode. Nothing can distract or affect you."

The 26 year old has been shooting since junior college. The years of honing her craft have shaped her character and perspectives in life as well. She shares, "This sport has taught me a lot on controlling my thoughts and keeping my emotions in check. During times of adversity, sometimes, the best solution is to really keep a cool head."

CHARTING OUT A PATH IN SCIENCE

This capacity to stay cool and collected is an important asset when it comes to scientific inquiry. Today, Shun Xie is a budding research officer at A*STAR. Here, a typical day for her involves managing and maintaining the mouse colony for the laboratory she is attached to, carrying out genotyping and supporting her colleagues in their research projects.

"In designing and conducting experiments, it is important to be patient and not rush through things. My years of training in shooting have certainly ingrained in me the necessity of precision, which is something you need in science too," Shun Xie compares.

Her enthusiasm for science began in her secondary school years. Life sciences attracted her in particular. "It was then that I decided that I wanted to focus on life sciences," she recalls. "What motivate me are things like how we can uncover how our bodies work and

dissect it right down to the cellular and genetic levels. It is fascinating to see how it all comes together, and how from experimentation on other life forms such as mice, we can learn more about ourselves."

FUN MATTERS TOO!

She may be deadly serious when it comes to nailing her target, but Shun Xie certainly has a strong sense of fun which belies her quiet demeanour.

This ability to have fun and see the bright side keeps her going even when the going gets tough, such as during demanding sessions of training, competing on the range and juggling research work at the laboratory. She puts it this way, "Hard work pays off. You may be experiencing a thunderstorm now, but it will pass, and you will see a nice, huge rainbow!"

"Give your best in anything you do, because you never know when you will be able to get a second chance again."



At work, that is the first word that pops to mind when she describes her laboratory. The young researcher confides, "This is a fun laboratory I'm working at. We have our own laboratory t-shirt, and we even went for the A*STAR family day together as a laboratory! That is how close we are."

Given her natural curiosity and strong interest in science, setting sight on a path of science is only to be expected. However, Shun Xie dreams about becoming a shooting coach or baker at times too. "Shooting coach – because that is my passion. As for baking, it is because baking is a science too," Shun Xie explains. "You put different things together, mix them, and they come together to create something else. This is another kind of experimentation, and I get to innovate and create different recipes, explore flavours and have fun at the same time!"



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