With only 3 weeks’ training, she breaks hurdles mark

By Chan U-Gene

SHE had resumed training for the hurdles barely a month ago, after a year-long injury layoff. So imagine Dipna Lim-Prasad’s surprise when she broke the national 100m hurdles record not once but twice yesterday.

The 19-year-old student clocked 14.69sec in the morning’s heats and then lowered it to 14.56sec in the final at yesterday’s Singapore Athletic Association (SAA) Track and Field Series 1 meet.

Lim-Prasad, whose previous mark of 14.72sec was set in 2009, said: “I really did not expect to break the record today, especially since I have been out of hurdles for a year.”

After suffering an ankle injury last January, the 1.74m tall athlete was advised by doctors to lay off the hurdles for a year. So she turned her focus to the 100m and 200m sprints, which proved to be a blessing in disguise.

She excelled in the 200m and came close to breaking Prema Govindan’s 26-year-old time of 24.54sec with her time of 24.61sec last month.

Though she missed that record, Lim-Prasad believes that the base speed she built while training and competing in the sprints last year was the secret to her 100m hurdles record.

Agreed her coach Slava Vassilev: “Her speed has improved. Only last week she clocked a new 100m personal best of 12.21sec.”

“I’m surprised with her result today as we had only three weeks of training. But I am glad she didn’t entirely forget how to do hurdles and could improve so fast.”

With the national record in hand, Lim-Prasad has set her sights on qualifying for November’s South-east Asia Games. She is 0.35sec away from the qualifying mark of 14.21sec set by bronze medallist Agustina Bawe of Indonesia at the 2009 Laos Games.

Vassilev is confident that his apprentice can reach that mark, if she works on her technique. Said the Georgian, who introduced Lim-Prasad to the hurdles in 2007: “The speed is there, now she must work on her technique.

“She is jumping too high and too close to the hurdles, because we do not have enough practice yet.”

Added Lim-Prasad, a Nanyang Technological University freshman: “I need to adjust my rhythm and my strides in between each hurdle.

“I am just super glad to be back.”

Another athlete who has an eye on a SEA Games berth is thrower James Wong, 42.

“I am just super glad to be back.”

DIPNA LIM-PRASAD, who suffered an injury and was advised to lay off the hurdles for a year

The nine-time gold medallist recorded a best effort of 47.82m in the discus yesterday, 4.2m short of the 52.02m Games qualifying mark.

Said Wong, who was not in competitive training last year: “Most important for me now is to get the competitions going so I can get more focused: After Chinese New Year, I will sit down and plan my training.”

The two-day SAA Track and Field Series – the first local meet of the year – ended yesterday, drawing about 880 participants to the Bukit Gombak Stadium.