

A young woman, Wahidah Ismail, is shown in a focused state, aiming a handgun. She is wearing a light-colored hijab and large red headphones. The background is a blurred indoor shooting range. The text 'Wahidah's Vision 2020' is overlaid in large, bold, yellow letters with a black outline. In the bottom right corner, there is a red star graphic with the words 'Rising Star' written across it in red.

Wahidah's Vision 2020

Shooting star: Wahidah Ismail during a training session at the National Shooting Range in Gym 3, National Sports Council in Bukit Jalil

Rising Star

Shooter hopes to hit the target at Tokyo Olympics

By **ASHREENA PILLAI**

KUALA LUMPUR: At 24 years of age, Wahidah Ismail considers herself a little bit of a late bloomer.

She only recently enjoyed her first international outing at a multi-sport event when she competed at the 2013 SEA Games in Myanmar.

It was her creditable ninth placed finish out of 28 competitors in the women's 10m air pistol event at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow that touted her as the next rising star.

Wahidah's score of 375 in the qualifying stage was just eight points shy of top qualifier Heena Sindhu of India. However, she was stuck in a three-way tie for the final two qualifying spots.

With only the top-eight shooters set to qualify for the finals, Wahidah missed on count back.

"I'm very proud of how I did in Glasgow. I missed the final by a whisker," said Wahidah.

"But I choose to take the positives. I shot very consistently (94-94-94-93) and managed to finish in the top-10 in my first Commonwealth Games. So the way I see it, the only way is up," she added.

Asked to gauge herself against seniors like Joceline and Bibiana Ng, Wahidah said: "I've managed to close

the gap a little. I just lack the experience for now.

"But I figure, all in good time and I'll concentrate on honing my skills and hopefully realise my full potential as a shooter."

Wahidah admitted she has struggled to find her form after the new shooting format was introduced in Nov 2012 but was roped in by the National Shooting Association of Malaysia in June last year.

With only two medals to her name this year, a silver in the 10m air pistol at the Tun Hanif Trophy (April) and a bronze in the 25m pistol at the Chia Woh Trophy (Aug), Wahidah is hoping to put in the extra hours to hit her long-term target – to compete in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Even studies will have to take a back seat for the Universiti Putra Malaysia final year accounting student with the Singapore SEA Games looming next year.

"I don't think I am the finished product yet and I'm in no rush for Rio (2016 Olympics), but I have my sights firmly on Tokyo.

"And part of my preparations for it is to up my game and compete at the SEA Games, Commonwealth and Asian Games. That's what I'm working towards."

Wahidah was never an outdoors person nor very sport-inclined when

she was growing up.

"I never liked sports. I would literally avoid it at all cost," confessed Wahidah.

"I was on a holiday after UPSR and my grandfather asked if I wanted to follow him to the shooting range. I just had such a great time that day. I knew then and there I wanted to be a shooter," she recalled.

She wasted no time and asked to be transferred to SMK Dato Syed Omar in Alor Setar where she would stay with her grandfather.

"Then I moved to the Bukit Jalil Sports School in 2005 and things began to take shape from there. Years later, I donned the national colours, it was just surreal. It validated all the sacrifice that I and my family put into this dream of mine."



QUICK READ

Name: Wahidah Ismail

Age: 24

Height: 150cm

Weight: 46kg

Date of birth: Aug 31, 1990

Place of birth: Gerik, Perak

Family: Ismail Mohamad (father), Rozita Ahmad (mother), Nadirah (older sister), Shaza Nasuha (younger sister), Mohd Akif (younger brother), Nuramni (youngest sister).

Coach: Mohamad Jaafar (grandfather and first coach), Alexey Kondratiev (BJSS) Tamara Antipova (BJSS), Oleksander Filipyuk (national backup), Hashim Desa (national elite) and Zamil Murad (current elite coach),

Achievements

2014: Finished ninth (10m air pistol) at the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

2013: Won one silver (10m air pistol team) with Joseline Cheah and Bibiana Ng, finished 10th (women's 10m air pistol) and 14th (women's 25m sport pistol) at the Myanmar SEA Games.

SILLY SEASON

If you were marooned on an island, what are your three must-have items?

Hmmm, I've never thought about things like this. I can bring anything? Well, then I'd go with my sport pistol for protection, my art block for doodling when I get bored and lastly, a pack of matches to help me light a fire.

If you could star in an action movie, is there any character from the silver screen that you would like to play?

Wow, this is a tough one. I don't mind Angelina Jolie from Tomb Raider (pauses) oh wait, I really like that girl from the Fast and Furious franchise... Michelle Rodriguez's character. She's so cool!

Which one do you crave more, a national record, an ISSF World Cup title or the Olympics?

Definitely the Olympics! But, the national record and the World Cup is equally important because it's the foundation that leads you to the Olympics.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Do I really have to reveal this? What have other people answered before? I think mine is just super embarrassing. But I'll be a sport and say dancing in my room when nobody is looking! (laughs)

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?

The power to read people's mind. I think it could be a very interesting and powerful gift to have.

If you had a windfall of RM1mil, what would you do with it?

That's a lot of money. Firstly, I'd help my parents and also send them to perform the Haj. Then I'd buy a house, donate some and save the rest. And of course, do some shopping!