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# Hard work, grit and determination ...

**KNOW THY POTENTIAL:** Divers Pandeleta Rinong and Cheong Jun Hoong's achievements are inspirational stories that remind us we can be among the best

**"A** DREAM doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work," said Colin Powell, American statesman and former United States' secretary of state. This rings true for the feat accomplished by our Olympians, Sarawakian Pandeleta Rinong, 23, and Perakian Cheong Jun Hoong, 26, who delivered the country's first medal in the women's 10m platform synchronised diving at the Rio Olympics 2016 in Brazil on Tuesday.

Their success story, like any other accomplished athletes, and the bumpy roads that they and their families have taken, en route to be-

coming what they are right now, are nothing short of inspirational for all of us.

Coming from Kupuo (kampung) Jugan — a small Bidayuh village in Bau, Pendeleta or Nong, the family's nickname for her, is proof that one's poor background plays a little role in one's pursuit of excellence. Like all kampung children

back then, nature is their playground.

Pandeleta, who knew nothing about competitive diving then, started off by jumping from the bridge into the river in her village almost daily at the tender age of 5. Her passion did not go unnoticed by her parents who went to the extent of building a small makeshift pool, made of bricks and cement, behind their house for Pandeleta to quench her thirst for water and diving.

To cut the story short, realising her potential and with the dream and determination of turning her into a competitive athlete, the family decided to relocate to Kuching, allowing Pandeleta to flourish under proper training. Their sacrifice — money and time — paid off when Pendeleta was elected as a state diver when she was 7 years old. Her talent then brought her to Bukit Jalil Sports School (BJSS) in Kuala Lumpur where she was further groomed and polished.

As a result of her hard work, she made her mark at various international competitions, bringing home gold medals, and is now one of the world's top divers. She also became the first-ever Malaysian female athlete to win an Olympic medal and

the first in any sport other than badminton when she won the bronze medal in the 10m platform diving event at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

As for Cheong, she is another example that a dream can be accomplished if you put your heart, mind and soul into it, and that there is no shortcut to it. It had been her dream, since she started competitive swimming 17 years ago, to win an Olympic medal. Hers is also a story of pure grit and hard work, beginning from the age of 4 when she was first sent to swimming classes in Ipoh by her vegetable dealer father. At the age of 9, Cheong was recruited by the state diving team's coach and she has not looked back since. But again, it was not without the support of her parents by enrolling her to a sports school in Gunung Rapat.

Like Pandeleta, her talent also brought her to BJSS. As related by her mother, Cheong would insist on training even when she was sick. It had been an occasion also when she had thought of quitting due to an injury. But, as the saying goes that your worst enemy in life is yourself, despite succumbing to other career-threatening injuries, she rose above them all and decided against throwing in the towel. On Tuesday, Cheong and her family stood proud of her achievement. So did the nation.

For us — lesser men and parents — the takeaways from their stories are a lot. For sure, as parents, we want the best for our children and for them to bring the best out of them, too. Hence, we should be able to identify our children's potential. We should also know that with our support and sacrifice, our children — if they are determined and hardworking — can be Olympians in their own ways. I have always told my school-going children that they can be a mechanic, chef, journalist, academician, carpenter, stand-up comedian or whatever, but be among the best in their chosen profession.

Coming back to our Olympians in Rio, let's us continue dreaming for more medals from our athletes. Let's pray for Pandeleta and Cheong to continue to shine and our other Olympians, including Datuk Lee Chong Wei and 'pocket rocket' man Azizulhasni Awang, to also deliver them for the nation and be rewarded for their sacrifice, sweat and hard work. And, of course, for the elusive gold medal for the country, and hopefully for my wishful thinking that a public holiday is declared!

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**Pandeleta Rinong (left) and Cheong Jun Hoong winning the silver medal in the women's 10m platform synchronised diving at the Rio Olympics on Tuesday. Pic by Rosli Rahmat**

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**HORSING AROUND WITH...**



**MUZLI MOHAMAD ZIN**