



# 27th SOUTH-EAST ASIA GAMES (DEC 11-22)



# HOCKEY CHANGED ENRICO FOREVER

**After a tough road, the Singapore captain is primed to inspire his men in Myanmar**

Report by GREGORY LOO  
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**Hockey set Enrico Marican on the straight and narrow.**

Looked after primarily by his grandmother after his parents divorced when he was seven, the youngster began to spend much of his time away from home.

It could well have got him into trouble, he says today, because, in his own words, he was "hanging with the wrong crowd".

When he started playing hockey in Primary 4 at Peixin Primary School, however, Enrico found peace, and a proper avenue to channel his energy.

It also helped that he was good at it.

Next week, Enrico will captain the Singapore hockey team at the South-east Asia (SEA) Games in Naypyidaw, Myanmar.

The team have targeted the silver medal, and also aim to push perennial favourites Malaysia hard.

It has been quite a journey for the 22-year-old Enrico, who is grateful to hockey.

Speaking candidly to The New Paper recently, he said: "When I'm on the pitch, I don't think about what goes on outside of it, so it's a good form of relaxation for me from my problems.

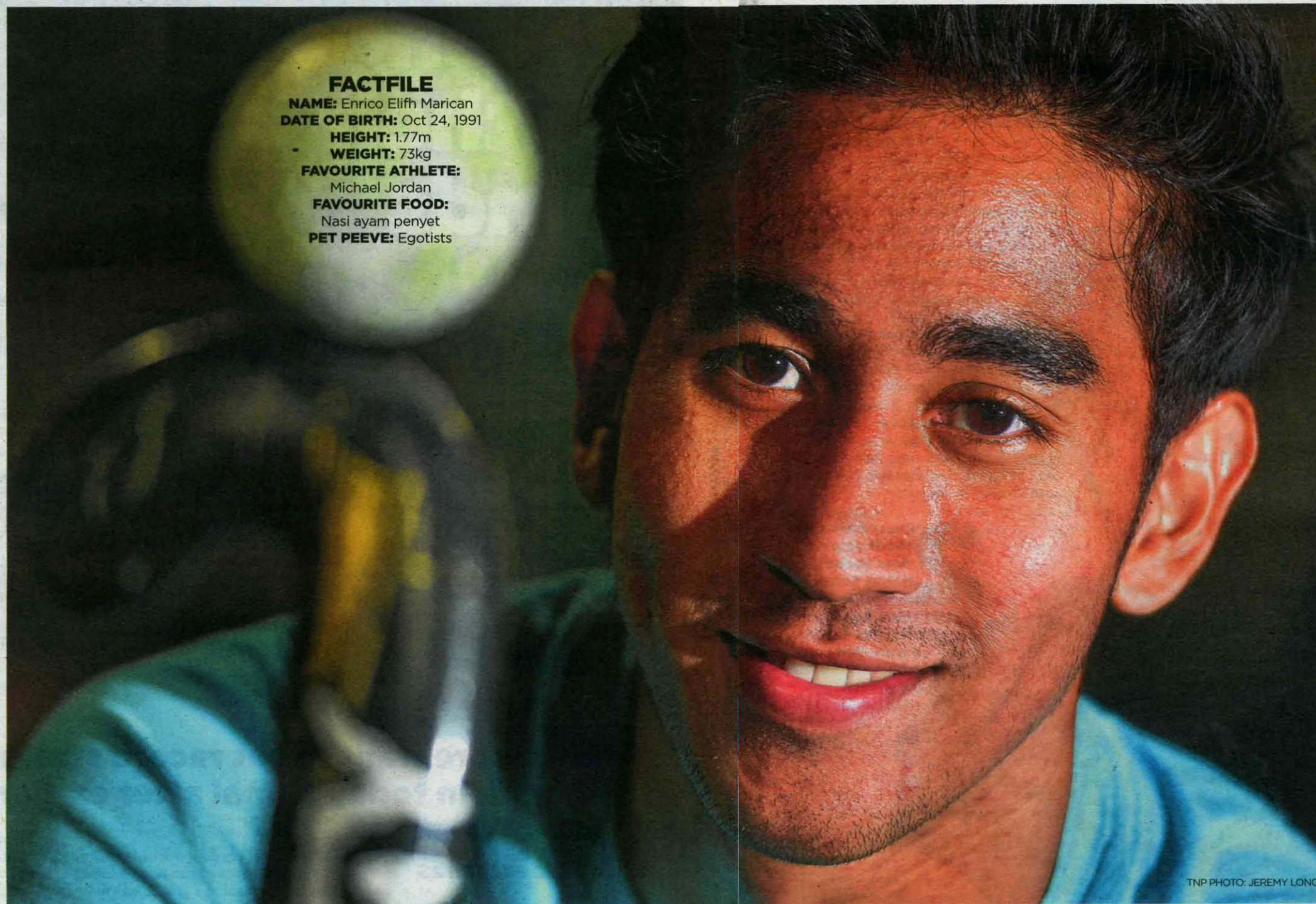
"My problems at home made me try to find attention by spending more time with my friends, but I also realised it could lead to bad company.

"So, I tried to spend more time in my sport and I slowly managed to influence a few of my mates to join up, instead of hanging around outside, which had no real benefits."

Channelling his energy into hockey has certainly paid off.

After a spell at ITE (Institute of Technical Education) College East, Enrico moved on to Nanyang Polytechnic where he recently graduated from with a diploma in chemical and pharmaceutical technology.

He will enlist for National Service in



## FACTFILE

**NAME:** Enrico Elifh Marican  
**DATE OF BIRTH:** Oct 24, 1991  
**HEIGHT:** 1.77m  
**WEIGHT:** 73kg  
**FAVOURITE ATHLETE:**  
Michael Jordan  
**FAVOURITE FOOD:**  
Nasi ayam penyet  
**PET PEEVE:** Egotists

March, and is hoping to further his education by pursuing a degree in a sports-related field.

Said Enrico: "Hockey has taught me to be very disciplined with every aspect of my life.

"I can manage my time better and it acts a kind of therapy for me – after I zone out from everything else while I'm on the pitch, I can focus 100 per cent on my studies when I'm back."

## GROWTH

While hockey has helped him grow up off the field, Enrico has also experienced growth in the national set-up.

He made his debut for the men's national team at 17, when hockey last featured at the SEA Games in 2007 in Korat, Thailand.

The team clinched silver.

Previously deployed as a striker, this time Enrico will drive his team forward from the heart of the engine room.

Having handed him the captain's armband last year, national coach Solomon Casoojée believes he could not have asked for a better leader.

"Enrico's a great talent – he's got good stick work, great balance and an excellent engine," said the South African.

"Shifting him into midfield has brought him into the game a lot more as he's working harder and being a lot more effective for us.

"One thing our group lacked for a long time was quality leadership and the one thing I noticed about Rico was that he commanded a lot of respect from his peers.

"I want each of the players to have an

opinion about the game and be able to debate things – Rico has really risen to that."

As the Singapore hockey team count down to their opening match against Vietnam next Friday, they will head to Myanmar knowing Malaysia are the team to beat in the competition.

Enrico is hoping the team can rise above expectations and break Singapore's gold medal hoodoo in men's hockey.

The Republic last won gold in 1973.

"This SEA Games is a big tournament for myself and the whole team. We are very confident of getting a silver and a gold would definitely be a bonus," he said.

"We want to end that 40-year spell very badly and to get that gold would be unbelievable."



**As a captain, I'm just going to remind the team and tell them why we are here and the reason we have been training so hard. As boys, we always want to have fun and sometimes drift a bit from what we want to achieve, so I'm there to get the players mentally prepared before the game.**

– Enrico Marican (above)

TNP PHOTO: JEREMY LONG