

Driven by a desire to integrate

SHE never let her condition stop her from taking part in activities.

"I couldn't climb ladders or slide down the slides," said Ms Nurulasyiqah Taha, 29, who was born with spinal muscular atrophy which requires her to use a wheelchair.

Instead, she planned routes around the playground for her two younger siblings – a desire for inclusion that eventually led her to join Singapore's national Boccia team.

Boccia is a sport requiring players to throw balls as close to a target as possible.

She was first exposed to it in 2003 while studying at Singapore Management University and soon fell in love with the game.

"It feeds my competitiveness," she said.

In January this year, she represented Singapore in the 7th Asean Para Games held in Myanmar and won gold medals in two Boccia events. She was also Singapore's flag bearer.

Yesterday, she was awarded the Singapore Youth Award for her contribution to local sport and her effort to make a difference in the lives of people with physical disabilities.

Ms Nurulasyiqah is a strong advocate of an inclusive society and said the disabled "do not want to be treated specially".

"We just want to integrate into the community," she added.

Ms Nurulasyiqah also gives motivational talks at primary and secondary schools and companies, in which she discusses her experience as a wheelchair-bound athlete.

She said: "I try in my own ways to help change the 'heartware' in people."

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