



**INSPIRATIONAL STAR:** Para-swimmer Yip Pin Xiu (above) is only the second para-athlete to win The Straits Times' Athlete of the Year, after equestrian rider Laurentia Tan won it in 2012. PHOTO: ST

# Pin Xiu's big wish

## ST Athlete of the Year 2015 makes call for more support for disability sport

**Para-swimmer Yip Pin Xiu was named The Straits Times' Athlete of the Year 2015 in a gala ceremony yesterday.**

The 23-year-old, who suffers from muscular dystrophy which gradually causes her muscles to lose their ability to function, broke the world record in the S2 50m backstroke en route to gold in last December's Asean Para Games in Singapore.

She edged out fellow nominees Shayna Ng (bowling), Shanti Pereira (athletics), Khairul Anwar (para-football) and 2014 winner Joseph Schooling (swimming) to become the second para-athlete to win the prestigious annual award.

Equestrian rider Laurentia Tan was the 2012 winner thanks to her two bronze medals at the 2012 London Paralympics.

Yip, who received her award from Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu at the Raffles City Convention Centre, said: "I really wasn't expecting this. All the nominees are so amazing, I'm very surprised and I'd like to thank everyone for the support.

"I'm very grateful for this and I hope that in the years to come, the

support (for sport) will grow and we will do even better as One Team Singapore."

The recognition for Yip's accomplishment was a shot in the arm for disability sport in the Republic, noted Ms Fu.

"I'm so happy for Pin Xiu. She so deserves it," she said.

"The fact that we have two out of five finalists from the disability sport speaks volumes about how the sport has come.

### HARD WORK

"The Asean Para Games has been really a game-changer that changes the mindset of Singaporeans about disability sport, something that we are very keen to push on and to develop it even more broadly and to give the athletes the encouragement.

"So Pin Xiu's award is not just a shot in the arm for disability sport but, also for her, it's really an endorsement about the hard work she has put in.

"To win at this level, to be an elite sportsperson takes years of hard work. Pin Xiu has really demonstrated the can-do spirit, resilience that is epitomised by all our athletes.

"We are very happy to see the athletes today, the finalists, they are actually winners in their own way. They have trained very hard and the Ministry and SportSG have been happy to be along their journey."

Added ST sports editor Marc Lim, who headed the 2015 award's 13-member judging panel: "The calibre of this year's nominees made picking a winner a very tough job for the judging panel.

"All of them are champions and sporting heroes in their own right.

"But inspiration is one of the core principles of the ST Athlete of the Year award and, in 2015, the judges felt that there was no one more inspirational than Pin Xiu.

"Unlike other athletes who are getting stronger, her body is getting weaker.

"She competed against athletes who are less physically impaired than she is and yet not only managed to beat them, but also did so in a world record time.

"Pin Xiu is the epitome of an athlete who refuses to be beaten, by an opponent or her condition. And that is why she is the ST Athlete of the Year 2015."