

'Rusty' Yip still claims silver

May Chen
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Photo: Courtesy of Yip Pin Xiu

Yip Pin Xiu is not as fast as before in her best event but is nevertheless happy with her result in Montreal.

SINGAPORE - She may not be as fast as before, but silver is still sweet for Paralympic swimmer Yip Pin Xiu.

The 21-year-old clinched second place in 1min 00.80sec at the International Paralympic Committee World Swimming Championships women's 50m backstroke S3 event early Friday morning.

She finished behind Ukraine's Olga Sviderska (57.97 seconds) but way ahead of Kazakhstan's Zulfya Gabidullina (1:11.53) at the Parc Jean-Drapeau in Montreal.

Yip holds the world record for this event, a 56.62sec effort set in Tokyo in 2009.

She said: "I didn't expect this result because I haven't competed in the 50m backstroke on the world stage in a while.

"So I wasn't expecting much, I just wanted to come and do my best and swim the fastest that I could."

Yip won a gold at the 2008 Beijing Paralympics in her pet event, but the 50m backstroke S3 was not offered at the London Games last year.

She was particularly pleased to have posted 59.03sec - a season's best - in the heats.

Yip suffers from muscular dystrophy, a condition where one's muscles degenerate progressively.

Having started competitive swimming in the S5 category, her disability classification for competing has dropped to S3. The lower the ranking, the greater the disability.

While the deterioration of her body condition has slowed down this year, the Singapore Management University social sciences undergraduate says she has had to deal with another problem - juggling school work and training.

Yip puts in about five training sessions in the pool, on top of two sessions in the gym, every week. More sessions will be added if major competitions are coming up.

She said: "I'm very happy to show that I'm back on track.

"Balancing school work and training has been really tough but I still do it because it (swimming) is something I have a passion for."

Said her coach Jiao Yang: "We had expected her to take at least a silver, so to have done it with a breakthrough in her timing, is very pleasing."

Yip was slated to compete in the heats of the 100m freestyle S3 at press time.

Theresa Goh, Singapore's other representative at the meet, competed in the 100m breaststroke SB4 and the 50m backstroke S5.

The 26-year-old clocked 2:14.36 in the breaststroke race to finish seventh among eight finalists but did not make the final in the backstroke event.