



Para archer Nur Syahidah Alim had a breakthrough year when she won a historic gold medal at the 2019 World Archery Para Championships in the Netherlands. Para bowler Eric Foo also had a good 2019, winning two golds each at the Thailand and Philippines legs of the World Para Bowling Tour Series. PHOTOS COURTESY OF SINGAPORE DISABILITY SPORTS COUNCIL

STAYING TRUE TO HER PARALYMPICS TARGET

Sportswoman award spurs archer Syahidah to use extra time to make an impact in Tokyo

Kimberly Kwek

Five years ago, para archer Nur Syahidah Alim burst onto the scene with gold medals in the individual compound and mixed team in her first competitive outing at the Asean Para Games (APG).

Her career has seen a meteoric rise since, with her biggest achievement coming in a "breakthrough year" last year when the 34-year-old won a historic gold medal at the World Archery Para Championships in the Netherlands.

Not only did it earn Singapore a spot at the Tokyo Paralympics, but her world title also helped propel her to the top of the world rankings.

To cap off the sterling year, the world No. 1 para archer was yesterday crowned Sportswoman of the Year at the Singapore Disability Sports Awards (SDSA) presented by Haw Par Corporation.

She emerged the winner among a strong field that comprised Paralympic medallists Yip Pin Xiu (swimming) and Laurentia Tan (equestrian), Diane Neo (bowling), Nur Aini Mohamad Yasli (powerlifting), Nurulasyiqah Mohammad Taha (boccia) and Claire Toh (table tennis).

Syahidah, a first-time recipient, said: "This award shows how much my team and I have achieved in the year.

"This will really give me motivation to do even better and achieve more milestones for Singapore in the years to come."

One of those milestones could be reached at next year's Paralympics, where she is targeting Singapore's first-ever medal in the sport.

While Syahidah, who reached the quarter-finals in Rio 2016, will have to wait another year to compete at the Aug 24-Sept 5 Tokyo Games next year after it was postponed owing to Covid-19, she is taking the extra time in her stride.

"It gives everyone a fair playing field to prepare for the Games and at the same time, there's that peace of mind that we are competing in a safe environment," said the athlete, who has cerebral palsy.

"With the time given to us, it's an opportunity to prepare as much as possible for the Games."

Bowler Eric Foo, 32, was named the Sportsman of the Year after a fruitful season that saw him bag two gold medals (mixed singles TPB4 and mixed doubles TPB4) and a silver (all events mixed TPB4) at the Thailand leg of the World

Para Bowling Tour Series last year.

He also claimed two golds (men's singles TPB4 and men's all events TPB4) and one bronze (men's doubles TPB4) at the Philippines leg of the series last year.

Foo, who has an intellectual impairment, also bagged the Team of the Year award with Muhammad Farhan Ismail. The duo won the mixed doubles and men's doubles events at the series in Thailand and Philippines respectively.

After missing out on the APG this year, which was postponed twice before it was cancelled owing to the pandemic, Foo is gunning for honours in next year's Games in Vietnam.

He said: "We have trained quite hard and at least we won the two gold medals in Thailand and then in the Philippines. We were hoping that these Games won't be cancelled, but we will continue to train hard for the next Games."

Yesterday's virtual awards ceremony also saw swimmer Toh Wei Soong picking up the Sportsboy of the Year accolade for the second year running for his achievements at the World Para Swimming World Series and Japan Para Swimming Championships last year.

Nine winners were honoured at yesterday's ceremony. Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong, who was the guest of honour, lauded the athletes for con-

tinuing to "train hard under extraordinary circumstances" despite the cancellation of the APG and postponement of the Paralympics.

"To our athletes, we hope you stay motivated and encouraged. As

you resume training and gear up towards the next competition, you can be sure that we will cheer you on as One Team Singapore."

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SINGAPORE DISABILITY SPORTS AWARDS – THE WINNERS

SPORTSMAN

Eric Foo (Bowling)

SPORTSWOMAN

Nur Syahidah Alim (Archery)

SPORTSBOY

Toh Wei Soong (Swimming)

SPORTSGIRL

Award was not given out

TEAM

Muhammad Farhan Ismail,
Eric Foo (Bowling)

COACH

(HIGH PERFORMANCE)
Pang Qing Liang (Archery)

COACH (DEVELOPMENTAL)

Muhammad Abdul Razak
Mansor (Powerlifting)

COMMUNITY IMPACT

(VOLUNTEERING)
serendipET

COMMUNITY IMPACT

(EVENTS & INITIATIVES)
Cerebral Palsy Alliance
Singapore

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Henry Tan