

# 4th Paralympic gold brings Yip to tears

Swimmer retains her 100m back crown for S'pore's first title in Tokyo, recalls a rough 18 months for all

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and KIMBERLY KWEK

As the Singapore flag rose above the podium at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre yesterday, tears fell from swimmer Yip Pin Xiu's eyes.

The 29-year-old had just retained her women's S2 100m backstroke title moments ago with a dominant performance that earned her a fourth Paralympic gold medal.

She touched the wall in 2min 16.61sec, with her closest competitor Miyuki Yamada of Japan coming in 9.57sec later. Mexico's Fabiola Ramirez took the bronze in 2:36.54.

Yip's gold on the opening day of competition at the Tokyo Games allowed Team Singapore to kick-start their campaign on a high note.

Such was her performance that it seemed like nothing had changed from Rio 2016, where Yip had also blown the competition out of the water, winning the event in a world record 2:07.09 – nearly 12 seconds ahead of silver medallist Feng Yazhuo of China.

In Brazil five years ago, Yip had also won the 50m back (S2) gold medal, adding to the 50m back (S3) title she had clinched at Beijing 2008.

But in reality, this gold in Tokyo was different from the others.

She told The Straits Times: "I do feel like there's a difference mainly because it's been a rough 1½ years for everyone, not just myself.

"It wasn't a conventional route to get here, we didn't have training camps, we didn't have competitions. There was a lot of adapting to do."

## ADAPT

She noted that it was a case of who could adapt best to the conditions, "so I really have to thank my coaches, my team, (who were) able to still bring me here this year".

"I'm really grateful for that and so grateful for all the support back home," she added.

The past year has been full of challenges as Yip and many other athletes saw their training disrupted and competitions postponed or cancelled due to



An emotional Yip Pin Xiu with her Tokyo Paralympic gold medal. PHOTO: SPORT SINGAPORE

the Covid-19 pandemic.

Days before she flew to Tokyo, a jittery Yip was unable to sleep and eat properly.

But despite the hardships in the lead-up to Tokyo, it is a journey that Yip said she would embark on again.

She said: "It's something I really love and would 100 per cent do again – I would take the pain, struggles, to be able to hear the national anthem here is magnificent and I will do it again."

At home, President Halimah Yacob led the tributes, writing on Facebook: "Competing on the global stage is no easy feat and I am glad that Pin Xiu as well as her fellow athletes remain focused and determined to achieve their goals... Continue

to do your best. We are cheering you on!"

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong also put up a social media post, writing: "Pin Xiu, Singapore is proud of you, and you inspire all of us!"

In a Facebook post, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong wrote: "She is, quite simply, legendary... PX is showing us what it means to be resilient amid difficult times."

Yip will now turn her focus to her next event on Sept 2 – the 50m back, in which she is also the defending champion and world record holder.

To perform in the 50m back, she said she will stick to her diet, train well and stay disciplined.

While Yip is a veteran of four

## Singaporeans in action at Paralympics

### YESTERDAY:

#### SWIMMING

● **Yip Pin Xiu** (women's 100m backstroke – S2 final) – Finished 1st in 2:16.61

● **Sophie Soon** (women's 100m butterfly – S13 heats) – Finished 18th out of 18 in 1:28.61

#### CYCLING

● **Steve Tee & Ang Kee Meng** (pilot) (men's B 4km individual pursuit qualifying) – Finished 9th out of 14 in personal best of 4:40.453

### TODAY:

#### POWERLIFTING

● **Nur Aini Yasli**  
3.30pm – women's 45kg final

#### EQUESTRIAN

● **Maximilian Tan**  
3.56pm – Individual test, Grade II

\*Catch the action on Mediacorp's Channel 5 & meWatch

Paralympics, fellow swimmer Sophie Soon made her debut yesterday.

She clocked 1:28.61 in the S13 100m butterfly heats to come in last of 18 swimmers.

The 24-year-old, whose goggles fogged up before she jumped into the water, is determined to put that behind her and work towards her SB12 100m breaststroke event on Sept 1.

She said: "I want to be able to look back on that race and confidently say that I did my best, regardless of the result. With today, we've got some good learning points to take forward to next week."

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