

# YIP REMAINS A TIMELESS ROLE MODEL FOR ALL

## Para-swimmer wins 2nd award seven years after her first, confident about Paris 2024

Kimberly Kwek

A stellar 2015 saw national para-swimmer Yip Pin Xiu named The Straits Times Athlete of the Year after she broke the world record in the S2 50m backstroke en route to gold at the Asean Para Games (APG) in Singapore.

Seven years have passed and Yip has only continued to build on her 2015 successes. In 2022, she won her fourth and fifth world titles after retaining her women's 50m and 100m backstroke (S2) gold medals at the world championships, earning her the ST Athlete of the Year accolade for the second time.

The five-gold Paralympic champion said: "I still remember 2015 because the SEA Games and APG were held in Singapore. So that year was pretty amazing that it was on home ground, I broke my world record in an event in a class higher than mine and got gold, so that was amazing.

"To think that seven years later, I

would still be pretty much at the top of my game and have this consistency shows that the sacrifices throughout the years have paid off. I'm just so grateful to still be here."

Yip, 31, was one of six nominees for the 2022 edition of the annual award, which is backed by 100Plus. The other candidates were Maximilian Maeder (kite foiling), Farhana Farid (powerlifting), Terry Hee and Jessica Tan (badminton), Shanti Pereira (athletics) and Feng Tianwei (table tennis).

ST sports editor Low Lin Fhoong headed a seven-member judging panel that included Singapore Fencing technical director Marko Milic, Singapore Bowling Federation senior national head coach Jason Yeong-Nathan and national archer Contessa Loh.

ST editor Jaime Ho said: "It was a year when Singapore's athletes continued to make us all proud with their sporting achievements. Yet it was Pin Xiu who again reminded us that sport provides the perfect platform for us to witness that indomitable spirit in us as hu-

mans, athletes and Singaporeans.

"We've been privileged to be spectators to her achievements."

Jennifer See, managing director of F&N Foods, added: "Through our various initiatives, we hope to contribute to the national effort of nurturing potential young athletes in Singapore.

"We would like to congratulate the nominees and winner, Pin Xiu, on their stellar achievements. Their dedication to bring glory to Singapore and to their sports has inspired us all and filled our hearts with pride and joy."

For Yip, 2022 was a year of getting back on track after things ground to a halt in 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic, which made it challenging at times.

She said: "Last year was amazing because competition restarted, training restarted, travel came back again so we could go for competitions, things felt a bit back to normal. It was nice but tough. The tough part is once you break momentum for something, it's really difficult to get back again."

Out of the pool, Yip has also played a key role in starting national conversations on parity between able-bodied and disabled athletes.



Para-swimmer Yip Pin Xiu receiving her 2022 ST Athlete of the Year award and hamper from The Straits Times editor Jaime Ho and F&N Foods managing director Jennifer See. She also won the 2015 edition. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

### A LASTING LEGACY

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**YIP PIN XIU**, para-swimmer, reflecting on her longevity. She had also won the 2015 ST Athlete of the Year award.

In 2021, the cash reward for a Paralympic gold medal under the Singapore National Paralympic Council's Athletes Achievement Awards scheme was doubled to \$400,000 following a public debate over the disparity in cash rewards for Olympic and Paralympic medalists, after Yip retained her two titles at the Tokyo Games.

Less than a year later, the scheme was enhanced till 2024, with the cash incentive for a Paralympic gold medal raised from \$400,000 to \$500,000, which is half the payout for an Olympic gold.

Yip's attention will now be on the

July 31-Aug 6 Para Swimming World Championships in Manchester before she sets her sights on the Paris Paralympics, which is less than a year and a half away. It would be her fifth outing at the quadrennial Games.

She said: "Everybody will be on their top game and be prepared for it, so it'll be a good opportunity to see what the current scene is like and what the world standings are."

"I'm training really hard, we have a good team behind us and with all the good support I've received, it's going to be a really good cycle."

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