



Jowen Lim's runner-up routine in the men's daoshu and gunshu all-round was witnessed by his fiancée and teammate Vera Tan, as well as his parents and grandmother in Hangzhou. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

'FLAWLESS' LIM WOWS WITH SILVER

Wushu exponent takes care of unfinished business to lead team to best Asiad showing



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HANGZHOU - From the heartbreak of missing out on an Asiad medal by just 0.01 of a point while nursing an ankle injury in 2018, Singaporean Jowen Lim was a fighting-fit history maker on Wednesday as he clinched an unprecedented wushu silver by the same margin at the 2023 Asian Games.

With his tearful fiancée and

teammate Vera Tan as well as his parents and grandmother cheering in the stands, he put in a steely performance for what is also the nation's first men's daoshu and gunshu all-round medal at the Games with a combined score of 19.476. China's Chang Zhizhao (19.626) took gold and Indonesia's Seraf Naro Siregar (19.466) claimed bronze.

Following Kimberly Ong's women's changquan bronze on Monday, this is Singapore's second wushu medal in Hangzhou and their best performance at a single Asiad - the Republic earned two bronzes at Hiroshima 1994.

Calling it one of his best performances, Lim said: "It feels really good to do it in front of my loved ones. It was a bit of unfinished business.

"Because of my injury in 2018, I had to change my routine and was unable to show the judges what I had been training so long for. It hurt then, but this time I was well-prepared.

"The hardest part of my routines were the 720-degree jumps, which has the highest level of difficulty.

"I was really worried about these jumps, so I was really happy to be able to execute them perfectly twice."

In the morning daoshu (broad-sword) component, Lim, 24, scored 9.733 points to give himself some breathing space over fourth-placed Siregar (9.726), while Chinese Taipei's Wang Chen-ming (9.736) was within his sights. China's former world champion Chang led with 9.826 points at the Xiaoshan Guali Sports Centre.

Siregar put the pressure on by scoring 9.740 in the afternoon gunshu (cudgel) segment, but Lim was unfazed.

The three-bronze World Championships medallist and two-time world junior champion grabbed the coveted podium finish when he scored 9.743 in front of a screaming Singapore contingent to move into second place.

The silver was secured when Wang was awarded 9.716 points for his routine.

After being cajoled into giving Lim a kiss for the cameras, Tan shared that while they began dating in 2015, she started getting more emotional watching him compete from 2019.

The 25-year-old, who finished eighth in the women's taijiquan and taijijian on Sunday, said: "It is just more overwhelming and exciting watching someone else than competing myself. I just want him to do his best, have no regrets and be happy after his routines."

Lim added: "It pains me to see her cry for me, but I try to turn it into motivation and confidence, and I wanted to do this not just for myself, but also for her.

"I also follow her competitions and while I did not cry, my eyes definitely were watering."

After ploughing back 20 per cent of the \$100,000 incentive handed out by the Singapore National Olympic Council Major Games Award Programme, the remainder will be handy for their wedding preparation and apartment purchase.

The pugilist pair, who got engaged after Lim's surprise proposal in the Maldives in January, are planning to get married in 2025, a decade from when they got together and 15 years after they first met when they joined the national team in 2010.

The medal also vindicates his decision to take a year-long leave of absence from school since February to train full time. The Singapore Management University undergraduate will now focus on the Oct 20-30 World Combat Games in Riyadh and the Nov 16-20 World Wushu Championships in Texas.

National coach Zhang Feng said: "Jowen has matured in terms of his technique and mentality.

"His movement today was flawless, and there was just a slight difference in the details between him and the champion.

"Considering how a full-time exponent like Jowen trains 20 hours a week this year and how the Chinese practise at least 30 hours a week since young, Singapore have done well with this breakthrough.

"There were some slip-ups in the taiji events but out of our seven-man team, only Jowen and Vera are not Asian Games debutants, so it's understandable."

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