

Gold! Shanti races into history books for Singapore

Kimberly Kwek

HANGZHOU – Shanti Pereira ended Singapore's 49-year wait for a gold medal in track and field at the Asian Games as she won the women's 200m crown on Monday.

Singapore's sprint queen crossed the line at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium in 23.03 seconds, ahead of China's Li Yuting (23.28sec) and defending champion Edidiong Ofonime Odiong (23.48sec).

The Bahraini's compatriot Salwa Eid Naser was disqualified for a false start, adding to the tension of the night.

Speaking on live television seconds after her race, Pereira, 27, said: "I wasn't really affected by the false start. It happens and we prepare for it... I was just focused on my execution from start to finish, how I came off the blocks and down the straight."

"When I saw I was ahead, I just ran for it."

On the significance of the moment, she smiled and added: "I'll probably be crying my eyes out later."

The Republic's last Asiad gold in athletics came from Chee Swee Lee, who was the 400m champion at the 1974 Teheran Games. She also claimed a silver and bronze in the relays that year. Before her, Ng Liang Chiang, in the men's 110m hurdles at the 1951 Games in New Delhi, was the country's only other gold medallist.

Pereira's gold is her second medal in Hangzhou. Last Saturday, she clinched silver in the 100m for Singapore's first athletics medal at the quadrennial Games since that same 1974 edition. With her contribution, Singapore have bagged three gold, five silver and four bronze medals in China. At the 2018 Games in Indonesia, the contingent managed a tally of 4-4-14. It completes a stunning year for



Shanti Pereira hugging her parents Clarence and Jeet Pereira after winning the 200m final at the Asian Games on Monday. Her gold is her second medal in Hangzhou, after she clinched silver in the 100m final last Saturday. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Pereira, who has notched many milestones, including winning the 100m and 200m titles at the SEA Games and Asian Athletics Championships, as well as meeting the Paris 2024 Olympic qualifying

mark in the 200m.

Her feats are just the latest in what has been a golden period for Singapore sports.

Among those who have redefined what is possible for the next

generation of local athletes is swimmer Joseph Schooling, who clinched a historic gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics when he claimed the 100m butterfly crown.

In 2021, Loh Kean Yew became

the first Singaporean to win the badminton world championships.

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