

SECOND 'STEPPING STONE'

Yip adds S2 50m European backstroke gold to 100m title, as she nears 'peak goal' of Paris

Lin Tianbao

Winner of five gold medals at the Paralympic Games, Yip Pin Xiu knows what it takes to be fast.

And her last race at the Para Swimming European Open Championships in Madeira, Portugal, on April 26, has given her a speedy push as she heads into her fifth Paralympic outing in Paris from Aug 28 to Sept 8.

She clocked 1min 05.14sec in the S2 50m backstroke to finish ahead of Italian Angela Procida (1:10.91) and neutral athlete Diana Koltsova (1:12.81), who were second and

third respectively.

The Singaporean swimmer shaved more than a second off her 1:07.01 at the National Para Swimming Championships on March 23, though it was slower than her gold-medal winning swim (1:02.04) at the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo.

Her eye is on the clock after winning her second meet title – she claimed the S2 100m backstroke on April 23 – and the 32-year-old is pleased with her progress.

"From the last time to now, my preparations are going better, I feel the times are pretty good and on track," she said.



Yip Pin Xiu's European Open S2 50m back time of 1min 05.14sec is faster than her 1:07.01 at the National Championships in March. PHOTO: CALVIN TEOH/SDSC

"It was nice to win the race but in the end, my main goal is Paris.

"All of these are just stepping stones for me to reach my peak goal. I'm not losing sight of it and not being complacent.

"I know I still need to work very hard and I'm going to do my best all the way to Paris."

Yip is set to face familiar foes in Paris, including Procida, who finished second behind her in the 50m backstroke at the 2023 World Para Swimming Championships.

While she is happy with her timing in the first 25m, she will be working to improve on her speed in the second half.

She added: "It's part of the process and every step I'm taking now is just to get faster. Moving forward, I also hope all the benefits from this race will carry on."

Yip will be taking a short break at the end of the European cycle, before heading back home for the Citi Para Swimming World Series Singapore at the OCBC Aquatic Centre from May 17 to 19.

"That race will be for me to reset and get back into the motions, just to get the feeling of racing again," she said.

"I want to bring on the speed that I have right now forward to the next cycle."

She will then head to Limoges, France, for another leg of the series from June 7 to 9.

After that, she will ramp up preparations with training camps in Sydney in July and Manchester the next month to "help align all our strategies leading up to Paris".

lntianbao@sph.com.sg