

'A VERY PROUD MOMENT'

Schooling, Yip among 21 legends inducted in Singapore Aquatics' inaugural Hall Of Fame

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 Sports Correspondent

It was a night of nostalgia and celebration for the local aquatics fraternity on May 10, when Singapore Aquatics held its 85th anniversary gala fundraising dinner at the Raffles City Convention Centre.

With guest of honour President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong in attendance, 21 former and current aquatic athletes and contributors were inducted into its inaugural Hall of

Fame. Over \$1 million in donations was also raised for the sport.

The Hall of Fame has 12 swimmers including Olympic champion Joseph Schooling, 1951 Asian Games men's 4x100m relay winners Barry Mitchell, Lionel Chee, Neo Chwee Kok and Wiebe Wolters, swim queens Tao Li and Joscelin Yeo, and multiple Paralympic gold-medallist Yip Pin Xiu.

Also making the list are the men's water polo team who won gold at the 1954 Asian Games, and water polo stalwarts Kenneth Kee, who was named Coach of the Year in 1982, and the late Tan Eng Liang,

who was Singapore Sports Council chairman from 1975 to 1991 and vice-president of the Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) from 1992 to 2020.

Singapore Aquatics president Mark Chay, who is also chairman of the selection panel, noted that it "represents a milestone in our commitment to honour the remarkable contributions of individuals who have shaped Singapore's aquatic community".

He added: "We are privileged to recognise all these esteemed figures, whose achievements have left an everlasting mark on our sport."

The selection panel comprised members from its executive committee, former national swimmers, officials from Sport Singapore and the SNOC, and the press.

The criteria included the athletes'

sporting achievements with an emphasis on the major Games and their sustained contributions to the community.

For contributors such as coaches, officials, volunteers and parents, the selection panel noted their work as initiators, game changers, innovators, sports developers or achievers at the highest levels of office or appointment available.

Legacy council chair Patricia Chan, who is also one of the pioneer Hall of Famers, said: "The inductees laid the foundations... They showed us how determination and dedication lead to excellence."

"They paved the way for the aquatic athletes of today and tomorrow. We must not forget them and what they achieved."

Schooling added: "It's awesome, a step in the right direction... gives

me a great sense of pride. Everyone has different accomplishments and medals, but the Hall of Fame is quite significant because your legacy is etched in swimming history. It's a very proud moment."

Singapore Aquatics is the first national sports association to do so and the 28-year-old hopes others will follow suit, saying: "Whatever criteria they set, the most important thing is recognising your athletes, both past and present."

The funds raised at the dinner and an April 3 golf event will be distributed across the association's grassroots development, development pathways for the five aquatic sports, high-performance programmes, and a general fund for coach and staff development.

Athletes preparing for the 2024 Paris Olympics will also benefit as

the money will go towards coaching and technical specialists for them. The association will also enhance its infrastructure, daily training environment and support for overseas training and competition opportunities.

Chay said: "We hope the funds raised will serve as a catalyst for our mission to advance the various facets of our sport."

"With these resources, we aim to expand competition and career-support opportunities for our athletes and coaches while striving to create better training environments and infrastructure for our sports development."

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Additional reporting by Lin Tianbao



Guest of honour President Tharman Shanmugaratnam (second from left) and Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong (fifth from left) with some of those inducted into Singapore Aquatics' inaugural Hall of Fame on May 10. The association, which was holding its 85th anniversary gala fundraising dinner at the Raffles City Convention Centre, raised over \$1 million. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

SINGAPORE AQUATICS' HALL OF FAME

ATHLETES

WATER POLO

Gan Eng Teck, Ho Kian Bin, Kee Soon Bee, Keith Mitchell, Oh Chwee Hock, Tan Eng Bock and Tan Hwee Hock

SWIMMING

Ang Peng Siong, Barry Mitchell, Joscelin Yeo, Joseph Schooling, Junie Sng, Lionel Chee, Neo Chwee Kok, Patricia Chan, Tao Li and Wiebe Wolters

PARA-SWIMMING

Theresa Goh and Yip Pin Xiu

OFFICIALS

Kenneth Kee and Tan Eng Liang (water polo)