

# Change of tack helps Tay land Thai Open title

Lin Tianbao

Languishing in 18th spot after the qualification round of the Thailand International Open, Singapore bowler Arianne Tay barely made it through to the women's Open Masters.

But the 20-year-old told herself to just enjoy the game the following day, which worked a treat.

After finishing second in Round 2, she topped Round 3 to enter the stepladder final, where she eventually prevailed by defeating compatriot Shayna Ng.

Her victory at the Blu-O Rhythm and Bowl in Bangkok on Aug 3, which earned her 130,000 baht (\$\$4,900) in prize money, comes just two weeks after she had emerged as the women's singles champion at the International

Bowling Federation (IBF) World Youth Championships.

At the Thailand Open, she did things the hard way. After qualifying for the stepladder final as the top seed with 1,296 pinfalls, she lost 239-158 to Ng before using her right as the first-placed bowler to replay the match, winning 236-204 at the second time of asking.

Tay said: "It's pretty unbelievable, I didn't expect this going into the competition as I didn't have much time to prepare for the Thailand Open after coming back from the World Youth Championships.

"I'm extremely surprised, I knew I was going up against so many strong competitors so after qualifying for Round 2, I told myself to enjoy the game and process."

She had to change her strategy after losing the first match in the stepladder final as the lanes "played differently".

The second-year business student at the Singapore Management University added: "I told myself that this was my last chance to fight back, and I had to prove to myself I could handle the pressure and enjoy the game at the same time."

National coach Helmi Chew said: "I was very impressed with her win... She stayed patient, stuck to the process and in the end, it went in our favour."

"It's definitely not easy winning here after returning from a grueling championship and switching gears to a senior tournament within a week."

Up next for Tay is the Nov 21-30 Asian Indoor And Martial Arts Games.

Another bowler who had a competition to remember was Mike Ong, who qualified for the men's Open stepladder with 1,347 pin-

falls, just behind the leader, Malaysia's Rafiq Ismail (1,434).

The 18-year-old Singaporean beat two competitors in the second stepladder round with 268 pinfalls to reach the final, where he lost 194-156 to Rafiq.

His second placing, which earned him 180,000 baht, was his highest finish at the senior international level, having ended third in the 2022 edition.

Like Tay, Ong endured a difficult start to the competition, finishing 27th in qualifying before moving up to seventh in Round 2.

He said: "(Placing second) still feels surreal to me. Finishing on the podium in a field of world-class bowlers who have years of experience and titles on me is something I never dreamt of accomplishing, especially at a tender age of 18."

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Singaporean bowler Arianne Tay's Thailand International Open victory in Bangkok on Aug 3 earned her 130,000 baht (\$\$4,900) in prize money. PHOTO: ASIAN BOWLING FEDERATION