

Tan stars as S’pore women win Asian team bronze

Not only is Tan Zhao Yun a member of the national intermediate table tennis squad, she also runs YouTube channel TRYTT as a hobby – the 2,100-subscriber channel has 85 videos and it is managed by Tan and her twin brother Zhao Ray.

But when she returns from the Asian Table Tennis Team Championships in Bhubaneswar, the 20-year-old will have plenty of highlight reels of herself to post, after she played a starring role in world No. 23 Singapore’s return to the podium with a joint-bronze alongside South Korea.

On Oct 13, the unheralded world No. 166 claimed two crucial points in Singapore’s 3-2 win over 11th-ranked hosts India in the women’s team quarter-finals at the Kalinga Athletics HPC Building.

After sweeping Kazakhstan and the Maldives, ranked 40th and 68th respectively, 3-0 in the group stage, and then Malaysia in the play-off to reach the last eight, Singapore then faced India in front of a partisan home crowd.

Up stepped Tan, who had played just one earlier match against Ka-

zakhstan, to become the unexpected star of Singapore’s campaign as the chopper stunned world No. 44 Manika Batra 3-1, followed by 86th-ranked Diya Chitale 3-0 to finish the event unbeaten.

She was not fielded in the 3-0 defeat by Japan in the semi-finals on Oct 14 – Singapore eventually clinched a joint-bronze as there was no third-place play-off.

The second-year Singapore Management University computer science undergraduate told The Straits Times: “I had beaten Manika in another tournament last month, so coach (Jing Jun Hong) hoped I was able to win again.

“I was initially quite stressed and nervous, but I took it as an opportunity to play against different styles as we don’t have anyone in our team who plays with long pimples like her.

“After beating her, we were up 2-0 and then when it was 2-2 and I had to play again, I told myself to just do my best against Diya Chitale. Don’t think too much and play like I would during training.

“In the end, I’m happy to be able

to contribute to the team’s victory.”

Under their father’s influence, the Tan siblings started playing table tennis at six. Both started off as attackers before Zhao Yun was persuaded by her coach to switch to a defensive style because her attacks were not powerful enough.

She said: “I was initially quite reluctant as my peers were all attackers, but afterwards I found that it matched my patient personality to be a defensive personality.

“Every athlete wants to compete with the best at the Olympics and that’s my dream too.

“But I haven’t thought about whether I want to play full-time, so for now my goal is to win a SEA Games medal first.”

National women’s coach Jing was encouraged by Tan’s display and how her young team – average age 20 – managed to improve on their performances in 2023 (seventh) and 2024 (eighth) to match their joint-third finish in 2021.

She said: “This is a pleasant surprise. The younger players treasure their spot in the national team and have a strong desire to want to



Tan Zhao Yun played a starring role against India in the Asian Table Tennis Team Championships quarter-finals. PHOTO: SINGAPORE TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

compete and prove themselves.

“During the build-up, they have trained hard while juggling their studies and also had the experience of playing on the World Table Tennis circuit.

“Zhao Yun is one such disciplined player who has a stable game and is capable of handling pressure.

“I hope there can be more young players stepping up like her, so that

KEEP IT SIMPLE

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**TAN ZHAO YUN**, table tennis player, on sealing the win over India.

we can have more strength in depth and variation for the national team.”

After the siblings – her brother is also in the intermediate squad – helped Hwa Chong Institution clinch a unique A Division table tennis boys and girls’ teams double in 2023, Tan set her sights on making it to the national team after completing her A levels.

Tan’s emergence and the performances of her teammates will raise hopes that Singapore can reclaim the SEA Games women’s team gold they last won in 2017. In 2023, they managed only a disappointing joint-bronze with Vietnam.

Meanwhile, Singapore’s men’s team retained their ninth position by beating Kazakhstan 3-2 in the play-off on Oct 13.

**David Lee**