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Jakarta 2018 is turning out to be a memorable outing for Yip Pin Xiu. Fresh from winning a gold and two bronze medals at the 3rd Asian Para Games, the 26-year-old was today (12 Oct) presented with this year's World Para Series Best Female Athlete S/SB 1-3 award for High Support Needs Athlete.

The ceremony was held at the Gelora Bung Karno Aquatic Centre on the final day of swimming competition at the Asian Para Games here.



Yip Pin XiuYip Pin Xiu proudly holds a framed action photo of her swim and looks forward to the Singapore leg next year. Photo: Sport Singapore

Four awards are handed out at the end of the World Series that just completed its second year, and the Singapore swim star is the only Asian winner this year.

"Asia represents!" she exclaimed. "I think it's nice knowing I'm able to be a face and representation for swimming in Asia, and I hope to encourage more Asian para athletes to come out to the World Para Series as well."

Apart from a plaque, the three-time Paralympic gold medallist also received a framed photo of her in action during the series, having found out about the award when the Singapore team arrived in Jakarta.

Inaugurated last year, the World Para Series follows the blueprint of the FINA World Series which began life nearly 30 years ago.

Said Pin Xiu of the World Series: "I was excited when it was introduced, and unlike meets like the British or German Opens when we don't know who will turn up, for the World Series you can be sure all the top seeds are there."

"What has been nice is that there is always a high level of competition a few times a year, and not having to wait for major Games to happen. Knowing the competition is going to be there pushes you to swim even harder."

At the World Series, swimmers from all categories take the pool together in the races over the various distances. Thus, a 50m freestyle race, for example, would feature swimmers from classes S1 to S10

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all at the same time. Points are awarded according to a swimmer's performance relative to the world record in his or her class.

While she wasn't fully in the groove for the first edition, this year went a lot better.

"I'd just returned from my break last year and took my time to get fully back into the water, so I didn't go as well in the first year of the World Series," she said. "This year I took part in three of the six legs, all tailored towards preparing me for Jakarta.

"I usually swim the 50m and 100m backstroke and freestyle, and I actually attempted a 200m race in one of the meets."

Asked how she went for the longer race, she replied with a laugh: "I'm a sprinter for a reason!"

Swim fans at home will be able to see Pin Xiu in action at close quarters next year as Singapore has been announced as one of the new stops of the World Para Series next year, when it is expanded from six to eight legs.

Certainly, Pin Xiu can't wait to make her splash at the OCBC Aquatic Centre next May 10-12.

"I'm so excited!" she said. "I've been racing competitively for almost 15 years and the last time I got to race on home ground was the 2015 ASEAN Para Games. And it was so good, I love the home atmosphere and the home crowd.

"I just hope that people will come out and watch this again. It's going to be a whole new different level. The last time was just within Southeast Asia but this one the competition will be much stronger and I think it's going to be fun."

As for how it feels to win this award, Pin Xiu said: "I'm really proud of it and I'm really grateful for all the support that's been coming from Singapore. The SpexScholarship allowing us to go to the World Para Series, coaches, support staff, all the sports bodies that make this possible.

"I can't do this alone and I'm just grateful to have all the support and I will work even harder to go even further."