

**TEAM SINGAPORE
 ATHLETES AT THE TOKYO
 2020 PARALYMPICS**



NUR SYAHIDAH ALIM, 36
 Sport Archery
 Event Women's individual
 compound open
 Paralympic career Second
 outing (first in 2016)



**MUHAMMAD DIROY NOORDIN,
 29**
 Sport Athletics
 Event Men's shot put – F40
 Paralympic career Second
 outing (2016)



**STEVE TEE, 40 (LEFT), AND
 PARTNER ANG KEE MENG, 34**
 Sport Cycling (road & track)
 Event Men's B time trial (road),
 men's B 1,000m time trial (track),
 men's B 4,000m individual
 pursuit (track)
 Paralympic career Debutant



GEMMA ROSE FOO, 25
 Sport Equestrian
 Event Individual test – Grade I,
 individual freestyle test – Grade
 I, team test to music
 Paralympic career Third outing
 (2012, 2016)



LAURENTIA TAN, 42
 Sport Equestrian
 Event Individual test – Grade I,
 individual freestyle test – Grade
 I, team test to music
 Paralympic career Fourth
 outing (2008, 2012, 2016) – one
 silver and three bronzes



Steve Tee (left) and his sighted pilot Ang Kee Meng with Mount Fuji in the background ahead of the Paralympics. PHOTO: SINGAPORE NATIONAL PARALYMPIC COUNCIL

ROCKY ROAD BUT READY TO ROLL

S'pore's 10 Paralympians keen to get going despite difficult run-up amid pandemic

Laura Chia

The Republic's athletes may have had their training and competition plans disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic the past 1½ years, but they remain upbeat ahead of the Paralympics, which open today.

Over 4,000 athletes are expected to compete in the Paralympic Games which, like the Olympics, will be held largely without spectators and will also see the participants subjected to frequent testing and other safe distancing restrictions.

Singapore's 10 athletes have arrived in Tokyo and four of them – cyclist Steve Tee, powerlifter Nur Aini Mohamad Yasli and swimmers Toh Wei Soong and Sophie Soon – are making their debut in the competition.

Tandem cyclist Tee and competition partner Ang Kee Meng were the first Singapore athletes to arrive in the Japanese capital last Wednesday and Tee said he is counting down to his first race – the men's B 4,000m individual pursuit – tomorrow. The duo are also pencilled in for the men's B 1,000m time trial and men's B time trial (road cycling).

Tee, 40, said it took him two days to adjust to the time zone, having arrived from London, which is eight hours behind Tokyo.

He added: "I'm keeping myself calm and relaxed by listening to my favourite music and listening to stand-up comedy."

"The facilities in the cycling vil-

lage are so far, so good. The Izu Velodrome is in good condition and I like the track."

Equestrian Maximillian Tan, 34, is glad to be there "considering how difficult the situation has been leading (up) to today."

He also noted that while the atmosphere at London 2012 and Rio 2016 was more competitive, he senses more relief this time that Tokyo 2020 is happening.

He said: "I am happy to be here, to reconnect with the many friends we have made through this sport from all over the world. I am glad to see that they are safe and well."

He has visited the Tokyo Equestrian Park, and said that while it seems smaller compared to the venue at the past two Paralympics, it is first class. He also added that moving around the Games Village is "quite seamless" as many considerations were made for athletes of diverse disabilities.

"A village is especially memorable and not just defined by its size, facilities, accommodation frills and food, but for me, it is about the hospitality shown by the people hosting and the affable volunteers, and Tokyo 2020 scores highly," said Tan.

For swimming coach Ang Peng Siong, who coaches Toh, attending Tokyo 2020 is special for another reason – his late father, judoka Ang Teck Bee, competed at the 1964 Olympics, the last time the Games were held in the Japanese capital.

Ang, who was two then, has already purchased a souvenir related to Tokyo 1964 which reminds him of his father.

Turning his attention to Toh, he acknowledged the effect of the pandemic on his swimmer's preparations, including the one-year delay.

"As an athlete who is still pursuing that perfect race, the extended time was a blessing. We focused on fine-tuning his technique and strength conditioning. He needs to be refined and stronger," he said.

However, Ang also noted that Toh had not been able to benefit from regular competition ahead of Tokyo. "You learn quickly from such intensity of performing under pressure."

Unable to compete overseas, the athletes and their teams had to simulate competition settings during training. Swimmer Yip Pin Xiu, 29, went through the process of waiting in the call room and warming up before her "race" during local time trials. Archer Nur Syahidah Alim, 36, had surprise drop-ins from sports scientists during training to help her learn to cope with the unexpected.

Ang said such simulations also helped Toh prepare mentally and added that the swimmer hopes to

set personal bests in his three events – the 50m freestyle, 50m butterfly and 400m free (all S7) – and make the finals or even win a medal in the 50m events.

While the Singapore National Paralympic Council had declined to announce medal targets for the contingent, it should be noted that Yip is the defending champion and world-record holder in the 50m and 100m backstroke (both S2).

Singapore will also enter the Games with a world champion in archer Syahidah, who is also No. 2 in the compound women's open individual world rankings.

Equestrienne Laurentia Tan won two medals each at Beijing 2008 and London 2012 although she drew a blank in Rio as she was injured. She went 15 months without training with her horses and coach but will be looking to bounce back in three events – the Individual Test Grade I, Individual Freestyle Test Grade I and Team Test to Music events.

Joining her in the team event will be Gemma Rose Foo and Maximilian, who will also compete in two individual events each.

Powerlifter Aini, the first in her sport to represent Singapore at the Games, is fifth on the World Para Powerlifting world rankings (up to 45kg) for those who have completed successful lifts this year.

Chef de mission Shirley Low said: "Everyone in our contingent is now getting into the rhythm of village life and there is a general feeling of nervous excitement as the big day approaches. We are quietly confident and ready to go."

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OPENING CEREMONY
 Mediacorp Ch5, 7pm

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MAXIMILLIAN TAN, 34
 Sport Equestrian
 Event Individual test – Grade II,
 individual freestyle test – Grade
 II, team test to music
 Paralympic career Third outing
 (2012, 2016)



NUR AINI MOHAMAD YASLI, 29
 Sport Powerlifting
 Event Women's –45kg
 Paralympic career Debutante



SOPHIE SOON, 24
 Sport Swimming
 Event Women's 100m
 breaststroke (SB12), women's
 100m butterfly (S13)
 Paralympic career Debutante



TOH WEI SOONG, 22
 Sport Archery
 Event Men's 50m freestyle (S7),
 men's 50m butterfly (S7), men's
 400m freestyle (S7)
 Paralympic career Debutant



YIP PIN XIU, 29
 Sport Swimming
 Event Women's 50m backstroke
 (S2), women's 100m backstroke
 (S2)
 Paralympic career Fourth
 outing (2008, 2012, 2016) – three
 golds and one silver