

# LANDMARK EVENT FOR S'PORE

## World Para Swimming C'ships in 2025 will help promote inclusivity, inspire community

Melvyn Teoh

The year 2025 is set to be an action-packed one for Singapore aquatics, after World Para Swimming (WPS) and the Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC) announced on Feb 5 that the World Para Swimming Championships will be held here.

The event, at the OCBC Aquatic Centre from Oct 3 to 9, will involve over 600 swimmers from about 60 countries and will join the World Aquatics Championships on the local sporting calendar for 2025.

Announced in February 2023, the latter will feature able-bodied athletes in swimming, diving, high div-

ing, open water swimming, artistic swimming and water polo.

SDSC president Teo-Koh Sock Miang said: "We envision this landmark event propelling Singapore onto the global stage as a country that commits to empower individuals of all abilities."

"There remains many Singaporeans with disabilities who can find inspiration, success and achievement in para swimming and para sport. We'd like everyone to be able to gain inspiration and confidence from the exceptional swimmers they will witness at this event."

Singapore previously hosted the Citi Para Swimming World Series in 2019 and 2023, and this will be the

first time that the championships are held in Asia.

The last three editions were in Europe, with the 2023 event in Manchester featuring over 600 swimmers from about 70 nations.

WPS head Craig Nicholson said that Singapore's hosting of the event "is a major milestone for our sport and is also evidence of the growth of para swimming in the country and the region".

"We look forward to working together with the SDSC and their partners to welcome the world's best Para swimmers to the OCBC Aquatic Centre in 2025," he added.

Singapore's five-gold Paralympic swimmer Yip Pin Xiu said at the announcement event at the Singapore Sports Hub: "To know that it would happen at a world-class pool, with the top para swimmers in the world competing right here on our little island, feels truly surreal."

"It not only shows that Singapore has taken concrete strides towards promoting inclusivity over the years but has received the confidence to play a leading role in the global landscape."

"I hope more Singaporeans and organisations will take up the opportunity to watch the para swimmers at the World Championships and find ways to be a part of this."

Yip, 32, is aiming for a fifth Paralympic Games in Paris. She said: "I will be racing at the end of August, so we have really ramped up all efforts towards Paris... Things have changed, my body has changed, it's all about finding what works."

She also witnessed the unveiling of a Madame Tussauds waxwork of her, which will find its home in Sentosa from Feb 6. She is the first para athlete in Singapore – and second in the world after Australian tennis player Dylan Alcott – to feature at a

A MOMENT TO REMEMBER

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**YIP PIN XIU**, Paralympic swimmer, on seeing her waxwork for the first time.

Madame Tussauds. Other Singaporeans who have had waxworks done include football legend Fandi Ahmad and table tennis icon Feng Tianwei.

Yip said: "It's also my first time today, seeing the figure. It's really life-like and extremely cool. To be an icon in Madame Tussauds, it's really significant for me. It's something I did as a kid, go to the museums."

"So now to be able to be part of it... I'm just very honoured and everything is just saying I made an impact in the world."

SDSC also announced a new para learn-to-swim initiative, SwimTogether, as part of the championship programme with WPS. It aims to equip more local swim coaches with the skills to work with individuals with disabilities. Workshops will commence in May 2024.

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Yip Pin Xiu (on her way to her sixth title at the World Para Swimming Championships in 2023) hopes more Singaporeans will watch when the event comes to the OCBC Aquatic Centre in 2025. PHOTO: SINGAPORE DISABILITY SPORTS COUNCIL/JON SUPER