



Rhythmic gymnast Tong Kah Mun in action during the all-round final at the KL SEA Games, in which she won the bronze. PHOTO: FLONA HAKIM/SPORT SINGAPORE

Tong finds KL redemption with rhythmic bronze

Ho Cai Jun

The 2015 SEA Games presented her with the chance to shine in front of her family and friends, since it was held in Singapore.

But gymnast Tong Kah Mun dropped the ball – literally – during the women's rhythmic individual all-around final.

The ball rolled out of the carpet at the Bishan Sports Hall and she finished fifth, 0.150 point shy of the bronze medal.

"After the competition ended, I checked the score. I saw that the difference was by a tiny bit. I was very disappointed and I cried. It was a mistake I could've avoided," said the 19-year-old.

"This time round, I really wanted to put in extra effort, so that I could fight for the medal."

That "extra effort" – sacrificing her university summer break to train for 10 hours a day, six days a week – paid off yesterday when she scored 52.900 points in the all-around final at Kuala Lumpur's Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre to clinch bronze.

Koi Sie Yan (63.150) and Amy Kwan (60.100) posted a one-two finish for the host nation.

Tong's bronze is Singapore's first individual rhythmic gymnastics medal at the Games.

Two years ago, the Republic stormed to its first medal – a gold – in rhythmic gymnastics at the Games, beating Malaysia in the group all-around final, but Tong

was not part of this group.

The multiple Schools National A Division all-around champion has already represented the Republic on numerous occasions, including the 2014 Commonwealth Games, and the 2014 Asean Schools Games in the Philippines.

However, she has set her sights on a bigger stage – the Olympics.

She said: "This medal confirms I'm heading in the right direction. If I work harder, smarter and train with the right people, I'd reach the goal of being at the Olympics."

National rhythmic gymnastics coach Natalia Rybak echoed Tong's sentiments, and added: "She definitely has a lot of potential because she is very strong mentally, and has the ability to focus very well."

"She has a unique style that is very suitable to excel in rhythmic gymnastics."

For now, an immediate focus for the Year 2 food science and technology undergraduate at the National University of Singapore would be settling back in her school routine.

Said Tong: "I'm quite thankful because school started only on Aug 14. But I've missed two weeks of school already, it's a lot of content. I have quite a bit to catch up on."

Singapore also clinched a silver medal yesterday, when the team of Edlyn Ho, Michele Lau, Phebe Lau, Avryl Tan and Jael Chew recorded 14.400 points in the five hoops final, behind Malaysia (16.050) but ahead of the Philippines (10.650).

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