

Speech Delivered by Irene Chua

Good evening,

Provost of NUS & Deputy President (Academic Affairs), Professor Tan Eng Chye,
Distinguished Guests,
Fellow Athletes,
Ladies & Gentlemen

We are really honored and grateful to receive this award today. First and foremost, special thanks to School of Design Environment and Faculty of Science for their understanding and unwavering support. Secondly, a significant group of people, our team mates who made training and racing so much more fun and worth it. We would also like to thank our coaches and sports officers, Teck Wah and Chee Hong, who have guided us and supported us unwaveringly. Finally, a special shout out to everyone else, who have helped us in your own special way. Thank you; We would never have gotten this far without the amazing support we've garnered over the years.

It is said that it is easy to sit up and take notice, but difficult to stand up and take action. Today, we are here to celebrate the fact that we stood up and took action. Today, we celebrate the spirit of sports, commitment and sheer hard work we have all put in, the achievements that were made and the tears that have been shed the past year.

With that said, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the bitter sweet story between my partner, Weiling, and I.

Sister-in-arms, is how I would describe my relationship with Weiling. We've fought hard in countless races alongside one another for nearly 4 years now, participating in various disciplines ranging from marathons to sprints events. And these 4 years have been an arduous yet rewarding journey for the both of us. We have had the opportunity to travel around the world and race against the best. Countless hours of paddling and gym trainings were involved, so as to prepare us against the world's best. And like any other athletes, tears were also shed along the way. But I would say we have both pushed each other and help one another to grow.

Looking back, I guess the both of us never did quite expect how far we would actually come in the doubles event. I mean, our first doubles together in 2007 is still etched vividly in my memory - and for all the wrong reasons. We had zero rapport and could barely paddle properly due to the boat's insane instability. It got so bad that we both nearly gave up. As luck would have it, we didn't.

The bond and rhythm we've built between us is something no one can take away. Potential is such an empty word, because as individual paddlers, we may all have it. But a good team, is like a chemical reaction, it takes the right kind of mix to set it off and I am truly thankful that both of us are blessed with this rare chemistry that is essential for great teamwork.

To everyone out there, do cherish this rare chemistry and rapport you have with your team mates - opportunity doesn't knock twice. We've been blessed with the chance of being athletes and I say, we make the most of our journey!

Thank you.