

# TOH BACK ON THE TOP STEP

He manages anxiety to land S'pore's first glittery medal, has chance for two more

Kimberly Kwek

Even with a decade of competitive swimming behind him, Toh Wei Soong arrived in Hangzhou feeling nervous.

This might be his third Asian Para Games and he has also competed at the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021, but the pre-race jitters were never far away.

Despite this, Toh managed these anxieties and turned them into a gold medal-winning performance on Thursday as he won the men's S7 100m backstroke for Singapore's first gold at the ongoing Games.

The 25-year-old clocked 1min 14.99sec at the Hangzhou Aquatic Sports Arena to set a meet record, eclipsing Chinese Gao Nan's previous mark of 1:15.65 in the 2010 edition in Guangzhou.

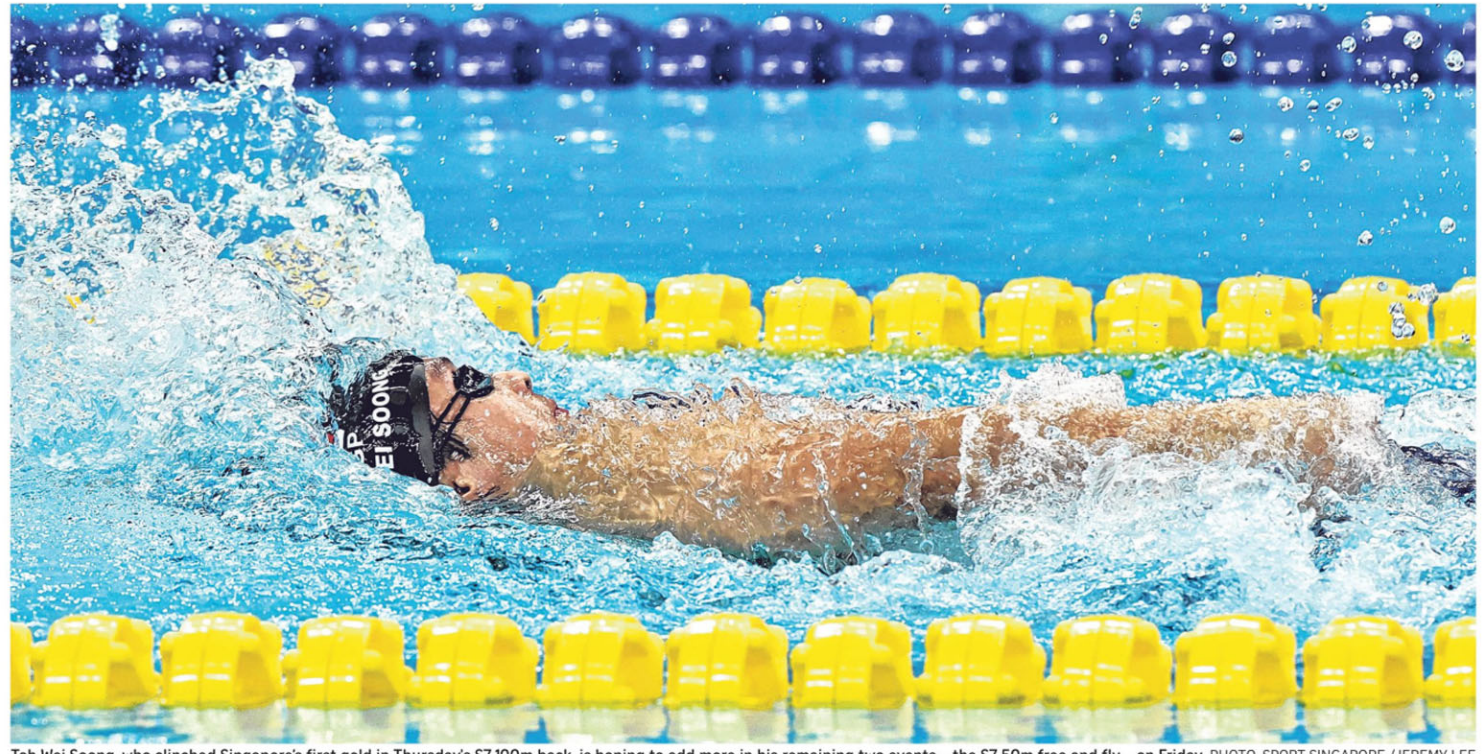
Chinese duo Yang Huaqiang (1:20.12) and Huang Xianquan (1:20.80) were second and third respectively.

Toh said: "These Games have been a little nerve-racking for me... I can't put it into words exactly.

"But after 10 years in the sport, coming back to my third stint at the Asian Games now as a veteran, there's both excitement and a little bit of anxiety over performing and continuing to perform at the highest level...

"That being said, I still have a lot of fun with the sport as stressful as it can be sometimes.

"I'm not going to rest on the laurels because I didn't exactly hit the



Toh Wei Soong, who clinched Singapore's first gold in Thursday's S7 100m back, is hoping to add more in his remaining two events – the S7 50m free and fly – on Friday. PHOTO: SPORT SINGAPORE / JEREMY LEE

target I was aiming for so there are still things to do, still things that need to be done. We're only halfway done so we'll keep on it."

While he was happy to capture the Republic's first gold in China, Toh, who clinched silver in the men's S7 400m freestyle on Tuesday, noted that it was not a perfect race as he had been gunning for Gao's Asian record of 1:14.71 which has stood since 2012.

At the previous edition in Jakarta in 2018, Toh had bagged a bronze in the S7 100m back event, one that he recently started training more for.

He said: "If you look at the races I've been doing in the past year, you're seeing me step up in terms of the 100m backstroke.

"I would attribute that to a lot of the improvements we've been making in the 50m freestyle and

butterfly in the past few years and bringing those same principles into backstroke.

"We've seen tremendous progress, it was an event that I really did not invest too much in in the early parts of my career."

He will be hoping to add more medals in his remaining two events – the men's S7 50m free and fly – on Friday. He has five medals from the Asian Para Games, including

two golds in the S7 50m and 100m free in 2018.

His coach Ang Peng Siong said: "Winning the first gold medal is a good start and preparation for his two pet events in the 50m.

"So this is breaking the ice and the main focus is tomorrow's races in the 50m free and fly, which are quite close to each other, so fingers crossed."

Aside from Toh's contributions,

Singapore also clinched another silver and two bronze medals.

The silver was from lawn bowler Faridah Salleh in the women's singles B6, while teammate Khirmern Mohamad claimed bronze in the men's singles B7.

Claire Toh had earlier secured a bronze in the Class 1-2 table tennis women's singles.

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