

FULL STEAM AHEAD

Paralympian Toh will focus on swimming full time after July's graduation from NUS

Kimberly Kwek

Having been a competitive swimmer for over a decade, Toh Wei Soong says he is entering the next chapter of his career, with the finale possibly ending at the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics.

With the 25-year-old graduating from the National University of Singapore in July, he is anticipating the prospect of focusing on swimming full time in what he called the "third act" of his career.

The Aug 28-Sept 8 Paris Paralympics will conclude the second stage, before he embarks on the next chapter.

"Once you've been swimming for 10 years and more, you've seen most of it. Everything else that comes afterwards is a variation of something you've seen in the past and you have what you need to meet the challenge," said Toh, after the first day of the Citi Para Swimming World Series Singapore on May 17.

"Overall, I feel like I'm coming to the third act of my swimming career. The middle act will end with Paris and we'll see how the finale may end with LA 2028. I'm feeling a mixture of fatigue, happiness and excitement with this change coming up in my life."

Toh, who usually competes in the S7 class, gave a glimpse of what is to come from him as he bagged medals in two multi-class events at the OCBC Arena. He won gold in the 50m butterfly and bronze in the 100m freestyle.

In the 50m fly, he touched the wall in 31.18 seconds to clinch gold, ahead of Japan's Kaede Hinata (35.76sec) and Kazakhstan's Siyazbek Daliyev (36.61sec).

At the meet, swimmers with a range of disabilities from multiple classifications can compete in multi-class events.

The winner is not always the one



Toh Wei Soong, who clinched a gold (50m butterfly) and a bronze (100m freestyle) in multi-class events at the Citi Para Swimming World Series Singapore on May 17, is poised to enter the "third act" of his storied career and could possibly retire after the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics. PHOTO: SINGAPORE DISABILITY SPORTS COUNCIL

who touches the wall first, but the athlete who posts the highest multi-class point score and the time closest to the world record for their classification.

Toh's win in the 50m fly came shortly after he bagged the 100m free bronze in 1min 04.28sec. The event was won by Uchu Tomita in 58.73sec, with South Korea's Lee In-kook (55.30sec) claiming silver.

With less than an hour separating the two races, Toh said that he has developed certain routines to help cope with such tight schedules.

One of which was meditating during which he forms a vessel with his hands and imagines that it is being emptied of his "ego, desires and fears". He also focuses on his

breathing until it is all that he can hear.

Other routines include lying down on the floor and raising his legs to ensure that blood is flowing from his legs to his body.

He said: "Today was a very tight, back-to-back pair of events."

"After 11 years of swimming competitively, you have a few of these and there are very specific options you can take to mitigate the worst of it... and learning how to calm your nervous system down after it's been excited to such a high state to prepare to be 100 per cent again in the next race without being afraid of how you'll do."

Compatriot Yip Pin Xiu added a bronze to Singapore's medal tally

LOOKING FORWARD

I'm feeling a mixture of fatigue, happiness and excitement with this change coming up in my life.



TOH WEI SOONG, national para-swimmer, who will embark on his next phase after the Aug 28-Sept 8 Paris Paralympics.

after placing third in the women's 100m freestyle multi-class.

The five-gold Paralympian clocked 2min 20.22sec, finishing behind Japan's Tomomi Ishiura (1:08.16) and Ayano Tsujiuchi (1:01.12).

Yip said: "I'm happy with the timing. I did a faster time in the final than I did in the heats (2:21.61), even though it's not as fast as what I did (at the Para Swimming European Open Championships) in Madeira."

"It's a good start for the cycle and we are looking forward to improving in the next 15 weeks before the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games."

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