

= Yip Pin Xiu =

Yip Pin Xiu ( Chinese : 叶佩霞 ; pinyin : Yè Pènxìu ) , born 10 January 1992 ) is a Singaporean backstroke swimmer . She has muscular dystrophy and competes in the S3 category for the physically impaired . Since 2005 , she has won medals in international competitions such as the World Wheelchair and Amputee Games , Japan Paralympic Swimming Championships and International German Paralympic Swimming Championships . At the 2008 Summer Paralympics , she won a gold medal in the 50 metres backstroke and a silver medal in the 50 metres freestyle , setting world records in both events . In honour of her feats at the Paralympic Games , she was conferred the Pingat Jasa Gemilang ( Meritorious Service Medal ) during the National Day Awards ceremony and named " Young Woman Achiever of the Year " by local magazine Her World . Her achievements contributed to public debate about the treatment and recognition of disabled athletes in Singapore .

= = Early years and personal life = =

Yip was born with muscular dystrophy , a genetic disorder that slowly breaks down the muscles , and a nerve condition that affects eyesight . When she was five , she started swimming to improve her health and strengthen her muscles ; nevertheless , by the age of eleven , she had lost her ability to walk and had to use a wheelchair . The youngest of three children in her family , she studied in Ai Tong Primary School and Bendemeer Secondary School , then graduated from Republic Polytechnic as back @-@ up valedictorian and , as of 2012 , is studying social science at Singapore Management University .

= = Swimming career = =

Yip started swimming competitively when she was twelve years old . After losing her ability to kick , Yip switched from the front crawl to the backstroke and was reclassified from the S5 to the S3 category ( lower numbers indicate more severe disabilities ) . Her coach is former Singaporean Olympic swimmer Ang Peng Siong , while fellow Paralympic swimmer Theresa Goh is her close friend and role model . Besides competitive swimming , Yip has participated in events to raise awareness of disabled sports , such as the Interschool Swimming Meets and Montfort Secondary School Track and Field Meet 2007 .

After successes in national championships , Yip participated in the Asia Paralympics Swimming Championship 2005 , winning two gold medals . Her first international competition was the World Wheelchair and Amputee Games 2005 , where she won two gold medals and a bronze . She then received four gold medals at the DSE Long Course Swimming Championships in 2006 . In 2007 , she won three gold medals at the Japan Paralympic Swimming Championships and four gold medals at the World Wheelchair and Amputee Games .

At the 4th ASEAN ParaGames , Yip finished first in the women 's 150 metres individual medley , clocking 4 minutes 56 @.@ 34 seconds . She set a world record time of 1 minute 00 @.@ 80 seconds in the 50 metres backstroke at the US Paralympic swimming trials . The 22nd International German Paralympic Swimming Championships saw her set a world record of 2 minutes 10 @.@ 09 seconds in the 100 metres backstroke heats ; in the finals , she was awarded the gold medal with a time of 2 minutes 08 @.@ 09 seconds , bettering her own world record .

Yip started her 2008 Summer Paralympic Games campaign by breaking another world record , clocking 57 @.@ 04 seconds in the women 's 50 metres freestyle heats . However , she was narrowly beaten by Mexican swimmer Patricia Valle in the finals , clinching a silver medal with a time of 57 @.@ 43 seconds . In the women 's 50 metres backstroke heats , she posted a time of 57 @.@ 92 seconds , taking two seconds off her own world record . She then swam the women 's 50 metres backstroke finals in a time of 58 @.@ 75 seconds to win the gold medal . After she returned to Singapore , the president conferred Yip a state medal , the Meritorious Service Medal .

The success of Yip and Laurentia Tan , who won two bronze medals in equestrian events , sparked

public debate about the treatment and recognition of disabled athletes in Singapore . Letters to The Straits Times criticised the poor coverage of the Paralympics . Many Singaporeans also commented about the disparity of the cash awards handed out by the government : S \$ 1 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 for an Olympic gold and S \$ 100 @, @ 000 for a Paralympic gold . When the issues were raised in Parliament , MCYS parliamentary secretary Teo Ser Luck promised to study plans to give disabled athletes greater support and to include them in sporting programmes such as Project 0812 , a training programme for top Singaporean sportspeople . Two months later , the cash rewards for Paralympic medals were doubled and funding for the Singapore National Paralympic Council was increased .

At the 8th ASEAN Para Games , she is torch lighter with Tay Wei Ming and Gan Kai Hong Aloysius .