

Media Release

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Four Singapore para swimmers begin races today for first 2024 Paralympic Games swim slots at Manchester 2023 World Para Swimming Championships



Above (Left to Right) Colin Soon Jin Guang, Sophie Soon Jin Wei, Toh Wei Soong, Yip Pin Xiu
(Image credits: Singapore Disability Sports Council/Andy Chua, Singapore National Paralympic Council)

Four para swimmers - Colin Soon Jin Guang, Sophie Soon Jin Wei, Toh Wei Soong and Yip Pin Xiu - have qualified for the World Para Swimming Championships 2023, and will be competing for the sport's first direct slots to the 2024 Paralympic Games. Sophie Soon will kick off the first race for Team Singapore today.

Taking place over 7 days in Manchester, United Kingdom, from 31 July to 6 August, the World Para Swimming Championships 2023 is set to be one of the exciting races to look forward to this year, with over 546 para swimmers from 67 nations vying for one of the 270 direct qualification slots on offer for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. The top two ranked athletes in each individual medal event at the championships will earn these highly coveted slots for their country.

Five-time Paralympic gold medalist, Yip Pin Xiu, will be seeking to defend her titles at the Championships in the Women’s S2 Backstroke 50m and 100m events. Commonwealth Games silver medalist, Toh Wei Soong, who made his Paralympic debut in Tokyo 2020 and narrowly missed the bronze in the Men’s S7 Butterfly 50m event by 0.16s, will also be eager to step up to the podium at the Championships.

This championship marks the second time that the Soon siblings will be featured together, with both achieving their qualifications to the World Championships on home ground during the World Para Swimming World Series 2023 Singapore held in May this year. Sophie secured a silver medal and set a new Asian record in the Women’s SB12 Breaststroke 100m event at the Madeira 2022 World Para Swimming Championships, while the youngest member of the team, Colin, 18, had come in fourth in Men’s S12 Backstroke 100m and Men’s S12 Breaststroke 100m events in his World Championships debut then.

"We began a ‘podium potential’ programme two years ago to provide a boost to para swimmers who we identified to possess the commitment, skill and aptitude to achieve more, but had yet to qualify for more support under public schemes. Additional training, competitions, sport science and sport medicine support were individualised and provided on top of what they would normally receive, with the help of our donors. Sophie and Colin were amongst the first athletes identified for this bridging support, and we are glad that they have been meeting new milestones one after another with the additional support. We are looking forward to their performance at the World Championships, together with Pin Xiu and Wei Soong, " shared Ms Kelly Fan, Executive Director, Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC).

Annex A – TeamSG Para Swimmers

Annex B – About Classification

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Annex A – TeamSG Para Swimmers

SN	Name	Profile	Event
1	Colin Soon Jin Guang	Since Colin was 3 years old, he was attracted to water and the pool. For his own safety, his mother decided he should participate in swimming classes to brush up on his proficiency skills. Since then, Colin has never looked back.	01 August (Day 2) Event 46 - Men’s 100m Breaststroke SB13

		<p>The feeling of being in water, and being able to represent his country in his favourite activity is what keeps Colin going. He wants to make himself and Singapore proud by winning more races and achieving personal best timings.</p> <p>Colin represented Singapore in the Dubai 2017 Asian Youth Para Games (AYPG) and won two bronze medals. He also represented Singapore at the Singapore 2019 World Para Swimming World Series. He took 4 gold medals in 4 events at the Bahrain 2021 AYPG, and hopes to be a Paralympian like his sister, Sophie Soon.</p> <p>Through swimming, Colin hopes to promote inclusiveness and advocate for persons with disabilities, particularly for young people with visual impairment. Outside of sports, he enjoys composing music digitally on his computer.</p>	
2	Sophie Soon Jin Wei	<p>Sophie Soon was diagnosed with cone-rod dystrophy as a child, a condition which causes deteriorating vision and may eventually lead to blindness. However, this did not stop her from pursuing her interests in sports and music. As a Grade 8 violinist, Sophie performed with The Sam Willows at the 2014 President's Star Charity Show, but took a break from music to focus on swimming.</p> <p>Sophie won 3 gold medals in the 2015 SPH National Para-Swimming Championship. She made her debut in the international arena at the 2015 ASEAN Para Games, and made her Paralympic debut at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, finishing 4th in the Women's 100m Breaststroke SB12. She won her first world championships title at the Madeira 2022 World Para Swimming Championships, earning silver and a new personal best of 1:25.89 in the Women's 100m Breaststroke SB12.</p>	<p>31 July (Day 1) Event 22 - Women's 100m Backstroke S12 - (DIRECT FINAL)</p> <p>03 August (Day 4) Event 82 - Women's 100m Breaststroke SB12</p>
3	Toh Wei Soong	<p>At the tender age of two, Wei Soong was diagnosed with the rare condition of transverse myelitis - a condition caused by the inflammation of the spinal cord. The disease affects the muscle nerves of his lower limbs. Wei Soong was first exposed to swimming at the age of six, as a form of therapy. However, he soon fell in love with the experience of being in water, where he faced little restriction and could do things that he could not on land. Wei Soong also enjoyed the discipline and confidence that trainings and victories brought him.</p>	<p>03 August (Day 4) Event 96 - Men's 100m Backstroke S7</p> <p>04 August (Day 5) Event 113 - Men's 50m Butterfly S7</p> <p>05 August (Day 6) Event 132 - Men's 50m Freestyle S7</p> <p>06 August (Day 7)</p>

		<p>Wei Soong participated in his first swimming competition when he was nine years old. He went on to participate in various competitions over the years, and his exemplary performance at the 2012 National Para Swimming Championships caught the attention of many. When he turned 15 the following year, he was scouted by the Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC) for international competitions. Three months later, Wei Soong participated in his first international competition, the IDM Berlin Open 2013, held in Germany. Despite being nervous as a debutant, Wei Soong rose to the occasion and brought back two gold medals for Singapore.</p> <p>Since then, Wei Soong has gone on to many more international competitions, and would debut at his first Paralympic Games in Tokyo. Wei Soong currently studies at the National University of Singapore.</p>	<p>Event 157 - Men's 100m Freestyle S7</p>
4	Yip Pin Xiu	<p>Paralympian and 5-time gold medallist, Yip Pin Xiu, is a true trailblazer, breaking boundaries as a para-athlete and as a voice for the community. Born with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, a degenerative nerve condition, she never allowed that to set limits for herself. The first time Majulah Singapura played at an Olympic arena was when she brought home Singapore's first-ever Paralympics gold medal at the age of 16.</p> <p>Pin Xiu was the youngest Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) in Singapore. She advocated for inclusion, better sporting culture in Singapore and proposed for a national code to be developed to address sexual harassment in universities. She is currently part of the Safe Sport Commission in Singapore that seeks to foster an environment where sports are free from harassment and abuse, sits on WADA athlete committee where they aim to protect the integrity of clean sport as the leading voice for athletes globally. She is part of the National Youth Council board, aimed at helping our youth to be future ready and the Singapore Disability Sports Council's executive committee to continue pushing for the growth of para sports in Singapore.</p>	<p>02 August (Day 3) Event 53 - Women's 100m Backstroke S2 (DIRECT FINAL)</p> <p>05 August (Day 6) Event 133 - Women's 50m Backstroke S2 (DIRECT FINAL)</p>

Annex B – About Classification

S1 to S10 - Physical Impairment

S11 to S13 - Visual Impairment

S14 - Intellectual Impairment

The lower number indicates a greater degree of impairment.

Please check <https://www.paralympic.org/swimming/classification> for in-depth information on para swimming classifications.

Link to image:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Me-X9_Yb8IHCzycbn9X7Nt1Ey47HkRI8/view?usp=sharing

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About Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC)

Established in 1973 by the then Ministry of Social Affairs, the Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC) is Singapore's national sports body for persons with disabilities. Committed to transforming the lives of individuals with disabilities through sports, the SDSC engages, develops, and promotes excellence among persons with disabilities.

In partnership with its members - an alliance of social service agencies, parasport and mainstream sport organizations - the SDSC drives Singapore's movement towards greater inclusivity. SDSC's efforts have produced inspiring success stories such as Aloysius Gan, Asian Youth Para Games medalist, and Yip Pin Xiu, Singapore's most decorated Paralympian.

More information at www.sdsc.org.sg