

Swimming: Ong clocks personal best after tough period to earn SEA Games spot



Ong Jung Yi clocked personal bests in the 100m and 200m butterfly. Photo: SSA



Kimberly Kwek

PUBLISHED MAR 19, 2021, 10:28 PM SGT



SINGAPORE - Having to juggle training with his International Baccalaureate examinations was already a challenge for national swimmer Ong Jung Yi, but that was made even tougher in 2019 when his asthma condition flared up.

And no matter how hard he trained, he was unable to lower his times in the pool.

After a frustrating few years, Ong finally got his breakthrough this week at the Liberty Insurance 51st Singapore National Age Group Swimming Championships (SNAG) Major Games Qualifier as he clocked personal bests (PB) in the 100m and 200m butterfly.

On Friday (March 19), the 20-year-old finished first in the 100m fly in 53.07sec to better his previous PB of 53.85sec from 2019.

His three-year attempt to go below his previous best of 1min 59.76sec in the 200m fly also bore fruit on Wednesday, as he clocked 1:58.71 in the final to finish first.

"I'd been training really hard to better my time at every meet since 2018 and 2019," said Ong, who won a bronze medal in the 200m fly event at the 2019 SEA Games.

"It was demoralising when I wasn't able to get a personal best for these few years, so I'm happy that I was able to achieve it."

The Chinese Swimming Club swimmer also made the SEA Games qualifying mark and Olympic 'B' cut for both events.

Encouraged by his performance at the SNAG, Ong aims to meet the Olympic 'A' cut in both events by June's Singapore National Swimming Championships - the last local qualifying meet for the July 23-Aug 8 Tokyo Games.

The Olympic 'A' times for the 100m and 200m fly events are 51.96sec and 1:56.48 respectively.

Over the next few months, Ong will be working on building his stamina to improve on the last 100m of his 200m fly event, as his coach feels he can shave one or two seconds off.

He said: "With another three months, I'll try and step up training to the next level to see if I can push myself to the 'A' cut time."

Ong, who is undergoing national service, said he had not expected to make the 'B' cut in the 100m fly, noting that he had "more potential to go even faster for 200 fly".

Friday's meet also saw breaststroke specialist Christie Chue qualifying for her second event at the SEA Games - she had made the mark for the 200m freestyle on Thursday - after touching home in 1:09.69 in the women's 100m breaststroke to claim the top spot.