

SCHOOL SPORTS

WINNER: Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School runner Natalie Soh (right) crosses the finishing line to claim the individual gold medal in the girls' B Division race of the 55th Schools' National Cross-Country Championships.

EXTRA TRAINING EDGES IT FOR NATALIE

Report by GREGORY LOO
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She was not among the top 20 finishers in the Schools' National cross-country championships in 2012 and 2013.

But, yesterday morning, Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School runner Natalie Soh clinched the Girls' B Division title at Bedok Reservoir Park.

The 16-year-old finished the 3.6km route in 14min 28.7sec, a marked improvement from last year's 16:24.54 that saw her finish 40th.

In 2012, Natalie came in 30th at 17:00.25.

After the race, the Secondary 4 student revealed that winning the Under-15 800m race of the Singapore Athletic Association's Series 7 last December motivated her to train harder.

CONFIDENT

Natalie said: "It was last year when I participated in Series 7 and won the 800m race that I realised that, hey, I could actually do this.

"Once you taste success, it becomes a real confidence-booster.

"I realised I could do this so I started to train harder, training very regularly and even in my free time."

On top of training three times a week, Natalie trained alongside her older brother Thaddeus, who recently completed his full-time National Service.

"I began training with my brother who has just finished his NS," she said. "I'd go to East Coast Park to run with him sometimes, so that definitely helped.

"Apart from that, I also did more in-



CASUALTY: Volunteers move in to help Anglo-Chinese Junior College runner Leroi Lee after he collapsed on completing the boys' route of the National Inter-school Cross Country Championships. Leroi finished fourth in 14min 42.2sec.

TNP PHOTOS: KIAT TAN WJ

terval training. The sprints training really helped because I only caught up at the end to win the race."

It was certainly a tight finish as Natalie overtook the leaders with 50m to go, finishing just 1.5 seconds ahead of runner-up Nah Yi Xin of Cedar Girls' Secondary School.

Having signed off her time with the PLMGS cross-country team victoriously, Natalie is now eyeing the Schools National track and field championships. She also intends to continue running in junior college.

"This is my last cross-country race of the year and I felt a combination of relief and 'Wow, I did this and it's over'," she said.

"Usually when I start running, I tell myself to push for 15 minutes and enjoy the rest after that.

"It's an amazing feeling and I still can't really believe that I won."

Woods unsure about Masters

Tiger Woods is still no closer to knowing whether he will be able to play in next month's US Masters as he struggles with back pain.

The world No. 1 withdrew from last week's Arnold Palmer Invitational in Florida because of his aching back and remains unsure if he will be fit for this year's

first Major, starting on April 10 at Augusta National.

"For Augusta, it's actually a little too soon to be honest with you," he told reporters on Monday at a sponsorship announcement for the AT&T National.

"That's kind of the frustrating thing about this," he said. "I've

had a couple weeks off getting treatment, just working on trying to get ready for Augusta.

"As of right now, it's still too soon. As I said, it's very frustrating."

Woods has never missed the Masters since he made his debut at Augusta National as an amateur in 1995. — Reuters.

RI's clean sweep of titles

Raffles Institution claimed a hat-trick of team golds in all three Boys' Divisions for the first time while the girls won their A Division event at the 55th Schools' National Cross-Country Championships at Bedok Reservoir Park yesterday.

There were also individual golds for Shohib Abdul Wahab Marican (Boys' A Division), Tan Chong Qi (Boys' B Division) and Mary-Lisa Chua (Girls' A Division).

Apart from a dedicated team of teachers, RI cross-country coach Steven Quek believes that there was no big secret to his team's clean sweep.

"The teachers really played an important part because they take care of the students and run with them," said RI old boy Quek, who has coached the school for four years.

"To me, it's basically about getting the children's study and CCA (Co-Curricular Activity) in order.

"If their studies are in order, their CCA is in order and their general lifestyle is in order, we can do our sports well.

"There is a healthy competition in the team and it was really a team effort."

The remaining B and C Division girls' team titles were won by River Valley High School and Cedar Girls' Secondary School.

All runners took a 3.6km route except for the A and B Division boys, who ran 4.7km.

— GREGORY LOO

RESULTS

A DIV

- **Boys' individual:** 1 Shohib Abdul Wahab Marican (RI) 14:02.8, 2 Heng Yu Jie (RI) 14:17.2, 3 Marcus Ng (VJC) 14:19.9
- **Team:** 1 RI 14pts, 2 VJC 33pts, 3 HCI 51pts
- **Girls' individual:** 1 Mary-Lisa Chua (RI) 14:21.2, 2 Denise Chia (RI) 14:28.6, 3 Melanie Bickham (CJC) 14:31.3
- **Team:** 1 RI 16pts, 2 VJC 43pts, 3 HCI 62pts

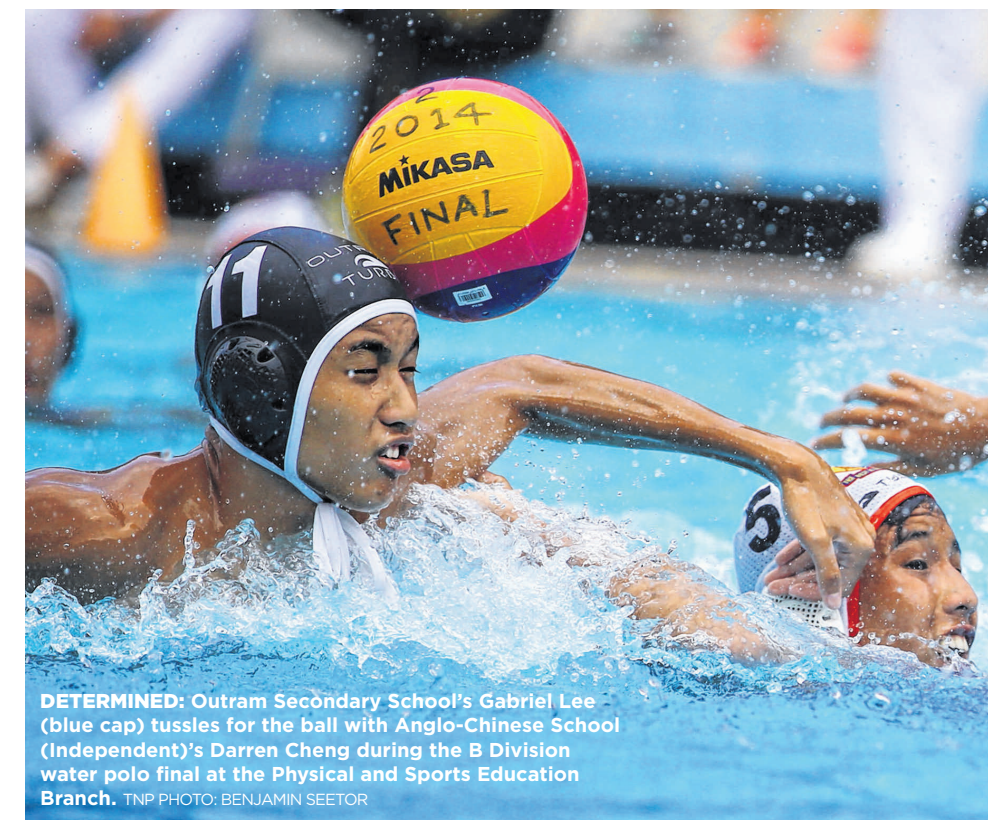
B DIV

- **Boys' individual:** 1 Tan Chong Qi (RI) 14:26.7, 2 Ierhan Muhammad Raushan (SSP) 14:36.4, 3 Isaac Tan (ACS-I) 14:38.1
- **Team:** 1 RI 40pts, 2 ACS(I) 61, 3 SJI 91pts
- **Girls' individual:** 1 Natalie Soh (PLMGS) 14:28.7, 2 Nah Yi Xin (CGSS) 14:30.2, 3 Shervon Goh (Commonwealth Sec) 14:39.2
- **Team:** 1 RVHS 41pts, 2 CGSS 52pts, 3 RGS 76pts

C DIV

- **Boys' individual:** 1 Er Wen Han (HCI) 12:16.5, 2 Thiruben Thana Rajan (NJC) 12:39.3, 3 Philip Wong (ACS-I) 12:42.3
- **Team:** 1 RI 29pts, 2 HCI 56pts, 3 ACS(I) 69pts
- **Girls' individual:** 1 Elaine Quah (RGS) 14:55.5, 2 Levyn Wong (Dunman High) 15:04.0, 3 Mariviv Tan (Guangyang Sec) 15:12.3
- **Team:** 1 CGSS 44pts, 2 RGS 48pts, 3 RVHS 88pts

Sweet revenge for ACS(I)



DETERMINED: Outram Secondary School's Gabriel Lee (blue cap) tussles for the ball with Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)'s Darren Cheng during the B Division water polo final at the Physical and Sports Education Branch. TNP PHOTO: BENJAMIN SECTOR

BOYS' B DIVISION WATER POLO FINAL (INDEPENDENT) 13 OUTRAM SECONDARY SCHOOL 7

Report by LIM SAY HENG
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At the final whistle, there were no wild celebrations or exuberant back-slapping, just a sense of relief over a mission accomplished.

Water-polo powerhouses Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) reclaimed their boys' B Division title yesterday at the Physical and Sports Education Branch pool at Evans Road with a 13-7 victory over Outram Secondary School, in a rematch of last year's final.

Then, Outram edged out ACS(I) 6-5 to claim their first-ever B Division water polo title.

ACS(I) captain Eythan Ang said: "After we lost the title last year, we were really very motivated to get it back this year.

"We beat them (Outram) narrowly, 7-6, in the preliminary round, but we weren't in the groove back then. We were definite-

ly in the groove today."

The ACSians grabbed the final by the horns, finishing the first quarter 4-1 up, thanks to a hat-trick by Daniel Tan.

It was a lead that they held throughout, with Efen Tan claiming five goals.

The ACSians' disciplined defence, along with their strong swimming on the counter-attack, were also major factors.

CLOSE AFFAIR

However, the final could have been a closer affair had the defending champions not hit the post thrice in the first period.

Outram captain Nicholas Yeo said: "We didn't convert our chances, especially in the first quarter, and we didn't pass well today either."

Eythan agreed, saying: "The first quarter was very important. It set the mood for us and we were really focused on doing well in that period to take the lead."

The ACSians continued to pour forward even in the dying minutes, despite holding a comfortable lead and with their supporters urging them to run down the clock.

Eythan smiled and said: "We will never relax completely."