



# THE STRAITS TIMES

## Familiar faces claim top honours at National School Games' cross-country finals



Nanyang Junior College's Clara Chua crossing the finish line to win the A Division Girls' gold at the National School Games cross-country finals on May 14. ST PHOTO: TARYN NG

**Samuel Tan**

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SINGAPORE – Pulling well clear of her closest challenger on a wet and rainy morning, Clara Chua of Nanyang Junior College stamped her dominance in the National School Games' (NSG) cross-country event by winning the A Division girls' individual race at OCBC Square on May 14.

It marked her third straight victory at the NSG after achieving similar feats in 2024 and 2023, the latter when she was with St Margaret's School (Secondary).

"I'm really happy that I managed to complete my goal of (becoming) a three-time champion," said Clara, 18, who crossed the finish line in 13min 51.595sec – the 36-second margin to second-placed Anisah Omar Alkhatib of Victoria Junior College highlighting her dominance.

It more than made up for the disappointment of having to wait for a day to compete. The finals were initially scheduled on May 13, but had to be postponed by 24 hours due to inclement weather.

"It (the postponement) was very disappointing because all my preparation was for that day," said Clara.

Even in the early hours of May 14, a light shower caused all races to be delayed by half an hour and threatened to dampen the mood.

Fortunately for the runners, the rain ceased. In the wet conditions, the A and B Division boys completed a 4.6km route, while the C Division boys and girls of all three divisions ran 3.6km. The starting point was the grassy section of Tanjong Rhu Promenade, with the route stretching past the Tanjong Rhu suspension footbridge before concluding at OCBC Square.

"The route was a bit hard to run because there were a lot of tight curves," said Clara. "The grass patch was kind of slippery. I fell down twice but it was nothing much. Just (got) a small scrape."

She managed to overcome her minor setback to complete her NSG journey with a treble of gold medals. "I just focus on running at my own pace. I told myself that I trained hard for this and I know my fitness will show how good I am," she added.

Tabitha Ng of Cedar Girls' Secondary School also found the tight curves hard to navigate on her way to winning the B Division girls' individual race.

"The part where I struggled the most was definitely the turns at the overhead bridge because they're really sharp. Not only that, there's a slope (going) upwards under the bridge," said the 16-year-old.

The bridge also signalled the home stretch where she started to run "all out" towards the finish line, taking first place with a time of 13:54.113, three seconds ahead of Charlotte Poon from St Anthony's Canossian Secondary School.



Cedar Girls' Secondary School's Tabitha Ng running "all out" towards the finish line to win the B Division girls' category. ST PHOTO: TARYN NG

"I was aiming for first (place)," said Tabitha after winning her fourth straight gold medal, which will also be her last for her school, having taken the top prize every year since her NSG debut in 2022.

She was glad to go out with a bang, adding: "I'm really happy and thankful because it's my last year running for Cedar. Ever since I came to Cedar, my teammates have been cheering me on. It's a very supportive environment, and all this support has inspired me to push myself even further."

There was still a sense of accomplishment among runners who might not have won, and for some, even redemption. Enoch Seow of St Joseph's Institution finished seventh in the B Division boys' individual race with a time of 15:57.699, massively



improving on his 37th-placed finish in 2024. NUS High School's Sung Yejun retained his title in 15:00.529.

"I feel really vindicated," said Enoch, 15. "Last year I messed up my race and because of that, my school missed out (on the team trophy). So this year I was really happy because it was like redemption."



Enoch Seow from St Joseph's Institution was glad to improve on his race from last year, coming in seventh in the B Division boys' category. ST PHOTO: TARYN NG

"I was more relaxed. I did not let the past failures weigh me down," he added.

For the overall team trophies, Victoria JC won the A Division boys' and girls' categories, while Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) claimed both the B and C Division boys' titles. Cedar took the B and C Division girls' crowns.

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