

School sports

FAMILIAL SUPPORT, FROM AFAR

Small crowd outside venue cheers on the players in all-ACS B Division rugby final

Kimberly Kwek

School rugby finals are typically a boisterous affair with alumni, students and parents from both camps packing the stadium to cheer on their teams.

The noise levels at this year's National School Games (NSG) have gone down significantly as spectators are not allowed owing to the pandemic, but about 50 family members and friends who turned up for the National B Division rugby final yesterday made sure that the players could hear them even from afar.

They lined the perimeter of the Ministry of Education (Evans) Stadium to catch the tussle between Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) and ACS (Barker Road), donning school jerseys and carrying banners decorated with the ACS colours of blue and yellow.

Yesterday's match was a special occasion for both players and supporters as it was a first all-ACS final in close to a decade. And just like in 2013, ACS (I) emerged victorious against their Barker counterparts to retain their B Division title.

ACS (I) captain Ryan Ong, 16, said: "We relish the opportunity to play in front of our friends and parents. Having no one in the stands was hard for us to accept at some point but our parents came to support us from outside the stadium and we're grateful for that."

Among the supporters was executive assistant Chiew Pei Shan, who was there to watch her son Jedd Tan play for ACS (I).

The 42-year-old had initially been disappointed that spectators were not allowed into the venue. But on the first day of the rugby



Jedd Tan (No. 20) of ACS (I) tackling a rival from ACS (Barker Road) during one of two final matches to decide the B Division title yesterday. ST PHOTOS: DESMOND FOO



The event saw a crowd of about 50 friends and family members of the players from both schools cheering on from outside the Ministry of Education (Evans) Stadium.

competition, she joined the other parents to look for places around the stadium where they could catch the action.

Chiew, who has supported her

son since he picked up rugby in Primary 5, said: "It's hard to be part of their lives as they grow older so every chance we get, we want to participate in what they're doing."

Back in the NSG after a two-year hiatus, this year's rugby competition was contested in a sevens format instead of the usual 15s, with the final played across two matches

comprising different line-ups.

It did not take long for ACS (I) to stamp their authority as Javier Ling scored a try early in the first half. The scrum-half added a sec-

MEANINGFUL BACKING

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RYAN ONG, ACS (I) captain, on the fans watching the final outside the venue.

ond try at the end of the period to take the defending champions to 14-0 and victory in the first match.

The second match was a closer contest, with Oscar McEwin's sole try giving ACS (I) the 5-0 win.

Noting that the lead up to this year's NSG had not been easy, ACS (I) coach Adrian Chong said there was a sense of relief after the final.

The 55-year-old said: "It was quite tough preparing for this. We're so used to playing 15s and sevens is totally different. A lot of delays and postponements did not help, but the mentality of the boys was really strong, so I'm very happy."

ACS (I) vice-captain John Heng, 16, added: "Sevens requires more fitness so you have to make the correct substitutes when necessary because people get tired. Our coach created an entirely new game plan and I'm glad our team managed to push through."

Despite the loss, ACS (Barker) vice-captain Ryan Hia was proud of his team. The Secondary 4 student said: "Going into this game, we had already proven that we had overcome everything by advancing to the final. We did our school proud because it's our first final in nine years and I know that the team put in a lot of effort."

kimkwek@sph.com.sg