

SPORT

School sports

SILENCE IS GOLDEN FOR TENNIS DUO

Nigel, Ethan rely on their chemistry to help ACS (I) win 4th B Div title in a row

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On the tennis court, one will hardly see doubles duo Ethan Chan and Nigel Chen talking to each other.

Yet the chemistry between the 15-year-olds is unmatched, with the pair proving too strong for their opponents in the National School Games (NSG) three years in a row.

The Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) Year 4 students played a pivotal role in the 3-2 victory over St Joseph's Institution (SJI) in the B Division boys' tennis final on Feb 29, as their school claimed their fourth straight title.

Holding court at the Yio Chu Kang Tennis Centre, they defeated Caden Fangiono and Jonas Chen 7-6, 6-2 to secure an unassailable 3-1 lead for ACS (I).

It was Ethan and Nigel's third consecutive NSG title, having also emerged triumphant against Raffles Institution and SJI in 2023 and 2022 respectively.

Their telepathic understanding comes as no surprise, as they have played together for six years.

Nigel said: "Over the years, we've improved a lot to the point we don't really need to communicate on court. We understand each other well and what we're good at."

"When you see us play, we don't talk as much as other doubles' partners because of this understanding, which comes from our six years of experience."

Besides knowing each other's strengths and weaknesses, they also trust the other person to do what is needed for a good showing. Overcoming challenges also helped strengthen their bond.

Said Ethan: "There were some points where we're both at our lows and we kept losing but, over time, we know this partnership has worked out in our favour."

Nigel added: "Sometimes we'll argue on the court because we dis-



Nigel Chen (left) and Ethan Chan helped ACS (I) beat SJI 3-2 in the B Division boys' tennis final on Feb 29. It was the pair's third straight title together and fourth in a row for ACS (I). ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

agree with certain plays, but we'll always settle our differences and focus on what we need to do."

The duo have been classmates since Primary 4 in Anglo-Chinese School. They have also represented Singapore in several international competitions, with a runners-up spot at the Asian Tennis Federation Under-16 series in Penang in June 2023 being a highlight.

With hundreds of students

cheering on the sidelines, SJI's Zachary Sng defeated Ethan Chiang 6-3, 6-2 in the singles, before Ryan Mackay eased past Simon Tremolieres 6-0, 6-1 to level the tie.

ACS (I) claimed their second point when Asher Ong and Dylan Lim came from behind to beat Kenneth Ng and Spencer Tan 1-6, 6-3, 6-3.

After Ethan and Nigel's doubles victory, Arjan Singh grabbed a con-

solation point for SJI with a 3-6, 6-0, 6-2 win over Christopher Phay.

Asher, 15, said they remained "mentally strong" despite losing the first set, adding: "In the second set, we tried to take away some pressure (from ourselves) and play more freely, which helped us a lot as we carried the energy through (to the end)."

Dylan expressed delight at their

championship victory. The 14-year-old said: "Everyone played really well, and we did a good job. We can be really happy about the win."

Meanwhile, SJI captain Simon was proud of his team's progress. They were unbeaten until the final, where they put up a good fight.

The 15-year-old said: "It wasn't the result we wanted, but we showed bravery and tried to per-

form our best. A bit of pressure got to us and we fell short... but we deserved (making the final) after the season we've had."

This was the last B Division final for Nigel and Ethan, who is hopeful of continuing this partnership.

He said: "Maybe in the A Division, we could partner up again and help the team secure victory."

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