

SPORT



Hwa Chong's Hayden Lam celebrating after winning the B Division boys' C1-500m event but it was not enough to wrest the overall title from Anglo-Chinese School (Independent). ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

School sports

A FINALE TO BE PROUD OF

ACS (I) quartet win thrilling race to deny HCI sweep of boys' overall canoeing titles

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Heading into the last race of the National School Games' canoeing championships, the B boys' K4-500m on Thursday, Hwa Chong Institution (HCI) looked set to repeat their 2022 clean sweep of the boys' A, B and C division titles.

But Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) had other ideas.

Their quartet of Michael Cheong, Jasper Heng Wee, Matthew Cheam and Tan Kye Ren were neck and neck with HCI's Ang Sherzer, Noah Binedell, Kayden

Chua and Nguyen Vu Kien as both sides glided down adjacent lanes, setting the stage for a nerve-racking finale at the MacRitchie Reservoir's Paddle Lodge.

As they neared the shore, with the roar of the supporters adding to the excitement, ACS (I) pipped their rivals by just 0.84sec and dashed HCI's hopes for a second successive clean sweep.

With their 1min 43.26sec win, ACS (I) joined HCI atop the B boys' standings on 66 points but ACS (I) claimed the overall title after winning six golds against HCI's two.

ACS (I) captain Kye Ren said:

"We were nervous because the competition was so close. There was pressure on every single one of us. We had to calm our nerves, trust our training and do as we planned."

The 15-year-old added: "We will remain humble about ending HCI's streak, but I am very proud of everyone in my team."

Despite coming so close to a clean sweep again, HCI teacher-in-charge Violet Teo was not disappointed. She said: "We were technically tied on points. We just lost in the number of medals. I'm already very proud of them. A clean sweep is not important, what's more important is the work they put in."

HCI were still the dominant school in canoeing, bagging the A

and C boys' crowns as well as the A girls' title.

HCI's A boys' captain Chung Wai Keong, who won the C2-1000m and C2-500m golds with Asher Tan, said: "Everyone put in a lot of effort this year and managed to prove themselves today."

Teammate Pan Congchang was also among their top performers in the A Division. The national athlete won the K1-1000m and K1-500m events.

The 17-year-old, who was also a member of Singapore's bronze-winning K4-500m quartet at the SEA Games in 2022, spoke about the team's camaraderie, adding: "It was fulfilling to see everyone pushing and giving their all during the races."

Shona Chan, coach of HCI's A

girls and C boys, said: "I'm happy for them because they trained very hard. The girls especially were very disciplined, they would train on their own too, in between lessons, or when we couldn't train on public holidays."

National Junior College (NJC) retained the B girls' crown, while the C girls' title was claimed by Crescent Girls' School.

NJC captain Katelynn Ho was glad that her team managed to steady their nerves to emerge victorious.

The 16-year-old said: "We came into this competition very nervous because we knew there'd be a tough fight, but I think everyone pulled through and did their best."

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