

Hard work in training has paid off, says coach Yang

PETALING JAYA: Cheong Jun Hoong suffered back muscle spasms during the Diving World Series campaign in April, and was only cleared to compete in Budapest a few days before the start of the world meet.

Head coach Yang Zhuliang (*pic*) then made a bold and calculated move by fielding her in the 10m platform individual instead of her usual 3m springboard individual and synchro disciplines.

The 53-year-old coach was delighted to have realised his dream of producing a diving world champion for Malaysia.

"Words cannot describe my happiness. I am so happy," he said.

"It's the greatest moment in Malaysian sports. It is so hard to beat the Chinese divers, especially their women.

Jun Hoong showed remarkable composure to bounce back from a disappointing performance in the 1m springboard final on Saturday.

She was last among the 12 finalists but claimed bronze in the 10m platform synchro with Pandelega Rinong on Sunday.

She has only taken part in the world meet once, when she made her debut in the 2005 edition in Montreal, Canada.



Jun Hoong and Pandelega are also the nation's first Olympic diving silver medallists. They finished second in the women's 10m platform synchro in Rio de Janeiro last year.

Asked about the formula behind Jun Hoong's success, Yang replied: "It's all hard work in training. Our training sessions are of a very high standard. My coaches and I have always emphasised technical training during practice.

"I hope Jun Hoong's achievement will be the start of better things to come for Malaysian divers. We are aiming for Olympic gold next."

Yang was also grateful to the Amateur Swimming Union of Malaysia, National Sports Council and National Sports Institute for their support.

He admitted that he did not expect Jun Hoong to win the world title.

"I am surprised, but I was also expecting it to come one day.

"Jun Hoong has always been flawless in training but not in competition. However, she has finally proved a point – that she can attain great results in world-class meets.

"I hope other divers will be motivated by this. I think Malaysian diving will spring more surprises in the future," said Yang, who holds a Malaysian PR.