

SSC launches schemes to help athletes juggle sports and studies

Two schemes have been launched by the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) to provide a formalised system of support for athletes to cope with the dual demands of competitive sport and their career or studies.

By Patwant Singh
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SINGAPORE: Two schemes have been launched by the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) to provide a formalised system of support for athletes to cope with the dual demands of competitive sport and their career or studies.

The Sports Excellence (Spex) Education and Sports Excellence Career Schemes are set to benefit more than one thousand Team Singapore athletes.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) undergraduate Suzanne Seah, a national canoeist, has a hectic training and competition schedule.

But over the past four years, the university has provided her some flexibility in juggling between her sport and studies.

This includes allowing her to extend the duration of study to a maximum of six years. Ms Seah said: "We do not have to worry about... what if my exams clash with my competitions? What if I am not able to make it for this particular dateline? It helps you, it gives you a bit of flexibility in life -- you do not have to do it like this, you just get the job done."

NTU is among six institutions of higher learning to come on board the Spex Education Scheme.

The other institutions include Singapore Management University, Republic Polytechnic, ITE College East, Central and West.

Meanwhile, seven companies including KPMG -- which employs bowler Jasmine Yeong-Nathan -- have joined the Spex Career Scheme.

Ms Yeong-Nathan said: "They have been so supportive in the sense that they let me go off work early to go for training. They grant me leave so that I can go for tournaments. So in that aspect, it just helps me to focus on bowling a lot more."

The two schemes were launched by Minister of State for Trade and Industry Teo Ser Luck, who is also Chairman of the High Performance Sports Selection & Performance Sub-Committee.



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Mr Teo said: "These athletes have... something special which I hope companies can recognise, and that is the part we should educate companies, that athletes are special people. They are very focused, very disciplined, (and) they definitely can be trained in any functions that you want them to train in. And I think if they continue to work hard, if you continue to give them a chance, they will be contributing... to your company quite substantially."

He hopes more companies from diverse industries will join the scheme so that athletes have a greater choice of careers.

A Spex Business Network was also launched on Tuesday for athletes that would allow the SSC to seek employers who are interested in hiring such talent.

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