

Juggling work and sports more easily

By MAY CHEN

JASMINE Yeong-Nathan is first a world champion bowler.

But over the last three years, she has also been a marketing communications executive, tried her hand in corporate finance and is now a management consulting associate.

It may sound like a busy life but the 25-year-old would not have it any other way.

"It's given me a completely different perspective and a life besides just sport," said



2008 bowling world champion Jasmine Yeong-Nathan (right), now a management consulting associate with KPMG, with executives (from left) Glory Sim, Stephen Tjoa and Rachel Lee, at the launch of the SSC Sporting Excellence Education Scheme and the Sporting Excellence Career Scheme at The Float@Marina Bay yesterday. These will let Singapore athletes cope better with the dual demands of competitive sport and their careers or studies. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Yeong-Nathan, who has been with audit firm KPMG since 2009 and is part of the company's elite athlete programme, where top athletes are given help to chase both sporting excellence and a career outside sport.

"Now I'll have peace of mind that the transition to my working career after bowling will be a smooth one."

More athletes could also find the transition from the sporting world to the corporate world a smoother one following the launch of the Sports Excellence (Spex) Career Scheme at The Float@Marina Bay yesterday.

The scheme will help promote athlete-friendly work environ-

ments, but differs from similar programmes in the past in that it is targeted at value-add, both for the employer and the athlete.

"It's not just about allowing athletes time to train and compete. Companies are not doing charity," said Minister of State for Trade and Industry Teo Ser Luck, the mastermind of the scheme.

"It's about training and apprenticeship, about continuing to work in a company after sport and in order to do that, you need to be trained in company functions."

Seven companies have signed on to be part of the Spex Career Scheme, including KPMG, Resorts World Sentosa and StarHub.

Six institutes of higher learning, including the Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University, also came on board as partners in the Spex Education Scheme. It will work to give student-athletes flexibility in their academic schedules as well as preferential admission by virtue of their sporting achievements.

Both education and career schemes will be extended to all carded national athletes.

Mr Teo, who also chairs the High Performance Sports selection and performance sub-committee, said that he is keen to help athletes expand their horizons when it comes to career choices.

"The public sector has always been supportive of athletes," he said, noting the number of athletes that are employed by the Singapore Sports Council.

"But athletes don't have to think that they can only be a coach or manager with their national sports association. There are a lot of different jobs out there."

He has no doubts about getting more companies on board, given the "X Factor" that athletes possess, and the scheme's first partners are already firm believers.

Said StarHub's senior vice-president of human resources Chan Hoi San: "We're happy for athletes to come in as interns, or work part-time with us while they're studying. We're committed to supporting them and we also believe they will make good employees."

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