

FLEXI-LEAVE FOR MAJOR GAMES, CHAMPIONSHIPS

SUPPORT SCHEMES TO BENEFIT OVER 1,000 ATHLETES

Education, career initiatives aim to help national athletes balance studies and work

LOW LIN FHOONG
linfhoong@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE – Bowler Jasmine Yeong-Nathan wants to compete at next year's Asian Games in Incheon from Sept 19 to Oct 4, and she will not have to worry about taking leave from her job at KPMG to prepare for it.

The accounting firm, which has been hiring national athletes under its Programme for Elite Athletes (PEAK) since 2009, is one of seven companies that have joined the Sports Excellence Career Scheme.

Launched by the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) at the Float@Marina Bay yesterday, the landmark initiative aims to promote a flexible work environment to enable national athletes to apply for flexi-leave and flexi-work arrangements for major games and world championships, with the focus on finding jobs, internships and apprenticeships.

Spearheaded by the Sports Excellence Business Network for Athletes, the other companies include Adecco, Charles & Keith, MOH Holdings,

MSIG Insurance, Resorts World Sentosa and StarHub.

Together with the Sports Excellence Education Scheme that was also unveiled yesterday, it is expected to benefit more than 1,000 carded national athletes.

Minister of State (Trade and Industry) Teo Ser Luck, who is also Chairman of the High Performance Sports Selection and Performance sub-committee, is confident more firms will come on board.

"It's just a matter whether we can find a match between employer and athletes," he said. "I'm approaching trade associations ... They have a lot of members and some of them have expressed interest. I have not set a target (for the scheme), but I hope to get as diverse an industry ... in manufacturing and engineering services from the private sector.

"These athletes have the 'X' factor ... They have something special which I hope companies can recognise — they are focused, disciplined and can be trained in any function, and if they get a chance they can value-add to a company."

KPMG, one of the world's leading audit, tax and advisory services firms, has eight national athletes from bowling, chess, floorball, squash and basketball under its PEAK programme, which enables them to get time off to train and compete in their respective sports.



Bowler Jasmine Yeong-Nathan (second from left) with her colleagues from KPMG at the launch of the athlete support schemes at the Float@Marina Bay. PHOTO: SSC

Yeong-Nathan, who joined KPMG in 2009 and is now a Management Consulting Associate, said: "This scheme is awesome for athletes. I'm thankful that KPMG approached me and this PEAK programme allows me to leave work early for training and take unrecorded leave for competitions. They also gave me the chance to try out different job scopes within the company."

Local telco StarHub is another company keen on supporting sports in Singapore, and is looking for national athletes to join its staff.

Said StarHub Senior Vice-President (Human Resource) Chan Hoi San: "We are happy for them to come and do their internships and apprenticeships and work part-time ... we believe they make good employees."

Also launched yesterday was the Sports Excellence Education Scheme, which aims to provide student-athletes the flexibility to pursue their respective sport while balancing their academic studies, and use their sporting achievements to gain admission into institutes of higher learning.

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Management University, Republic Polytechnic, ITE College East, College Central and



Wakeboarder Christian welcomed the schemes. TODAY FILE PHOTO



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College West have joined the start-up scheme.

Wakeboarder Sasha Christian, who will compete at the 2014 and 2015 Asian Championships and 2015 World Championships before gunning for gold at the 2015 Southeast Asian Games in Singapore, plans to train full-time after graduating from Republic Polytechnic in May.

Said the 20-year-old: "This gives me the reassurance that there is a career for me after sports and that life doesn't stop after you retire from sports."