

Singapore athletes receive nearly S\$1 million from Peter Lim Scholarship

By Justin Ong / Fit To Post Sports – Mon, Jul 1, 2013 11:27 PM SGT



Guest-of-honour Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean and Peter Lim with primary school recipients of the scholarship. ...

A grand total of S\$936,000 was handed out to 320 Singaporean athletes on Monday, courtesy of the Singapore Olympic Foundation-Peter Lim Scholarship.

This year's record sum was a 25 per cent increase from the S\$746,000 disbursed to 271 recipients in 2012.

Named after its billionaire founder, the S\$10 million Peter Lim Scholarship was started in 2010 to support fledgling young athletes in need of financial aid, as well as outstanding national athletes.

Athletes in the primary, secondary, tertiary and high-performance categories received S\$1,000, S\$2,000, S\$3,000 and S\$10,000, respectively, during a ceremony at Singapore Expo.

The high-performance group of national athletes included the likes of football whiz Adam Swandi, sprinter Gary Yeo, bowling world champion Shayna Ng and rower Saiyidah Aisyah.



Democratic Republic of Congo's Ghislain Nsimba Mandualika (L), Singapore's Gary Yeo Foo Ee (C) and Zambia's Gerald ...

Yeo, who was awarded the scholarship for the third time, told *Yahoo! Singapore* the injection of funds would allow him to stop part-time coaching at primary schools and concentrate more on training.

"I haven't been getting money from my parents since I was 17," said the business student at Singapore Management University. "Now I can better fulfil the hours of a full-time athlete."

Fellow recipient Aisyah is planning to use the S\$10,000 award to fund overseas training as she gears up for the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games later this year.

The only national female rower in Singapore revealed she has been paying for her training and competition expenses out of her own pocket, after the Singapore Rowing Association's budget was cut by the Singapore Sports Council (SSC).

"That's why I'm training really hard," said Aisyah. "To show SSC that rowing is worth their support."



Joanna Chan Lai Cheng and Saiyidah Aisyah of Singapore warm up for the women's pairs on day four of the 2011 Southeast ...

Cash-strapped; talent-stacked

Yet it is the athletes outside of the high-performance category who are arguably more grateful for the monetary boost provided by the scholarship.

National wrestler Eddy Khidzer will channel his S\$3,000 towards paying off "debts owed" to the Wrestling Federation of Singapore (WFS).

The WFS has paid for a number of Khidzer's overseas competitions – and is now in trouble after the SSC drastically cut its annual funding from S\$199,000 to just over S\$44,000. The government body has not yet responded to an appeal by WFS.

Khidzer's own financial picture at home is dire. His father passed away when he was seven and his mother, a factory worker, meets Khidzer once in a while to give him a monthly allowance of S\$300. The 19-year-old resides with his grandmother, uncle and aunt, who takes care of household expenses with her job running a stall in a school canteen.

To chip in, the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College West student took on part-time work in retail at Paragon mall – a commitment that has caused him to sacrifice the odd training here and there.

Nonetheless, Khidzer managed to finish in third place at the Pre-SEA Games tournament held in Myanmar in April.



National wrestler Eddy Khidzer with his aunt and grandmother. (Yahoo! Photo)

His fellow bronze medallist then, Toh Xin Ran, was also a recipient of the tertiary scholarship. The 18-year-old ITE College East student said the award would come in handy with current circumstances in his family.

Toh's oldest sister passed away some years ago after a prolonged battle with a "non-transmittable" disease that led to kidney and lung failure. Her unsuccessful treatment in a private hospital racked up a S\$200,000 bill which remains unsettled -- largely because their father, a supervisor at Singapore Technologies, is now bankrupt.

For young, financially-challenged athletes like Toh and Khidzer, the way forward is to train harder in hopes of excelling and qualifying for a more lucrative award.

"I hope to win something at SEA Games and go for the high-performance group," said Khidzer. "If not... I'll just settle for tertiary."