

Speech by Principal, Mr Tan Teck Hock, at Singapore Sports School's 15th Anniversary Celebrations cum Awards Night 2019 at Singapore Sports School Auditorium on 13 February 2019, 7.05 pm.

Greetings

1. Good evening. I would also like to wish everyone: *Xin Nian Kuai Le, Wan Shi Ru Yi.*

- Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies – our Guest-of-Honour;
- Ms Tan Gee Keow, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and Chairman of Singapore Sports School Board of Directors;
- Board of Directors;
- Madam Kit Gek Wah, Superintendent North 8, Ministry of Education;
- Our Valued Partners: National Sports Associations and Sponsors;

- Guests, parents, staff, past and present student-athletes;

Welcome to Singapore Sports School's 15th Anniversary Celebrations cum Awards Night 2019.

Prime Minister's Challenge

2. ***“Become a National Sports Academy of Excellence 10 years from now.”*** – that was Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s challenge for Sports School at our 10th Anniversary Awards Night 5 years ago.

3. A strategic review committee was formed to study how the School could up its game to meet the demands of an intensive sport and training regime paired with a quality academic programme, and to also examine how the School would make a greater impact in youth sports by supporting student-athletes in the mainstream schools.

National Youth Sports Institute

4. One of the recommendations was the setting up of the National Youth Sports Institute (NYSI) to better support high-performing youth athletes in the sporting ecosystem. NYSI was launched in November 2015 and has since provided impactful support for top youth athletes across various sports at the national level. To raise standards in the national youth sports ecosystem, NYSI, works in partnership not just with Sports School, but also with Singapore Sport Institute, Ministry of Education, Singapore University Sports Council and National Sports Associations.

5. Today, NYSI is making its presence felt all along the athlete development pathway, supporting student-athletes in primary school through to university. Youth athletes from mainstream schools are tapping on NYSI's suite of services. And I want to take this opportunity to specially thank NYSI for supporting 6 of our student-athletes who competed at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in October last year.

Longer Athlete-Friendly Academic Pathways

6. The strategic review committee affirmed the early success of the Diploma in Sports and Leisure Management programme which we offered with Republic Polytechnic's support since 2011 for high-performing student-athletes, and recommended that we provide more such post-secondary academic programmes.
7. Today, the Sports School also offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and the Diploma in Business Studies, the latter, in collaboration with Ngee Ann Polytechnic.
8. Last December, the World Academy of Sport reaccredited us as an Athlete-Friendly Education Centre. This means that national level athletes can continue to have 3 or 4 years to complete their

IB Diploma Programme with the Sports School, instead of the standard 2.

9. We are privileged to be the only school in Singapore, and amongst selected ones worldwide, to be authorised to offer the Extended IB Diploma Programme.
10. With an enhanced athlete-friendly environment, more talented student-athletes from the mainstream schools have chosen to enroll, midstream, in Sports School's academic programmes.
11. Jowen Lim, winner of 3 SEA Games wushu gold medals, joined our Diploma in Sports and Leisure Management programme midstream; Au Yeong Wai Yhann joined us in the IBDP and became the national squash champion; and Justyn Sim, considered one of the best youth badminton players, has just joined our Diploma in Business Studies as a Year 1 student-athlete, and these are just 3 examples.

Overseas Partnerships

12. To seek a breakthrough, Sports School was also encouraged to strengthen and establish relations and training exchanges with overseas institutions so that our student-athletes from the different sports can learn and benefit from quality sparring and competitions.

13. We have relations and partnerships with sport and academic institutions from Australia, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand, many of whom have travelled from afar to celebrate with us tonight.

14. In fact, yesterday, we signed an MOU with Sportschule im Olympiapark, Poelchau-Schule. This MOU will give our footballers, swimmers and trackers new opportunities to learn from their German counterparts. We want to thank the Singapore Embassy in Berlin for helping to cement this new partnership.

Partnership Drives Excellence

15. The Sports School has done well over the last 15 years. In sports, we have nurtured 8 Olympians, 13 World Champions and 460 national athletes on senior teams since Sports School opened its doors in 2004.

16. Academically, the 2018 graduating cohort that sat for the national examinations proved that sport and studies are indeed not binary options. Our 4th batch of IBDP graduands did the Sports School proud by maintaining the 40-points average. In the GCE “O” and “N” Level Examinations, our secondary graduands gave the Sports School equally much to cheer by achieving 100% progression rates.

17. We didn’t achieve all this on our own. Besides our dedicated staff, past and present, we have many supportive partners and sponsors at home to thank for making this happen.

18. First, we want to thank all our partner NSAs, without which we would not have been able to chart our student-athletes’ transition from school level to national level athletes representing Team Singapore at the major games.

NSAs

19. Because the Sports School is committed to working closely with the NSAs, student-athletes like Martina Veloso, Adele Tan and Ho Xiu Yi have the opportunity to blossom. These 3 young ladies enrolled in the Sports School's Learn-to-Shoot Programme when they were in primary school. Alumna Martina went on to win gold at the 2015 SEA Games and double golds at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Together, they won a prestigious silver medal in the Women's Junior 10m Air Rifle Team event at the 2018 ISSF Junior World Cup in Germany, setting a new World Junior Team Record of 1,879.9 points.

20. They are taking turns at breaking the 10m Air Rifle National Record. The 630.8 points National Record currently belongs to Xiu Yi, set on 26 January in Munich, Germany. Working closely with the Singapore Shooting Association, the Sports School has groomed a golden generation of shooters that will augur well for Team Singapore in the years to come.

21. Last year, we also signed an MOU with Singapore Table Tennis Association to become the only zone training centre that is hosted at a school. The STTA Zone Training Centre will help to identify more young talents such as alumna Isabelle Li, a 3-time World Cup

and World Championship Team bronze medallist, and Secondary 2 student-athlete Zhou Jingyi, the 2018 World Hopes Challenge Champion.

22. Thank you NSAs for your unwavering support in further developing our student-athletes.

Sponsors

23. We also want to thank all our sponsors. 6 companies have been with us for more than 10 years and this demonstrates their belief in us.

School-Within-A-School

24. Our sponsors include Temasek Foundation Nurtures, part of the family of Foundations established by Temasek to serve the needs of the community. The Foundation manages the E W Barker Endowment which aims to enhance knowledge and deepen skills in education and training, with a focus on youth and sports.
25. In 2011, Sports School's second principal, Mrs Deborah Tan, made the courageous proposal for the highly-customised School-Within-A-School (SWS) programme to be supported by the E W Barker Endowment.

26. Today, several athletes from the SWS programme are ranked within the world top 100. In January 2019, we saw badminton players Yeo Jia Min at No. 44; Crystal Wong, No. 57, and Terry Hee, No. 66. And, there's Loh Kean Yew who, exactly a month ago, defeated Lin Dan, the 2-time Olympic champion and 5-time World Champion at a World Tour event.
27. Among our SWS table tennis players, we have Koen Pang and Goi Rui Xuan who competed at the 2018 YOG. Koen also finished 4th in the Men's Doubles with Ethan Poh and 4th in the Men's Team event at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Both Rui Xuan and Koen have been promoted to the senior team since last month. Congratulations!
28. We are grateful to Temasek Foundation Nurtures for supporting this programme over 8 years. Thank you Temasek!
29. Just as Sports School is grateful to Mrs Deborah Tan, our second principal, for her foresight to introduce the SWS and the IB Diploma Programme, we have deep respect for Sports School's first principal, the late Mr Moo Soon Chong who had an uncanny knack of picking out champions. In particular, Mr Moo's decision to admit bowler Muhammad Jaris Goh on appeal. After

completing his secondary education at the Sports School, Jaris went on to study at ITE and graduated as his cohort's Valedictorian, and returned to the Sports School to pursue the Diploma in Sports and Leisure Management.

30. Jaris, a final year student-athlete on the Diploma in Sports and Leisure Management programme, became the World's No. 3 amateur male bowler when he won the QubicaAMF World Cup bronze medal in 2015. As Captain, he led the Men's Team to a gold medal at the 2017 Sea Games, then the Men's Trios to a bronze medal at the 2018 Asian Games before closing the year with the Team bronze medal at the 2018 World Men's Bowling Championships.

31. All 3 achievements are historic and ground-breaking for the Men's Team. Jaris is a nominee for the ST Athlete of the Year award. Last night, Jaris was named by Singapore Bowling Federation as Bowler of the Year. Mr Moo would have been extremely proud of Jaris' achievements.

Alumni

32. Singapore Sports School is a very special place. In good faith, parents entrust their children to us and in many instances, this

has been extremely fulfilling for the staff who have seen them grow over the years. The early cohorts are either working or still chasing their sport dreams.

33. Several have returned to their alma mater to serve as full-time staff. Having been Sport Champions themselves, they know how to mentor and mould their young charges into champion material.
34. To name a few, there's Muhammad Al-Qasimy, who captained the Under 22 and Under 23 national football teams and is now a Boarding Mentor; there's Kayla Lau in Sports Administration and Gail Chia in Strategic Communications; there's bowler Tay Hui Wen, netballer Geraldine Ng and Olympian swimmer Mylene Ong who have returned as full-time coaches.
35. There are many alumni who continue to chase their Olympic dreams. In particular, I would like to highlight that sailor Griselda Khng has paired up with our ex-netballer Olivia Chen and they are aiming to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games next year. We wish them and all our alumni the very best!
36. Many alumni have returned home this evening.

37. Thank you, Benjamin and Narelle Kheng from the Swimming Academy – one-half of The Sam Willows, who will be performing during the poolside dinner programme.
38. Thank you, Bhaama Padmanathan from the Netball Academy – Miss World Singapore 2016, who is assisting with the awards presentation. Bhaama, please step out from backstage and let me present you to our audience.
39. Thank you Timothy Low from the Golf Academy – a sport news anchor, who is our co-MC tonight; Tim, please come forward... Ladies and gentlemen, here's Timothy Low.
40. Adam Swandi from the Football Academy, who is turning out for Home United Football Club, is at a scheduled IPPT; he will join us as soon as he can. To Adam Swandi, Sports School will always be home.
41. There are also some who can't join us this evening. Fencer Amita Berthier is studying in the USA and the new term just started in January, so she can't get away. In a congratulatory email to the School last week, Amita described Sports School as the crucible of sporting dreams.

42. Olympian sprinter Calvin Kang is in Bangkok expanding his company's business. He sends his warmest regards to thank the Sports School for helping him achieve his Olympic dream.
43. Shooter Martina Veloso is currently overseas for a competition and she also sends her congratulatory message. Martina is also a nominee for the ST Athlete of the Year Award.

15th Anniversary

44. When we started planning for our 15th Anniversary, we decided that the activities must be meaningful as much as commemorative.
45. One activity is the Tapestry, which involved all student-athletes painting strips of canvas to decorate the facade facing the swimming pool. The Tapestry carries the names of the sports that our student-athletes took part in.
46. A second activity is the publication of *The Champion's Way*, a book that showcases a champion from each academic year since 2004, except for one year that features a pair of twins. We are honoured that Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam has agreed to launch the book this evening – thank you, DPM.

47. The decision to invite DPM was an easy one to make as he was not only an athlete, but also a competitive hockey, football and cricket player in his youth.
48. At Sports School, we don't just excel in sport and studies. Through our student development programme, we also build character. We are the only school where student-athletes have the opportunity to participate in 3 Outward Bound Camps over 3 years. This photo was taken by our staff, Mr Chin Khen Then who was waiting anxiously at the shores of OBS Lumut. He shared with me that the student-athletes were late, the winds had dropped, and they could not sail back. They had the option of being towed back to base camp that very long night, but chose instead to row on. Kudos!
49. Just as we receive, we must also give. We encourage our student-athletes and staff to pay it forward and give back to society, whether it is as Sports Champions, Champions for Sports or Champions for Others.

50. About 2 weeks ago, Sports School hosted residents of the Sree Narayana Mission to a Festive Lunch. I was touched to see our swimmers take such good care of the elderly - welcoming them, making sure that they were comfortable, and helping to feed those who needed additional support.
51. The act of giving to the community is deeply entrenched in the School's values. Between 2015 and 2018, the Sports School's Project Champions Way has raised a total of \$320,008.20 for charitable causes. The latest beneficiaries – the Singapore Disability Sports Council and Special Olympics Singapore – will receive a total of \$73,888.88.
52. The act of gifting prize money by Sports School student-athletes is also laudable. 2 weeks ago, Mr Colin Foo, Chairman of the Sporting Parents Network, unveiled the Trophy Wall at Boarding. The Trophy Wall is an art installation using selected plates of trophies won by our student-athletes in the different sports from 2004 to 2018.
53. The first person to contribute towards the Trophy Wall was Artistic Swimmer and 2018 Sportsgirl of the Year Debbie Soh. By word of mouth, many student-athletes and alumni decided to

make donations, including Loh Kean Yew, Olympian shuttler Liang Xiao Yu and 2-time Olympian swimmer Tao Li. Altogether, we have 32 donors, including the Sporting Parents Network. Thank you very much for your contributions!

54. Tonight's Awards Night celebrates our student-athletes – in sport, academics and character. We are inducting 7 national athletes to our Sport Roll of Honour, as well as 6 graduands to our Academic Roll of Honour for topping their GCE "O" Level and IBDP cohorts. We are also recognising 14 student-athletes with Character awards. My heartiest congratulations to all the award recipients!

55. It takes a village to raise a champion.

- Staff, past and present
- Parents
- Generous Sponsors
- Education Partners – Republic Polytechnic and Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- NSAs
- And all of you present this evening – you form the Singapore Sports School Village. The Singapore Sports School is successful today because of your unstinting support and belief in the School.

56. I thank our overseas partners who provide our student-athletes with quality training and competition opportunities.
57. We appreciate and look forward to the continuing support from Singapore National Olympic Council, Sport Singapore, Singapore Sports Institute (SSI) and NYSI.
58. When the late Mr Moo gamely took on the task of establishing the Singapore Sports School more than 15 years ago, he knew that sport has the potential to transform communities positively and enrich lives. 15 years on, the Singapore Sports School has not only established itself as a key institution nurturing national athletes, we have nurtured a dozen graduating cohorts of *Learned Champions With Character* whom we know will make for a more vibrant and wholesome Singapore
59. And finally, thank you very much for joining us in our 15th Anniversary Celebrations cum Awards Night 2019. I wish you a most pleasant evening.