

SPEECH BY PRINCIPAL TAN TECK HOCK AT SINGAPORE SPORTS SCHOOL'S 2014 GRADUATION CEREMONY AT SINGAPORE SPORTS SCHOOL'S AUDITORIUM ON THURSDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2014.

This year, our student-athletes and alumni competed at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games and the Incheon 2014 Asian Games. The Closing Ceremony of the Asian Games will take place in two days' time.

I am proud to highlight the achievements of our 35 Sports School alumni, 3 student-athletes and 1 staff at the Incheon 2014 Asian Games:

- Bowler Jazreel Tan Shi Hua won 1 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze to become the most be-medalled athlete from Singapore
- Bowlers New Hui Fen won 1 gold and 1 silver and Daphne Tan Shi Jing won 1 gold medal
- Sailors Andrew Paul Chan won 1 gold and Cecilia Low Rui Qi won 1 silver
- Swimmer Tao Li won 1 silver and 1 bronze in her individual events
- Table Tennis player Isabelle Li Siyun won 1 bronze medal, and
- Staff shooter Nigel Lim Swee Hon won the Men's Team 25m Standard Pistol bronze medal.

Congratulations to all of them!

There are some commonalities among these medallists. They are all seasoned campaigners having made their rounds at the Sea Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and World Championships: They set targets. They have self-belief. They surround themselves with like-minded people and learn from the experts. And they work hard and don't give up.

These are also the common points shared by sprinter UK Shyam, gymnast Lim Heem Wei, sailor Benedict Tan and shooter Lee Wung Yew who delivered the "*Lessons From The Champions*" series this year.

Some of our graduating student-athletes have already tasted some sporting successes and are likely to carry on training to compete in larger-scale and more challenging international competitions, while some are still unsure where this earlier choice of studying at Singapore Sports School in the last four, five years, is taking you.

If you still have the smallest spark of passion in you to be a top competitor, I urge you to reflect on the lessons shared by our champions and get back on track with your target setting and training.

You need to set targets. Without an aim, you will not know where you are going and what you need to do to get there.

Shooter Lee Wung Yew set himself the target of competing at the Olympic Games and he represented Singapore not once or twice but three times, in Atlanta, Athens and Beijing. All three times, he was selected based on qualification in ranking competitions.

Like Lee Wung Yew, sailor Benedict Tan met people who were sceptical about his targets. When Benedict changed from a two-men boat to a one-man vessel, he was told that he should be realistic in not expecting success any time soon. But he believed he could overcome the odds. He analysed every little thing that he did during training and prepared ahead what he wanted to do in his next training session. He studied his competitors and trained to get ahead of them. He read widely so that he could learn faster – from the experiences of other sailors. In 1995, he was listed among the “Top 50 Sailors” in the world, and in 1996, he went to the Olympic Games and finished 36th out of 86 boats in Atlanta.

Gymnast Lim Heem Wei also had strong self-belief. She was not contented with her regional achievements. She took different routes to achieve her dream. She deferred her GCE “O” Level Examinations to train fulltime for the Manila 2005 Sea Games. She chose to study at Nanyang Polytechnic instead of taking the usual route of going to a Junior College, which she had made the grades for, because being on the three-year diploma course allowed her to train and compete more than if she was on the two-year GCE “A” Level certificate pathway. In 2012, she went to the Olympic Games in London, based on qualification. She had been plagued by some serious injuries and if she had given up, she would not have realised her dream and achieved her targets.

Sprinter UK Shyam was also one who didn’t give up. He confronted the many difficulties he faced, including poverty, eating scraps off the plates of customers in the restaurant where he had worked part-time. Fortunately, swimmer Ang Peng Siong discovered his difficulties and

reached out to help him. Running and swimming – two totally different sports, but there was a commonality, the passion for excellence. Peng Siong felt the fire in Shyam and he became Shyam’s mentor, to help him along.

In selecting speakers to deliver *“Lessons From The Champions”*, our School looks at what lessons the speakers can share with our student-athletes. So, besides classroom lessons and the sport lessons, I also hope that our graduates will take away the life lessons with them and find them applicable for the future.

Completing secondary school education is a milestone for our graduates. Moving on to Junior College or Polytechnic, or returning to Singapore Sports School for the IBDP or the RP-SSP DSLM, is the next lap.

Among the African tribes, the nomadic Maasai has long used the hunting of lions as a rite of passage for a teenager to become an adult. Armed with nothing more than a spear and a shield, the young Maasai sets out into the Savanna to kill lions – and he must bring back to his village, proof that he has killed at least one lion.

What is your rite of passage? A driver’s license? The license to carry out adult activities like smoking and consuming alcohol? Graduating with a degree and entering the workforce?

Whatever your rite of passage, whatever your choice in life, you must believe in your future.

I’m going to share with you a short story written by Paulo Coelho, a Brazilian, who has become one of the most widely-read authors in the world. In his book, *“Like The Flowing River”*, is a chapter entitled, *“Raj Tells Me A Story”*. This is what he wrote:

“A widow from a poor village in Bengal did not have enough money to pay for her son’s bus fare, and so, when the boy started going to school, he would have to walk through the forest all on his own. In order to reassure him, she said: ‘Don’t be afraid of the forest, my son. Ask your God Krishna to go with you. He will hear your prayer.’

The boy followed his mother's suggestion; Krishna duly appeared; and from then on, accompanied him to school every day.

When it was his teacher's birthday, the boy asked his mother for some money in order to buy him a present.

'We haven't any money, son. Ask your brother Krishna to get you a present.'

The following day, the boy explained his problem to Krishna, who gave him a jug of milk.

The boy proudly handed the milk to his teacher, but the other boys' presents were far superior and the teacher didn't even notice his gift.

'Take that jug of milk to the kitchen,' said the teacher to an assistant.

The assistant did as he was told. However, when he tried to empty the jug, he found that it immediately filled up again on its own accord. He informed the teacher, who was amazed and asked the boy: 'Where did you get that jug, and how does it manage to stay filled all the time?'

'Krishna, the god of the forest, gave it to me.'

The teacher, the students and the assistant all burst out laughing.

'There are no gods in the forest. That's pure superstition,' said the teacher. 'If he exists, let's all go and see him.'

The whole group set off. The boy started calling for Krishna, but he did not appear. The boy made one last desperate appeal: 'Brother Krishna, my teacher wants to see you. Please show yourself.'

At that moment, a voice emerged and echoed throughout the forest.

'How can he possibly want to see me, my son? He doesn't even believe I exist!'

Believe. How can you "see" if you don't believe? Clear away all doubts and believe. And work hard towards achieving your goals.

Congratulations on your graduation.