

'My Paper' 6th October 2010

Adecco Article One

In order to better focus on his training, 28-year old Singapore Team Rower Yeoh Wei Wen made a different choice for his career when he graduated from the University three years ago. He decided to dedicate full-time for his competition trainings and working part-time at the same time.

Mr Yeoh chose this path because he knows he is assured that Singapore Sports Council (SSC) will be there to assist him in matching a suitable job for him when he retires from the team and joins back the workforce.

With the development in sports field, the committee would be more interested to provide athletes with career planning so as to allow them devote their full attention to their trainings and competitions.

Last month, Minister of Community Development, Youth and Sports Dr Vivian Balakrishnan mentioned during a parliament session that he is preparing to set up a committee to review the current development of local athletes and methods to strengthen the education and career choices of the athletes. He added, "We want to ensure their parents that choosing sports is not a dead end. In fact, sport is a stepping stone that allows them to climb higher career peak."

SSC and Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) have been working with Adecco in recent years in 2006 and 2007 to kick start two programs "Programme for Athletes' Career and Education (PACE) and "Athlete Career Programme" (ACP).

These two programs are not compulsory and they provide services such as career development workshops, counselling, career planning, matching education to career choice etc.

There are over 800 athletes, who are expected to do well in the SEA Games, and about 500 of them have opted to join PACE. Among this group of athletes, there are 12 athletes who have retired from the games and are now successfully employed by the SSC or other organizations. As for ACP, it targets at athletes who play for the Olympic Games and now, there are about 370 participants in this program.

31-year old retired Archery Player Maryanne Gul was the first athlete to have undergone the ACP program successfully and secured a job. "The local sports industry has changed a lot over the past ten years. With the government investing more resources in this area, we can expect more athletes to devote their full time in the trainings and competitions."

Adecco Article Two

Career Planning for Professional Athletes

In recent years, Singapore sports scene has started to provide career planning for our athletes. Other than providing full-time athletes a plan for their career after they retire from the games, they have also helped to balance the other aspirations of the student athletes the ideals of sports development and individual pursuit.

30-year-old former swimmer Sun Ruwei was the first to have benefited from the SSC and PACE program. In 2005, after graduating from university in Sun Ruwei considered joining the banking industry but due to the worrying of difficulties in juggling both his career and training, he nearly gave up on the latter.

Thankfully, PACE stepped in to help Ru Wei and customized a program that allowed him to devote his time to his banking career as well as continue to compete in the 2006 Asian Games and 2007 World Swimming Championships.

RuWei, who works in Standard Chartered Bank as a Risk Analysis Officer, highlighted that this program has definitely helped to extend his career in the sports scene. A lot of times, athletes who finished their education would either become a full-time athlete or retire from the scene due to work commitments. This results in outstanding athlete to let their talents go to waste."

Adecco Article Three

Sports-related Careers Moving Towards Diversification

The traditional career path for athletes who retired from the sports scene is either to be a coach or open a sports training school. However with the rapid development of the sports scene, sports-related careers are getting more diversified.

SSC, SNOC, and National Sports Association (NSA) have come together to offer athletes career training programs and matching job opportunities. Adecco also pointed out that with the development in sports in Singapore, other relevant fields will also be booming.

Adecco Singapore and Malaysia Personnel Recruiting Manager Foong Wei Liang stated, "We have discovered more job opportunities that are relevant to sports and sports development, such as sports marketing, programming, and planning etc. More importantly, Singapore has also began training a group of experienced professionals in sports activities.

All these years, the efforts include establishment of the Singapore Sports School, the development of PE and Sports Development Framework by Ministry of Education (MOE) which trains students to become coaches and education administrators, and launching of sports-related courses by polytechnics.

Deputy Director of Republic Polytechnic's Sports, Health and Leisure School mentioned that more students are taking up sports-related courses in ITE, polytechnics and universities. This shows that people have changed their perception towards choosing sports as a career. For example, there were only 21 people in the first batch of students who enrolled into Sports, Health and Leisure School in 2006, but now there are more than 1,000 students.

On the other hand, Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) Sports and Nutrition Wellness course manager has also noticed sports organizations such as the National Sports Associations and other providers of sports and leisure activities have better effective management now. Therefore, this requires more staff with relevant skills, which further widens the opportunities for retired athletes.

Adecco Article Four

Organizations Fancy the "Soft Skills" of Retired Athletes

In the past, people tend perceive that athletes could excel in sports; but now, more organizations are appreciating the "soft skills" of these athletes who have retired.

Adecco has also realised that more organizations are willing to employ retired athletes because they have learnt to appreciate better the special skills that athletes possess.

Foong Wei Liang commented that these athletes have the skills that allow them to excel at work. These skills include competitiveness, working together as a team, striving hard towards their goals, passion, experience garnered from international events, educated, and able to withstand hard work. All these skills are definitely essential in the workforce, and are applicable in most of the jobs out there.