

Presentation Transcript

Topic: Hangout with our Athlete, Physical Impairment

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Pauline: Hi I'm Pauline I'm from SDSC, Singapore Disability Sports Council. I have here with me Aini and today's session of Hangout with Athlete we have our physical impairment.

Pauline: So, I'll introduced to you SDSC and the sports available at SDSC. Then, we will have Aini to speak about herself.

Pauline: So, SDSC was set up in 1973, to champion sports accessibility for persons with disability. We believe in dignity, capability and the value of PWDs. We enable Singapore's PWD to excel in sports both recreationally and competitively. SDSC is the only organisation in Singapore to reach out across to all disability sports.

Pauline: Our mission and goals - We transform life of PWDs through sports. Firstly, we influence national initiative and policies to introduce recreational sports activities. We also promote mental and physical benefits of the sport. Second, we promote guidance for organisation clubs and groups to become inclusive to PWDs and improve access to parasports. For example, we enter mainstream schools to promote parasports to our CCAs. Aini, have you been to one of our mainstream schools to introduce sports?

Aini: Yes, actually, as part of an athlete engagement, I went to mainstream secondary school to share more about parasports, especially the sports that I'm doing: para powerlifting. So, during this session, I shared more with the students on how people with disability, especially lower limbs disability, do sports in para powerlifting.

Pauline: So last one, we promote education and host national programmes, to enable PWDs to train, participate and excel in sports. For example, we hold annual competitions for parasport, to enable PWDs to join.

Pauline: Next up the benefits of sports. We teach independence as well as teamwork. We help the community to meet one another of the common interests and also different sports that bring them together. We open up exciting opportunities and challenges. We support them through socialising and social inclusion and also contribute to their cognitive mental and emotional development.

Pauline: Next up, these are different types of sports that pair of parasports are categorised into. Right here we have Aini, who is under the physical impairment disability, which is under the short stature. So, we have different physical impairment like Amputee, Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, Muscle Dystrophy, and others like wheelchair users or the loss of lower limbs or upper limbs. So Aini, do you want to speak more about your short stature under the physical impairment?

Aini: I have this physical disability called Multiple Epiphyseal Dysplasia, which hinders the growth of both my knees. So due to this condition, I as a result have short stature so due to short stature, this physical disability have also hindered my mobility. So, I have restricted mobility as well.

Pauline: Under intellectual, we also have the IQ level below 75. They must be diagnosed before the age of 18 and we also have autism and down syndrome. Next up, sensory for visual impairment and hard of hearing, there are also different types of severity.

Pauline: So, here are the list of sports that we have at SDSC: Athletics, Swimming, Tenpin Bowling, Table Tennis, Goalball for visual impairment, Shooting, Powerlifting, Lawn Bowls, Sailing, Chess, and also Adaptive Climbing.

Pauline: So, this is the list of sports that caters to the physical impairment where you can look through for the physical impairment like Athletics, we have the Track and Field. We have Wheelchair Racing, Boccia, Cycling, Shooting, Swimming, Tennis, Tenpin Bowling, and Wheelchair Basketball.

Pauline: So, in SDSC, in our pathway development, we Recruit, Nurture and Develop. When we hold our events, we introduce awareness and outreach to our PWDs, we build up the interest in sports. So PWDs will come in and enjoy the sports that we have, and we will nurture them through “Learn to Play” programmes. When we expose different sports to them, they can sign up for the programme that we have, and it will be more of the expertise of the sports.

Pauline: Next up, we have the “Development”, where they will specialise in the sport and learn to compete. For example, National Games, they can come in, join and have their results taken down.

Pauline: So, these are the past major games and events that were organised by SDSC. We have our National Para Games for cycling in 2018, National Boccia Championship in 2019, Micron Foundations Singapore World Para Bowling Tour that was held in 2018. Major Para Games like ASEAN Para Games in 2015 and 2017. And the last edition was ASEAN games 2018 in Indonesia. So now, we will come to a part where Aini can talk about herself and give you more in depth about her journey in para powerlifting, Aini.

Aini: Hello, everyone. I'm Annie. I'm Team Singapore Para Powerlifter. I'm 29 years old this year, and I've been doing para powerlifting for four years. I have this physical condition called Multiple Epiphyseal Dysplasia or commonly known as SMED, which affects my bone growth and resulted to my short stature. So as for my hobbies, I prefer the outdoors, mainly kite flying and also exploring new places. And when I'm indoors, I prefer to spend time with my family, doing cooking or even reading. So, a little bit fun fact about myself is that I've never heard about para power lifting prior to doing this sport. In fact, I've never done any weight training at all. So, my journey in para powerlifting was accidental. As my current teammate Kalai, he was the one who introduced para powerlifting to me in 2015 when Singapore hosted the ASEAN Para Games. However, in 2015, I was still schooling, and the competition clashed with my exam date, so I had to give that a miss. Then in 2017, Kalai messaged me again and said that you must have graduated, we are going to Kuala Lumpur for the 2017 ASEAN Para Games. Are you interested to participate? So that's when I came down for the trial just for fun and I didn't have any expectations. And that's where I lifted the 35 kilogrammes. 35 kilogrammes were the bronze medal during the ASEAN Para Games in Singapore. Two days later, I received a call from the Singapore National Paralympic Council that I'll be flying to Kuala Lumpur to represent Singapore for the ASEAN Para Games. And then everything else is history.

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Pauline: Now on this picture here, can you tell us more about what your experience like was when you were on the competition mat?

Aini: So, para powerlifting in comparison to the able-bodied powerlifting, para power lifting only comprises of one discipline, which is the bench press. So, para powerlifting is mainly for athletes with lower limb deficiency. So, when we do bench press, we actually lay on the bench and then we will strap both our legs. The reason for strapping is because sometimes when the weight gets too heavy, your legs will flip over. So, this strapping is to avoid that from happening. Usually before I start my lift, I have fears and I also doubt myself because I feel like this weight is very heavy. How can I do this? But the few minutes before I actually started my lift, my coach actually have to do some mental preparation with me. He will run through all the processes that I have to focus on instead of me focusing and worrying about the weight that I'm lifting. So that actually helped a lot in calming myself down and remain composed during my lifts.

Pauline: Next we have Aini at the KL games in 2015. That was her first game before she went to Indonesia for ASEAN games. Okay, tell us more on how you actually feel when you were at the KL games?

Aini: Yes. So, my very first competition for powerlifting was the ASEAN para games in Kuala Lumpur in 2017. So, before that I've never competed in any para powerlifting competition in Singapore. And this was also my first-time representing Singapore in a regional competition. So, I was very nervous, and I was the only female athlete in the para powerlifting team. It was also my coach's first-time coaching female athletes. So, we didn't know what to expect in terms of preparation prior to the game. And it was my first experience, so I was really, really nervous. Like, I suddenly I forgot what I should do when I go out. Should I smile? Should I be too friendly or not? But something that's stuck with me to this day is that my family and friends actually flew down to watch me during the Kuala Lumpur ASEAN Para Game. So even though I was on unfamiliar ground, when I came out during the athlete presentation, and I heard my mom's voice, I saw my friends, that gave me a huge sense of relief. And I felt really comfortable to know that they are there with me. So that feeling of familiarity, that there are people who are close to me that are watching me, that really helped me to calm down during my very first competition.

Pauline: Let's know more about yourself. Other than your major games, so what's your weekly schedule like when you go for trainings?

Aini: So, I train three times a week and I training mainly on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, about two and a half hours per session. My coach will come up with the training programme. So, on Monday, we will usually we do heavier weights where I will get to test my strength. And then on Wednesday, I will do more on endurance work, and on Friday, I will work on my techniques, because para power lifting is a very technical sport where they actually mark you base on the technicalities of your lifts.

Pauline: So other than powerlifting, you actually tried other sports also. I think you mentioned that you tried wheelchair basketball. So, there's like team sport and individual sport. How do you feel when you enter a different environment in terms of the sport?

Aini: As compared to powerlifting, where it's a more individual sport, wheelchair basketball, you have more teammates. So, it's like, when you train, you have more people with you, and when you suffer through training, you also have more people with you. So as compared to para powerlifting, where is just you alone, in wheelchair basketball, you have teammates going through the whole process with you. But having said that, even in para powerlifting when I was doing my lifts alone, I actually have a team of people supporting me and which are my teammates. So, during training when I'm almost on the verge of giving up, my teammates will cheer me on. So that's the one that keeps me going during trainings.

Pauline: I think we also can we know about your education. I understand that you are from a mainstream school since young and what you went through during your activities that your CCAs in school, how do you feel about it?

Aini: So, I am fortunate that my teachers and friends are very inclusive when it comes to doing physical activity in school with me. So mainly in secondary school, I was into swimming, so I was interested to do biathlon, triathlon. I can't do the full biathlon and triathlon by myself, so my teacher actually recommended that I participated the relays instead, so I will do swimming and my friend will do the running and cycling portion. So that made me feel like I can still do sports competitively despite my condition. When I went to university, I really wanted to try out dragon boating. But I was afraid to try out dragon boating because I thought it was very hectic, I see people training and running around the school and I thought to myself, I can't run and how do I keep up with the team? But I emailed the team captain at that time. And the team captain said to just come down, we'll customise the training programme for you. So, when my teammates are running around the school for training, I will be doing the rowing machine. This kind of adjustment in the training programme really made me feel welcomed and made me feel like I really want to give a try in that sport.

Pauline: What about your game rituals? Just now you mentioned that you were very nervous but now that you have been in SDSC sports and you've actually been to a few more competitions. What do you normally do now, when you compose yourself?

Aini: I still get very nervous even after four years of competing, because it's a very different environment each time I compete. And sometimes I see different competitors also but to keep myself down, I listened to my playlists. So, my go to fight song is Hall of Fame by The Script, so everytime when i go for competition, I will listen to that song, it is like a mantra for me before my competitions.

Pauline: Aini, do you want to tell the audience, like any messages to them and the PWDs, or how you want to enjoy the PI Sport.

Aini: One message that I would like to share with the audience is that although I have done sports, prior to joining para powerlifting in school, but it was a different kind of environment, because I was doing sports with people mainly who are able bodied, so I was trying to play catch up with them. And sometimes I also have this major fear of missing out, fomo, so when I tried to push myself further, which resulted to some kind of injuries, which was worsening my condition. But when I started doing para sports, and that's when I realised like my disability is not the one holding me back. It's my mentality and my disability actually made me realise my true ability, and I will not be able to, be who I am today, if it's not for the things I learned during my involvement in para sports. To end off, let us share with you a video of our training journey. Please enjoy. Thank you and goodbye.