

GIVING BACK THROUGH SPORT

Five national athletes head TeamSG Cares projects to promote their craft to masses

Kolette Lim

Pearlyn Koh may be busy juggling commitments as a full-time student and national table tennis player, but that has not stopped her from giving back to the community.

Since 2019, the first-year business undergraduate at the National University of Singapore has been organising several community activities, such as a table tennis tournament for primary school kids and distributing welfare packages

to foreign workers during the holiday season.

The 21-year-old said: “If you can give someone a little help, it might mean a lot to the other party. A little bit can go a long way.”

Her latest project, Healthy Body Healthy Me!, is a one-day programme that aims to increase awareness of table tennis and provide opportunities for more people to play the sport.

It is one of five projects under Sport Singapore’s TeamSG Cares, a platform to help former and current national athletes give back to



Since 2019, national table tennis player Pearlyn Koh has been organising activities such as a table tennis tournament for kids and distributing welfare packages to foreign workers during the holiday season. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PEARLYN KOH

the community and promote healthy living.

Koh’s project, to be held on Feb 5, aims to introduce the sport to underprivileged children living in rental flats in Jalan Kukoh.

The national team will share their experiences of managing busy schedules and perseverance. They will also teach the children some basic skills.

The players have a packed training schedule ahead of the SEA and Asian Games in 2023, but Koh said they had no qualms in participating in the initiative.

She added: “As national players, we receive a lot of support from Singaporeans, as well as financial support and resources. This is a small way to... show my gratitude for all I’ve received. Giving back

keeps me going.”

More than \$75,000 was disbursed under the Active Citizen Grant in December 2022 to fund five such community-based initiatives, said Sport Singapore.

Other current and former athletes who have come up with similar projects are cyclist Calvin Sim, boxer Muhamad Ridhwan Ahmad and footballers Ernie Sontaril and

Madhu Mohana.

Also in December, Madhu kicked off Football Masterclass With Madhu Mohana, which is targeted at those aged eight to 18.

Every week, he trains about 20 youngsters at The Cage at Kallang, with each session lasting an hour.

The 31-year-old, who played as a defender for the national team from 2013 to 2021, said: “I was from the Singapore Sports School, so I had proper training from a young age.

“I realised not many people were able to be coached like I was and they didn’t have the basics and proper understanding of the game.

“I want to get as many kids to get the opportunity to play, enjoy and understand football.”

He has reached out to charity-based organisations such as Boys’ Town and Salvation Army, inviting underprivileged children and youth to attend his classes.

“A lot of kids don’t have opportunities to play at a futsal court because it’s not cheap, so I hope to allow many people to have this experience.”

Madhu, who is pursuing a sports management degree at the International Sports Academy, believes that organising and executing these classes are worth it.

He said: “Some kids were so happy to see me because they always thought of me as just a figure on the television who they would not get to meet.

“But on the ground, I’m just another person and I think it’s really good that these kids are able to meet someone they look up to and train with them.”

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