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SPEECH BY TAN ENG LIANG, CHAIRMAN, SINGAPORE SPORTS COUNCIL AT THE ESSO SPORTS SCHOLAR/UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PRESENTATION AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM CONFERENCE ROOM ON 30 NOVEMBER 82 AT 10.00 AM

I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet with you - the Esso Sports Scholar and the Esso University Sports Scholarship awardees - this morning. The Singapore Sports Council is happy to see deserving students who have excelled in studies and sports winning the awards and benefitting from the grant to help meet their educational and sporting requirements.

The Esso Sports Scholar Award was first instituted in 1975. Since its inception, 115 boys and girls have won it. There were just 10 awardees in the initial year but the number grew to 15 last year. This year, an additional four awards have been given, making it 19 in all.

It is interesting to see the representation of sports among the award winners. From 1975 till 1978, badminton and swimming were the dominant sports. In 1977, for example, 62% of the awardees were swimmers. From 1979, more athletes than in previous years have won the award. In that year, 46% of the awardees came from track and field.

This rivalry is in order. Each sport would like to see its representatives emerging as winners. However, it is not so encouraging to see the majority of recipients and scholars coming from just two or three major sports. A lock

at this year's awardees from the various sports will show that the standard and quality of the less popular sports is not lagging behind. For the first time since 1975, awardees have come from squash, canoeing, softball and judo. I commend both the awardees and the sports concerned for this scholarship "breakthrough".

Related to studies and sports is the subject of leisure. Leisure defined simply refers to the free, uncommitted time that a person can spend at his disposal. From our observation, today's student has little free time to speak of, largely because he has allowed his academic and related work like tuition to use up most of his leisure.

This is a sad reflection of the rigid student life that one encounters today. There is no reason why leisure should be sacrificed all the time for academic studies, if a student manages his time sensibly. Sports and studies can mix and they should be on a continuum, in the same way that work and leisure are complementary to each other in adult life.

There is little reason for the present-day student to forego his leisure altogether, for months on end, especially when an examination comes around. Sometimes it may even be a health hazard if a student avoids sports and exercise for an extended period of time. This is an irony in itself because we

are supposed to live in an age that provides ample opportunities for leisure, more so than any other age has provided us in the past.

Students should learn to cultivate the right attitude towards studies and sports, and remove the pressure of compulsion from their leisure so that the old idea of "mugging and swotting" will not spill over from study into what should be their non-compulsive leisure. Otherwise, students can never reap the full benefit of leisure that is supposed to unwind and refresh their minds and bodies.

Contrary to popular belief, sports and studies can mix. One can complement the other. The sports world is abound with examples of people who have combined both successfully. Sebastian Coe, one of the world's greatest athletes, is currently pursuing post-graduate studies despite his heavy training schedule. Peter Snell, a former world mile record holder who is still running recreationally, has recently completed his PhD degree starting from scratch. Julie Anthony, a top woman tennis professional, despite her busy life playing tournaments worldwide, has found time to complete her research work to earn herself a doctorate in psychology. Socrates, the captain of the 1982 Brazilian World Cup football team, plans to be a doctor of medicine once his playing days are over. I am sure you know

of many prominent sportsmen and women who have managed their time well in sports and studies.

May I urge students to make every effort to make their lives more meaningful. After they have satisfied the obligations of academic work, they should learn everything within their means to be well-rounded individuals. Also, they should appreciate whatever leisure they have and tap its potential to the fullest. In short, they should use leisure constructively.

I wish to congratulate those of you who have won awards for your sporting achievements. This is only the first step in the long road to sports excellence. Meanwhile, you have an important role to play at your institutions. By the recognition bestowed on you today, you have become the examples for thousands of fellow students to emulate. I wish you success in fulfilling this exemplary role so that the honour you have brought yourself in your sport, your school and your country, can be held in high esteem.

Finally, I would like to thank Esso for sponsoring the scholarship scheme which has been well received in all quarters. I hope Esso will continue to lend support in the years to come so that more deserving students would stand to benefit.

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