

EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY

SPEECH BY DR TAN ENG LIANG AT THE TOYOTA OPEN 1984 BUFFET
DINNER TO BE HELD AT PENINSULA HOTEL POOLSIDE ON
10 OCTOBER 1984 AT 8.00 PM

At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Singapore Lawn Tennis Association (SLTA) and Borneo Motors (S) Pte Ltd for once again organising the prestigious Toyota Open 1984 tournament at the Singapore Cricket Club from 10 - 14 October 1984.

Today, I am going to talk about an unpleasant topic which has been bothering us at the Singapore Sports Council recently. I hope the friends from overseas will bear with me as I would like to carry this message across to all those who participate in sports, especially to local sportsmen in competitive sports.

There has been an upsurge in sports violence in Singapore among spectators and players. In the month of September alone, there were at least five cases reported in the mass media. To cite them:

- . Spectators during a pugilistic competition descending on a referee whom they thought had erred.
- . A basketball player during an international tournament, unhappy over the umpire's decision, shoved and manhandled him.

- . In a Under-19 Soccer Tournament, players assaulting an opponent, resulting in the game being abandoned.
- . In another soccer tournament, the referee abandoned the game due to extreme rough play, which almost resulted in a free-for-all. After abandoning the game, the referee was abused and manhandled by players from one of the teams.

I am sure most of you here are also familiar with a case that happened in one of your tournaments which caught me and I am sure many of you by surprise.

How are we going to prevent and eliminate sports violence in all our sporting arenas in Singapore?

To begin with, game officials must receive far greater support than has been the case recently. Players, spectators and officials have been especially guilty of subjecting umpires and referees to unending criticism, mockery and at times even abuse and assault. Clearly incompetent officials should be dismissed, but the rest deserve backing and respect.

Second, stiffer penalties could deter and sometimes stop most of the intentional violence in sports today. It may also have an impact on crowd misbehaviour.

Third, game rules and regulations should be modified and changed such that the least opportunities are given to a player to want to commit a brutal act. The match officials should also be empowered to use their discretion and take action before any violent act is committed.

Fourth, favouritism and politics have often been able to influence the decisions of the Disciplinary Committees of national sports associations. The Disciplinary Committees should be more stringent and be free from outside influence. They should advocate fair action to curb the spread of sports violence. On this point, I would like to commend the SLTA Disciplinary Committee for having taken firm and appropriate action in dealing with the recent case.

Lastly, players, officials and spectators alike must change their attitudes and expectations. Although everybody wants to win or see a winning team, a win-at-all-cost philosophy usually overlooks the spirit of fair play, good sportsmanship and the observance of rules. We must therefore educate our teams and players from school to National Teams, to learn how to win fairly and at the same time the spirit on how to lose gracefully.

It leaves me now the pleasure of wishing all foreign participants a warm welcome to Singapore and every success in the competition. I hope you will all have an enjoyable night.