

Treat young athletes with dignity, please

LEVEL FIELD

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IT'S embarrassing that the cream of our young athletes competed with minimum sports attire and equipment at the 17th Asian Junior Track and Field Championships at Ho Chi Minh City recently.

That the contingent of 24 athletes, five coaches and team manager travelled without an official bag, track suit and jogging shoes is indeed sad.

The athletes wore their own attire during the prize presentation.

They were given a running vest with the word "Malaysia" embossed on the back and a pair of shorts and two plain round-neck T-shirts.

Whatever reason Malaysian Athletics Federation (MAF) come up with for this poor state of affairs — even if their sponsor Mizuno could not supply them with an official attire on time — is unacceptable.

MAF should have been better prepared for such a premier junior athletics competition which involved 18 countries.

Granted MAF are trying to stand on their own two feet, unlike most associations who rely on National Sports Council (NSC) for support.

At least NSC ensure athletes are well attired. To see our athletes dressed in rainbow colours does not auger well for Malaysian sport.

Just three weeks ago in this column, I said athletics was beginning to shine with many

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budding athletes on the rise.

I drew attention to the need athletes had to be well cared for, guided and given the best coaching opportunities and exposure.

To send a contingent to an Asian-level meet without proper attire certainly does not give such an impression.

If these athletes are disillusioned at an early age, the future of the sport may be in danger.

I don't favour spoiling athletes but they must be treated with respect and dignity.

MAF gave each athlete an allowance of RM180 for the seven-day event from June 1 to 7. This works out to about RM25 per day.

I also don't advocate splashing money on athletes but they do deserve a more decent allowance.

Twenty-five ringgit is about US\$6 and in a country where US dollars are used, the amount would not bring them much comfort.

They couldn't have bought their peers from other countries a decent meal or refreshments, or purchased souvenirs for their loved ones!

I hope some of the athletes didn't resort to trading their vest or T-shirts to souvenir hunters for extra cash!

Yes, the athletes were provided accommodation and meals but they could have still been given something like RM50 a day.

Athletes for the Malaysia Games (Sukma) probably get more.

Maybe MAF are cash-strapped and that was all they could afford. If that was the case, the association had better start working on raising funds.

I know MAF are trying to get things right but it must be a concerted effort by the council, not just a few individuals.

If anyone wants to serve, they must be prepared to work harder to raise funds for the association to care for athletes.

Otherwise, they should be honourable enough to step down; make way for those who are interested in the sport and want to contribute.

Athletics is a poor cousin to football.

When they travel, the national footballers — be they seniors or juniors — do so in style. They wear suits and are given a suitcase of attire and equipment, not to mention handsome allowances and bonuses.

No wonder many youngsters prefer football to athletics.

Our young athletes did Malaysia proud, winning three gold medals, three silvers and a bronze out of the 44 at stake.

They finished fourth behind Japan (13-10-4), China (11-7-4) and India third (7-4-6).

Without doubt, we have a crop of young people who have the potential to raise the athletics profile of the country. MAF must look at ways to keep them happy or lose them to other sports.

There is no need to pamper athletes — just give them their due.

I wonder if MAF help athletes in securing running spikes through sponsorship?

Once an athlete makes a name for himself, he has no problems getting sponsors. But in the early days, when they are struggling with expenses, they should be given the assistance they need.

Let's give our youngsters the respect they deserve and, hopefully, they reward the country with respectable performances.

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Malaysia's 4x100m men's silver medal-winning team weren't in uniform during the prize presentation ceremony.

LEE CHONG WEI
mengumpul 94,453
mata, 5,509 mata
mengatasi Chen Long.

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Chong Wei disahkan No. 1

Oleh **SUFIAN HADI SOJAK**
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KUALA LUMPUR 9 Jun

- Setelah lebih setahun setengah kehilangan takhta, Datuk Lee Chong Wei kembali merampas gelaran pemain No. 1 dunia secara rasminya apabila Persekutuan Badminton Dunia (BWF) mengemas kini kedudukan berdasarkan pungutan mata hari ini.

Laman web BWF menunjukkan Chong Wei, 34, mendaki satu anak tangga untuk ke puncak *ranking* dengan 94,453 mata, menggantikan seterusnya dari China, Chen Long yang turun ke tempat kedua, ketinggalan 5,509 mata di belakngannya.

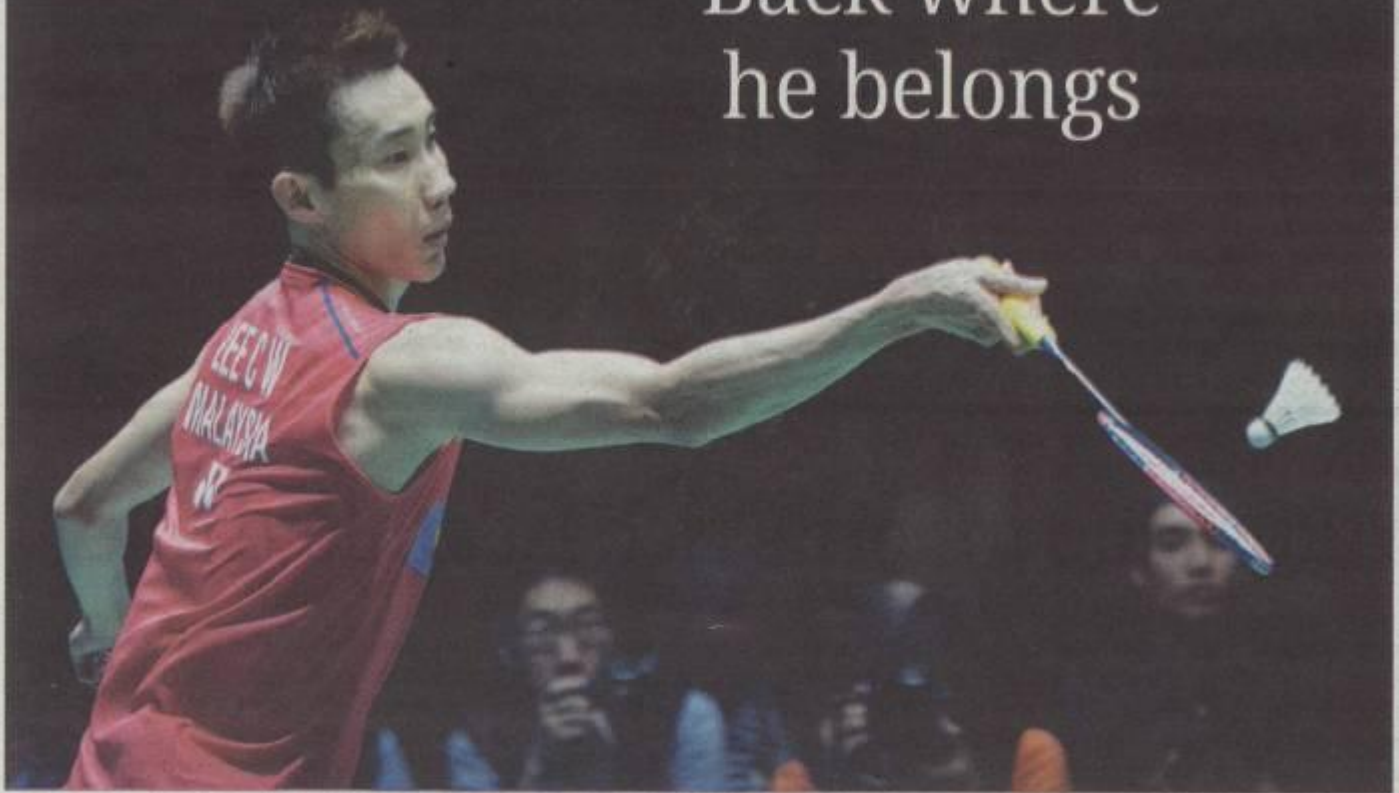
Tempat ketiga kekal milik rakan senegara Chen Long, iaitu Lin Dan dengan 75,388 mata, diikuti dua pemain Denmark, Viktor Axelsen (72,384 mata) dan Jan O Jorgensen (71,702 mata).

Kemenangan Chong Wei ke atas Jorgensen 17-21, 21-19 dan 21-17 dalam perlawanan akhir Terbuka Indonesia Ahad lalu telah melonjakkan kedudukannya ke puncak.

Pemenang dua pingat perak Sukan Olimpik itu kehilangan takhta bermula 27 November 2014 selepas digantung daripada bertanding dalam perlawanan kompetitif selama lapan bulan sejak 30 Ogos 2014 oleh BWF akibat positif dadah.

Hukuman itu menyebabkan Chong Wei jatuh ke kedudukan paling teruknya dalam *ranking* dunia iaitu ke-180 pada 18 Jun 2015.

BADMINTON

Back where
he belongs

Chong Wei has worked hard to reach the top of the world rankings. — File picture

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KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's Lee Chong Wei yesterday reclaimed the world No 1 ranking he lost 18 months ago following a positive doping test, establishing himself as the man to beat as he takes a possibly final crack at an elusive Olympic gold medal.

Chong Wei knocked China's Chen Long from the summit of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings, capping a remarkable comeback for Malaysia's biggest sporting star, who had earlier bleakly fretted that his eight-month doping ban could dash his Olympic hopes.

Chong Wei, then the world No 1, had tested positive for the banned anti-inflammatory drug dexamethasone at the World Championships in August 2014.

BWF eventually decided against a possible two-year ban after concluding he "accidentally" took the drug.

Chong Wei also argued he received dexamethasone during stem cell treatment for a thigh injury and that it gave him no

playing advantage.

Since returning to the court a year ago, the 33-year-old has recaptured much of the form that allowed him to dominate the game for years, lately surging to a string of victories including a win in last weekend's Indonesian Open that finally put him back in the world's top spot.

His failure to add an Olympic or world title to his packed trophy case has become a defining feature of his career, earning accusations the quiet, soft-spoken shuttler wilts on the biggest stages.

In particular, his heart-breaking losses to long-time nemesis Lin Dan of China, who defeated Chong Wei in the 2008 and 2012 Olympic finals, have become the stuff of badminton history.

He makes no secret of his burning desire to fill that void in his career and said recently the Rio Games now loomed larger for him and Malaysia due to his previous failures.

Malaysia has never won an Olympic gold

and Chong Wei has previously acknowledged the pressure that entails.

His resurrection — Lee will carry the Malaysian flag and lead the country's team into the Rio opening ceremonies in August — raises the tantalising possibility of another clash with Lin Dan, who is now third in the world, just Chen Long.

Meanwhile, Koo Kien Keat-Tan Boon Heong and Chan Peng Soon-Goh Liu Ying are the only Malaysian left in the Australian Open.

Kien Keat- Boon Heong toppled top seeded Indonesians Muhammad Ahsan-Hendrawan Setiawan 21-17, 17-21, 21-19 in 40 minutes.

They face a other Indonesian pair — Berry Angriawan- Rian Agung Saputro in today's quarterfinals.

Peng Soon-Liu Ying defeated Hong Kong's Reginald Lee Chun Hei-Hau Hoi Wah 21-11, 21-15 and meet China's Liu Yuchen-Tang Jinhua next.

80

arena

10-06-2016

"Kami bermain baik hari ini (semalam) dan saya dapat lihat pasangan lawan beraksi kurang bagus"

Goh Liu Ying

HARIAN ME

Beregu lolos

HARIAN METRO

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■ Dua gandingan negara mara ke suku akhir

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Kuala Lumpur

Satu demi satu wakil negara tumbang ba-gaikan domino, namun beregu campuran negara, Chan Peng Soon-Goh Liu Ying dan beregu lelaki veteran, Koo Kien Keat-Tan Boon Heong memberikan sedikit keceriaan pada saingan Terbuka Australia, semalam.

Peng Soon-Liu Ying mara ke suku akhir selepas mengalahkan pasangan Hong Kong Lee Chun Hei-Chau Hoi Wah 21-17, 21-16 dan mereka akan berdepan wakil China Liu Yuchen-Tang Jin hua hari ini.

"Kami bermain baik hari ini (semalam) dan saya dapat lihat pasangan lawan beraksi kurang bagus. Esok (hari ini) bertemu pasangan China,

kami harus berhati-hati kerana mereka mengejutkan pilihan kedua dari Denmark (Joachim Fischer Niel sen-Christinna Pedersen)," kata Liu Ying kepada Arena Metro, semalam.

Sementara itu, Kien Keat-Boon Heong melakukan kejutan apabila menumbangkan pilihan utama dari Indonesia Mohammad Ah-san-Hendra Setiawan dengan kemenangan 17-21, 21-17, 21-19.

"Ketika mereka mendahului, kami hanya bermain seperti biasa dan bertahan. Apabila mereka gagal meraih mata, kami mengambil kesempatan mengejar. Esok kami akan cuba yang terbaik," kata Boon Heong.

Mereka akan berdepan satu lagi pasangan Indonesia, Berry Agriawan-Rian Agung Saputro yang sebelum itu mengalahkan pasangan negara, Goh V Shem-Tan Wee Klong 21-14, 21-18.

Perseorangan lelaki negara, Zulfadli Zulkiffli ternyata tidak mampu untuk memberi saingan kepada pilihan utama dari China Chen Long apabila tewas 17-21, 12-21.

"Saya bermain baik hari ini cuma pada set kedua ketika 10-11, dia bijak mencuri mata Dia mengambil mata mudah dan saya pula melakukan kesilapan di penghujung saingan. Apapun saya memperoleh banyak pengalaman dan belajar daripada Chen Long," kata juara remaja dunia 2011 itu.

Turut tersingkir seorang lagi perseorangan lelaki negara, Iskandar Zulkarnain Zainuddin yang tumpas kepada Sho Sasaki dari Jepun 12-21, 16-21.

Perseorangan wanita pula menyaksikan Tee Jing Yi kalah 10-21, 19-21 kepada Tai Tzu Ying dari Taiwan, manakala Goh Jin Wei tunduk di tangan jaguh India, Saina Nehwal 12-21, 14-21.



PENG Soon (belakang) dan Liu Ying meraikan kemenangan mereka.

'Walau apapun keputusan, mereka tetap sertai SUKMA'

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Kuala Lumpur: Isu berhubung keputusan atlet olahraga negara Badrul Hisyam Abdul Manap dan Khairul Hafiz Jantan (*gambar*) yang memilih untuk menyertai Sukan Malaysia (SUKMA) berbanding ke Kejohanan Olahraga Remaja Dunia di Poland masih belum ada kesudahan.

Malah beberapa pihak cuba mengambil kesempatan membincangkan isu ini secara terbuka di media sosial dan memberi komen serta pendapat tanpa memikirkan kesannya.

Jurulatih dua atlet berkenaan, Mohd Poad Md Kassim berkata secara tidak langsung apa yang berlaku ini mengganggu persiapan kedua-dua atletnya biarpun beliau yakin mereka mampu



mengetepikan isu itu apabila sesi latihan bermula esok.

"Keputusan tetap sama. Kami akan ke SUKMA dan bukan ke Kejohanan Dunia Remaja. Keputusan sudah dibuat dan saya berharap ia tidak lagi diperdebatkan.

"Daripada anda semua terus berdebat mengenai isu ini, lebih baik memikirkan mengenai cara terbaik untuk membangunkan sukan olahraga.

"Beri peluang kepada Badrul dan Khairul. Fikir cara terbaik untuk membantu kedua-dua atlet ini memajukan diri mereka.

"Hormati keputusan mereka kerana anda semua tidak berada di tempat mereka

dan tidak tahu jerit perih yang dilalui sebelum berjaya sampai ke tahap ini," kata Poad.

Kejayaan Badrul yang melakarakan catatan 10.29 saat di Kejohanan Sukan Sekolah ASEAN dan pencapalan Khairul muncul juara remaja Asia dalam acara 100m membuka mata ramai pihak.

Bagaimanapun, kedua-dua atlet itu memilih untuk ke SUKMA dan menganggap keputusan itu bukan mudah dengan jika tarikh dua kejohanan itu tidak bertindih, mereka pasti tidak akan melepaskan peluang untuk ke Kejohanan Dunia Remaja.