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Lesson from Thaddeus: Live life meaningfully

LAST month we saw the demise of three sporting greats: the triathlete 17-year-old

Thaddeus Cheong, WWE wrestler Chris Benoit and the Grand Old Lady National Stadium.

It may surprise many that I found the 17-year-old Thaddeus Cheong the most memorable of the lot. In a nutshell, he died doing the thing that he loves most. Nevertheless, my condolences to the loved ones of Thaddeus who will miss him. I am sure he has brought many fond memories for all who have crossed path with him.

In a country whereby many of our youth here single-mindedly chase after academic excellence, Thaddeus manages to go after something that he loves most - a spot in the South East Asian games in triathlete. Not that he is not a scholar in his own right - he is a first year student in Raffles Junior College - not some place for the academically weak. Somehow, he also manages to find time and make the effort to go for the triathlete event - a strenous sport that combines both mental acumen and physical stress. Only the fittest will go for such extreme endurance sports.

Having personally ran three half-marathons in the Standard Chartered Marathon and practising for the full marathon this year, I can empathisize with Thaddeus when he embarks on his training runs. It takes alot of effort and discipline to force the body and mind to practise when it is easier just to lie down and rest. I read that he practises twice a day before the triathlete trial and for that he gained my respect. The difference between a good athlete and an excellent one is those who can discipline themselves enough to stay hungry for the ultimate prize. It is also the pursuit of a dream that keeps most people focused. The punishing of the body is just but a small prize to pay for achieving that goal. I am sure Thaddeus is very focused in his dream.

I feel that many of our youth here do not have the kind of discipline and goal setting that epitomises Thaddeus. They may have excellent grades and speak eloquently but fail to plan and set any meaningful goal in life. Most graduate and finds a job that pays them the most salary. They then marry, have kids and chase after the 5 Cs (they still do). Most live aimlessly and often seeks after materialistic pursuits which will never give them any satisfaction. Some change cars to please their egos whereas others look for jobs that give them a bigger pay check. Materialism is the name of the game for many here.

My encouragement to the youth today out there is to plan and live your life meaningfully as time flies. Each day has twenty four hours and each year 365 days. Even if you sleep through it, the world will pass you by. Learn to seek for meaning in life and plan your life well as those who plan will eventually gain more out of it.

When I run my marathon in the December 2007 Standard Chartered's Marathon, part of the run will be dedicated to Thaddeus. Rest well my friend and I salute you for going after your dream even unto death.

Gilbert Goh Keow Wah

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I respect Thaddeus and his passion for running

However I do not agree that running Marathons is a pursuit more worthy than others. Yes it tests your mental and physical limits, but frankly I find it pointless and meaningless if all that you do is for self fulfillment at the expense of society. It takes time to train, leaving less time for family. Isn't that a selfish goal?

People who work hard for a living pay taxes and benefit society and the economy as a whole. Life is hard and success not easy, do not belittle their efforts, even bringing up a child is also a lifelong Marathon.

Posted by: kilofoxtrot at Thu Jul 05 11:01:45 SGT 2007

Just as Thaddeus was focused on his tri training, others can chose to focus on getting good grades or a good pay. To each his own. Don't diss the pursuit of 5Cs as something less worthy than a good timing in tri or marathon.

Though I have completed a few marathons, I can say that it is not a very meaningful achievement either. I do it mainly because I enjoy running more than putting extra hours on the job. In fact, some of my colleagues are very hungry. They put in long hours and earn more. I respect their different goals in life.

Posted by: Baikinman at Thu Jul 05 09:54:54 SGT 2007

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