

One-time school dropout proves he's a good sport

By Divya Kirti

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ONCE, he was a dropout from a government school. His "crime": He was a snooker fanatic.

The school didn't approve of it.

Why?

Apparently because of the perception that snooker is a sport played by delinquents and gangsters.

But he persisted with his passion and has come up trumps.

Now 19, Mr Clarence Ho runs a professional snooker supplies shop and is a member of the Singapore national youth team.

His business partner, Mr Chris Choo, is also a member of the national youth team.

Their shop is at the Klassic snooker centre at Sultan Plaza.

The partners raised the money for the shop through their savings and loans from their parents, said Mr Choo.

But Mr Ho also has another goal. He is determined to change the negative perception of snooker.

LAW STUDIES

Training three to six hours every day, Mr Ho is also studying at the Singapore Institute of Commerce (SIC) for a certificate in law studies.

He was accepted as a student by SIC at the age of 16 despite the fact that the minimum age is 18, as the SIC panel was impressed by him during the interview.

For his contributions to snooker, the

He's right on cue

Singapore Sports Council awarded him the Singapore Sporting Inspiration Award (SSIA) in 2004.

So how did such a recognised role-model and budding entrepreneur fall from grace in the first place?

He was a born sportsman.

Although he became passionate about snooker later on, Mr Ho has also been on the national youth teams for basketball and volleyball too.

But while at his previous secondary school before 2004, he was always at odds with the authorities.

UNABLE TO TRAIN

Long hours at school meant that he was unable to train.

His parents also frequently received complaints that he was spending more time playing snooker.

This happened so often that his parents "got fed-up" and decided to move him to a private school — St Francis Methodist in 2004.

At St Francis, his interest in snooker grew even more — not least due to the conducive atmosphere which he helped create at his new school.

Upon his arrival, Mr Ho started St Francis' first snooker team. He made sure that the members practised regularly.

He even convinced the principal to allow the team to compete in the junior championships.

He then led them to their first National Schools Championship win that year despite the fact that they did not even have a coach.



◆ Mr Ho has set up shop with a co-member of the national youth team. It caters to snooker professionals.

His effective leadership and the exceptional result landed him the SSIA award.

It also caught the attention of Mr Joe Lim, former coach of the national youth snooker team.

Mr Lim accompanied Mr Ho to a snooker tournament in Malaysia the same year, but he failed to make an impact.

It was after this, while coaching him, that Mr Lim realised that Mr Ho was an

enthusiastic and fast learner, with good potential.

Said Mr Lim: "Clarence has the GUTS, as in the Genuine Urge to Succeed."

TOURNAMENTS

Mr Ho has since participated in three to four big tournaments every year, with smaller ones every month, but has yet to win a title.

He has also had to balance his