

**Presentation Transcript**

Topic: Sports Pathway - Recreational to High Performance

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Good Afternoon everyone, thank you for joining me today. My name is Justinian, I am from the Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC).

SDSC was set up in 1973 to champion sport accessibility for Persons with Disability (PWDs) to realise their potential. We believe in the dignity, capability and value of the PWDs. We enable Singapore's PWDs to excel in sports, both recreationally and competitively and we reach out across all disability groups.

Today, my talk is about Para Sports Pathway, from recreational to high performance. Now, what is Sports Pathway? Sports Pathway is basically a model of athlete development. Since its introduction as a concept many years ago, it has become increasingly popular all over the world as the best way to provide the right environment for athletes to learn, to train, to compete, and to become successful in sport.

Here in SDSC, we have broken up the Para Sports Pathway into three phases, the recreational phase, the development phase, and the high-performance phase. Moving forward, these three phases can be broken up into five stages. Stage one is where it is about introduction of disability sports to PWDs. Stage two is where, once you are interested in a Para Sports, you will go for a beginner's programme and stage three is where you start to compete in Para Sports. Once you compete, you want to progress further, then you go into stage four, which is the development where you train to upskill your competitive level. At the final stage, the stage five we are at high performance, where it is about national representation, representing Singapore in overseas competition and doing the country proud.

At a recreational level, it depends on your objective. If you are taking up Para Sports just to socialise, for leisure, for recreation, or just to have an active lifestyle, there's two golden rule of thumb that you should know. Safe to do and able to do. As long as it's safe and you're able to do, anyone can do any sport.

We have three main organisations here locally in Singapore. SDSC being one of them, and the other two being Special Olympics Singapore and SportCares. In this table, you can see the difference between the three organisations. In SDSC and SportCares, we cater to all disabilities, whereas Special Olympics caters to persons with intellectual disability. We have different programmes for different groups. Today, my presentation will be mostly focused on the programmes at SDSC. If you want to have more information or want to know more about the other two organisations, do feel free to contact them directly, or you can go to their website for more information.

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Under stage one, under the recreational phase, where it's about introduction of disability sports. Here in SDSC, we have two programmes that we target the mainstream schools. One is the I'mPossible workshop and the second, Project ParAble (Component 1).

For the I'mPossible workshop, it is an education programme for teachers to help to promote the Paralympic Values and the spirit of inclusion among their students. It is usually attended by PE HODs, teachers, the character or citizenship education teachers or level heads. The outcome of this workshop is for the teachers to have knowledge and understanding of the Paralympic Movement, its values and Para Sports. Teachers will undergo Para Sports in this workshop, and when they return to school, they will impart these values and the Para Sports to their students.

The second programme we have is what we call Project ParAble, and Project ParAble has two components. Component one requires the mainstream schools to experience Para Sports. We have under component one, two types, Inspiration and Experience. Inspiration in the sense that we will send our athlete down to give a talk or sharing session with the students and second part is Experience, where the students in the school will get to experience Para Sports through tryouts.

Stage Two is where it is about "Learn to Play" or beginning programmes. Here in SDSC, we have Learn To Play programmes, our Project ParAble (Component 2), SDSC-ActiveSG Academies & Clubs programme and our Through Train Sports programme.

For the Learn To Play programme, it is a structured programme typically six to eight sessions, once a week. We provide introductory level sports training for PWDs, so that they can pick up a new skill and hobby. It helps them to experience and understand the benefits of sports, such as rehabilitative therapy, self fulfilment and integration. We have quite a number of sports that we offer under this programme, catering to the different impairment groups. Some examples will be Athletics, Archery, Badminton, Goalball, Shooting, Table Tennis.

The second programme we have is Component Two of the Project ParAble. These are targeted for students with disabilities in the mainstream schools. It provides an opportunity for these students to pursue sport and to engage with their peers at a higher level. We provide resources for the students with disabilities to continue training in a suitable sport. We have two parts in this. First is to adept, where we provide four to six training sessions for the students, together with their peers to learn a Para Sport. It is usually conducted on site at schools. The second part is where we explore modifications to current school CCAs so that the students with disabilities will be included in the school CCAs with their peers.

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And the third programme we have is a collaboration between SDSC and ActiveSG Academies and clubs. The outcome of this programme is to create a sustainable and robust community level opportunity for PWDs to learn and pick up an interest in sport. We have started this programme with the sport of Athletics. The Athletic Specialised Programme has been launched in 2021 for intellectual impairment. We are looking for it to be offered in Season Two and for the rest of the impairment, the visual impairment and the physical impairment is a work in progress, but the target is to have it up and running at the end of the year.

The fourth programme we have is the Through-Train Sports Programme, this is a new initiative in SDSC, it is targeting youth with physical impairments to pick up Para Sports despite being new to sports. It provides them a smooth entry into the Sports Pathway that allows them to learn and develop their skills. We have offered this programme for two sports, Archery and Shooting. First, the athletes, the PWDs and the youth will go through the Learn To Play stage and then after that, they will progress to learn how to compete. After learning, they will be training to compete, and then the last they will train to win. Currently we have two students in this programme, in a sport of Archery.

Now stage three, it is where we start your competitive journey. Under SDSC, we have our local national competition. I'll also be sharing with you some of the competition opportunities by our other partners, namely ActiveSG, MOE and other NSAs.

As you can see in this slide, there are four main players. On top is the National Sports Association, for example, Singapore Athletics Association and Singapore Swimming Association. They do have their local competitions that are open to PWDs to participate. And, at the bottom is the MOE, where under the National Primary School Games, Athletics and Swimming have events that are offered for PWDs. And for the National School Games, Athletics, Swimming, Shooting and Tenpin Bowling. On the left-hand side is by ActiveSG, where they have their Get Active! Singapore Competition or sometimes, some years, they call it the Singapore National Games or the Pesta Sukan. It is typically held in the month of July, end July to August in the lead up to national day. We work closely with ActiveSG to provide opportunities for PWDs to be part of this competition. Some of the competition offered at this platform are Archery, Athletics, Boccia, Badminton, Swimming, Table Tennis and Tenpin Bowling. Last but not least, SDSC. We do hold National Championships in Athletics, Swimming, Boccia, Cycling, Equestrian and Tenpin bowling. And also a Youth Championship for Swimming and Athletics. In addition to these two national championships, we have our Goalball 2 on 2 challenge, our Lawn Bowls Annual Challenge and we do partner with Singapore Sport School to have a Para Games for them at the Sports School itself every year.

After you started being competitive, you want to progress further. That is where the development stage will come in, where under development stage there are selection criteria in place to provide regular trainings for you to progress further. We talk about Development Programme, there are two areas that we need to talk about, Eligibility and the type of sports available.

Eligible impairments for sports development, there is an important process that what we call classification, where we will determine your eligibility to compete in the sport and the sport class for you. Types of eligible impairments can be broken up, can be grouped in three main groups, Physical, Intellectual and Sensory. Under the Physical Impairments, it will cater to those who with amputees, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, muscular dystrophy, soft stature, or other conditions which are permanent in nature. Under the Intellectual group, you have to have IQ below 75 and recently, Virtus has open sports classes for down syndrome and autism. And in the Sensory Group, we have the visually impaired and the deaf or hard of hearing. You need to be of this eligible impairment before you can be considered for sports development.

Some of the Para Sports Programmes we have under SDSC in Singapore are for Athletics, Badminton, Bowling, Cycling, Powerlifting, Swimming, Table Tennis and Triathlon, and team sports like CP Football and Goalball. We have also other precision sports, Archery, Boccia, Lawn Bowls and Shooting. And under Chess, Equestrian and Sailing, so these are the sports that have SDSC support regular training for them.

Now, the last and final stage is where we talk about high performance, where we qualify and participate in international competition and major games.

Now, just to give you a brief overview of the international scene, the highest Pinnacle that we have is Paralympic Games, the equivalent to Olympic Games, is held once every four years. The next edition will be Tokyo, in August 2021, which was postponed from last year. And then we have the Commonwealth Games. The Commonwealth Games in itself is unique in the sense that the abled and para athletes will compete at the same time and same place. Then, equivalent to the Asian Games, we have the Asian Para Games. The next edition will be held in Hangzhou in 2022. And closer to home at the regional level, we have equivalent to the SEA games is the ASEAN Para Games, with the next edition being in Vietnam 2021.

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Now, there is another group where it caters for specific impairments. We have the Deaflympic Games for the hearing impaired and the CPISRA World Games for people with cerebral palsy. The IBSA Blind Sports World Games caters for people with visual impairment, and the IWAS World Games for wheelchair and amputee sports. Vitrus, the World Intellectual Impairment Sports has their World Games that caters to the II, those with down syndrome and autism. Now, last but not least, Special Olympics, where they have their Summer World Games.

We can basically group a few of these under one group. The first column as you can see for the Paralympics, the Commonwealth Games, the Asian Para Games and the ASEAN Para Games. The second column you will see under Virtus World Games and the last column Special Olympics. This table just give you a brief comparison of the different groups of international games we have. For the first and second group the Paralympics, Commonwealth Games or Virtus World Games is quite similar in nature, in the sense that there are qualifying standards that we need to meet in order to be able to participate. It is very performance driven, you need to have a year-round intense and specialised training in a specific sport in order to be able to excel. For Special Olympics, the difference is that, the key element is participation.

In summary, Para Sports Pathway can be summarised as follows. If you are a PWD, there are three routes available for you to take: SportCares, SDSC or Special Olympics. For SportCares, the route for SportCares, they provide community programmes for mass participation. For further development into sports and for national representation, you have to go to SDSC. There is a pathway for that and similarly for Special Olympics. PWDs with intellectual disability can go to Special Olympics for their sports training, and then proceed to represent Singapore at their Summer World Games. Then there will be those with potential, who will have a pathway to SDSC where they can progress further representing in other levels of competition, like the Paralympics or the Asian Para Games. We do have a few of our current athletes, currently that came from the Special Olympics program. Namely, we have Farhan, Eric, Nixon from Bowling, and Suhairi in Athletics. Suhairi came through the Special Olympics route, after he represented Special Olympics at the Summer World Games. He was invited to join our development training, and from there he has gone on to represent Singapore in numerous international competitions, like the Rio 2016 Paralympics. So, it doesn't really matter which route you start off, at the end of the day if you want to progress further, there is a pathway to SDSC for development and high performance.

This ends my presentation for today, thank you.