

BADMINTON CHEN LOOKS TO ADD S'PORE FEATHER TO HIS CAP C11
SCHOOL SPORTS ACS(I) & RGS WIN FIRST TITLES OF THE YEAR C13

SPORT

\$14.2m

AMOUNT DISGRACED EX-CYCLIST LANCE ARMSTRONG IS BEING SUED FOR BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT C12

SSP VOWS 'WIN-WIN' OUTCOME

S'pore Sports School principal will meet parents tomorrow to address clause on prizes

**Pearl Lee and
Chua Siang Yee**

A resolution could be in sight for some parents of Singapore Sports School (SSP) students after weeks of heated discussions over prizes.

In an e-mail to the parents on Monday, the school said a town hall meeting with the affected parents would be held tomorrow evening.

It added that after obtaining feedback from parents, the school will offer proposals "to arrive at a win-win resolution in this matter".

The school had revised a clause in its Sports Handbook this year, making it compulsory for students to hand over prizes – including cash

awards and products – to the school.

Previously, students were allowed to keep their winnings as long as the prizes were not "clearly awarded to the SSP".

The Sports Handbook acts as a code of conduct for the students.

The change got a group of parents hot under the collar. They then raised the issue with school principal Tan Teck Hock on Jan 13.

They claim they were not told about the change, and are upset by the manner in which the new clause was introduced. In seeking clarity, they were told, among other explanations, that money should not be a motivating factor for student-athletes.

Following the meeting with Tan, they met SSP representatives once more to discuss the issue to no avail.

Stephen Lowe, chairman of the school's parent volunteer network, who chaired the second meeting with the parents on Sunday night, said: "The school is keen to address the issue. I am hopeful that a solution will be found on Thursday."

He added that Tan would be present at tomorrow's meeting.

The Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth, which oversees the school, told The Straits Times (ST) yesterday that it is monitoring the situation. But it did not say if it agreed with the clause or if it would intervene.

Separately, ST understands that some members of the school board intend to raise the issue at a bi-monthly board meeting scheduled for this afternoon.

A parent who had attended the past two discussions with the school over the prize money issue said she is not getting her hopes up over tomorrow's meeting as she is unsure if the school is able to offer a solution. She added that the different sports groups, or what the school terms "academies", operate differently and a blanket rule is unlikely to work well.

An SSP alumnus, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "I don't think the new clause is fair. First of all, it's not a lot of money.

"Furthermore, unlike NSAs (National Sports Associations), the school also does not subsidise 100 per cent of the costs when students compete. Why should the students give back everything?"

Some NSAs require their athletes to give 20 per cent of their winnings to the association. But NSAs usually subsidise 100 per cent of

the costs of competition.

In contrast, the parents of the SSP athletes say they bear a significant portion of the costs incurred when their children compete overseas. Including school fees, parents could spend up to \$20,000 a year funding their children's sporting ambitions.

SSP is holding some A\$3,000 (S\$3,265) in prize money which some students won at an Australian bowling competition last month.

Another parent added: "If the school wants students to give back a portion of their winnings, the different sports academies should discuss among themselves and come up with what is most appropriate for them."

Only parents of bowling students have expressed their unhappiness over the clause thus far.

leepearl@sph.com.sg
siangyee@sph.com.sg

NOT 100% FAIR

The school also does not subsidise 100 per cent of the costs when students compete. Why should the students give back everything?



ASINGAPORE SPORTS SCHOOL ALUMNUS, who declined to be named, weighs in on the Singapore Sports School's decision to make it compulsory for students to hand over prizes.