

Sports

'Max, we've no hard feelings'



WEETECK HIAN

HITTING BACK: Sailing chief Low (right) insisted the team of sailors were a united bunch while CEO Sanders said he was always in contact with Soh's mother to talk about her son's progress.

President Low defends SingaporeSailing, expresses shock at Soh's mother's claims in letter

TAN YO-HINN
yohinn@mediacorp.com.sg

AT THE head of the table was president Low Teo Ping, flanked by chief executive officer Andrew Sanders and secretary-general Edwin Low.

Part of the brains trust at SingaporeSailing, men who have worked hard to make the Republic the top sailing nation in Asia.

This time though, they were not at a press conference to talk about medals, but to defend their association and rubbish the claims of the mother of one of their own.

In a letter to TODAY published yesterday, Helen Choe, mother of Asian Games champion Maximilian Soh, had hit out at SingaporeSailing for their treatment of the sailor, claiming it resulted in the 19-year-old pulling out of Project 0812.

Yesterday, Low said: "We categorically deny everything that has been said in the letter (by Choe).

"Like all other National Sports Associations (NSA), we're not in the business of managing expectations, but managing aspirations, with a template, format and structure (in place) to achieve that. That's why it gets on us if we're thought of as otherwise.

"It is very important for us to defend all the good work that the executive committee, management, staff, Singapore Sports Council, Singapore National Olympic Council and everyone else involved has put into this to arrive at an organisation that I would say is the best you can think of."

Launched in January, Project 0812 provides Singapore's elite athletes with all the resources required to give them a chance to win medals at the 2008 or 2012 Olympics.

Last week, Soh announced he was quitting the project after disagreements with SingaporeSailing.

While SingaporeSailing cited the "rigours" of training as a reason for Soh dropping out, Choe claimed they had reneged on incentives and allowances promised to her son for his training and performances.

She also claimed the 19-year-old was subjected to "belittling and disparaging remarks and treatment regarding his age and youthfulness by SingaporeSailing in the course of its programmes", and it led to Soh falling into depression.

Addressing the monetary issue first, Low said all sailors received different allowances due to a tiered system introduced in May.

Sailors are categorised into three bands depending on their skill and responsibilities beyond sailing, such as having undergone National Service and possession of a valid driving licence. Those in the top band receive the highest allowance.

The system is only used to assess a sailor's allowance, and does not apply to other expenses incurred by them, like accommodation, transport, high performance coaching, sports science and sports medicine – all borne fully by SingaporeSailing.

"For example, where we don't have a whole armoury to move boats to overseas competition or to training sites, we require logistical help," said Low.

"So, those sailors who can drive help out. They usually leave much earlier than the rest. So, the tier system is to recognise the inconvenience and added responsibility that some of them go through."

Low, 62, revealed that Soh was in the middle band and received \$380 less than the highest earner in the top tier.

Low expressed disbelief at Choe's accusation that Soh was subjected to "belittling and disparaging remarks".

"How can that be?"

The sailors pride themselves in the fact that they move, eat and do things together as a team," he said.

"They play computer games together, and guys like (Koh) Seng Leong (Asian Games silver medallist) always talk to him."

SingaporeSailing funded Soh to 12 overseas regattas and training stints in 2006 in the lead-up to last Decem-

ber's Asian Games in Doha, where he clinched gold in the Laser class.

Earlier this year, they appealed successfully to the Ministry of Defence for him to be able to defer his full-time National Service so that he could concentrate on his Olympic quest.

In July, Soh performed poorly at the World Championships – a 2008 Beijing Olympics qualifier – in Cascais, Portugal, and subsequently, he met up regularly with Sanders, Low and other sports officials and experts to try to get back on track.


Now, Choe's accusations have shocked the association.

"I've been communicating with Helen (Choe) for the past three years, and she's always happy about what we did for Maxi. This is a real surprise," said Sanders.

Low ended the proceedings by insisting the door was still open for Soh.

He (Soh) is still very much part of us and there is no animosity, bad blood or hard feelings. We fully respect his decision (to quit) but the door is always open for him to come back.

— SingaporeSailing chief Low



Happiness is your Birthright

The quest for happiness has finally become a science. Now, living happiness is an art everyone should experience. The international movement of positive psychology has finally come to Singapore. With our specialized courses, you can create your own path to happiness share this knowledge with people around you.

<p>Diploma in Applied Positive Psychology \$229 × 24mths*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Foundation in Psychology +Introduction to Positive Psychology +Developmental Psychology +Emotional Intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Cognitive Psychology +Positive Emotions and Thoughts +Social Psychology +Psychotherapy & Counselling
<p>Advanced Diploma in Applied Positive Psychology \$229 × 24mths*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Neuro Psychology +Abnormal Psychology +Psychological Assessment & Diagnosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Business Psychology +Positive Personality Traits +Positive Research & Projects
<p>Professional Diploma in Applied Positive Psychology \$270 × 24mths* (seminar based)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Foundation in Psychology +Introduction to Positive Psychology +Business Psychology +Emotional Intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Cognitive Psychology +Positive Emotions and Thoughts +Social Psychology +Positive Research & Projects


Preview on
28 Nov, 7pm

68845161
68845162

Other Programme/Services

- ✓ Professional Diploma in Psychotherapy
- ✓ Positive Therapies (Hypnotherapy/CBT/SFBT)

Awarded by The National Council of Psychotherapists (United Kingdom)



Rediscover Yourself, Re-experience Joy, Relive Life

www.positivepsychology.com.sg

Meridien Hotel & Shopping Centre, 100 Orchard Rd, #03-20/21, Singapore 238840

\$5500 off for pastoral care workers, health care workers, community outreach workers, social workers and educators - Graduates of the programme are eligible for the Licentiate membership registration with the National Council of Psychotherapists, UK

* Terms & conditions apply

The Art & Science of Happiness