

Loh refutes 'irresponsible' allegation



TODAY FILE PHOTO

But track and field chief admits SAA could have handled Chinese athletes better

TANYO-HINN
yohinn@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE — He took the stand on Monday, and has so far refuted all allegations against the Singapore Athletic Association (SAA) in their ongoing trial against China-born shot putter Luan Wei.

However, SAA president Loh Lin Kok, 63, did concede yesterday that the matter could have been handled better.

Luan, 27, and his mother Zhang Ping are seeking damages from the national sports association (NSA) for the athlete's loss of opportunities in his education and athletics career as a result of his sacking by SAA in 2004. They also claim the SAA reneged on eight promises made in 1999, including training allowances, English lessons, enrolment in a university and Singapore citizenship within a year of arrival.

On the issue of citizenship, plaintiffs' counsel Edmond Pereira, in his six-and-a-half hour cross-examination of Loh at the Subordinate Courts yesterday, asked why a written agreement on what exactly was expected of Luan was not drawn up, particularly since the SAA had stressed performance and results were vital to applying for citizenship for the thrower, where as a caveat Luan would have to return to China if he failed to make the cut.

"We were inexperienced," Loh told the court. "I agree and accept that in hindsight, things could have been done better then."

Although it was the first time the NSA were recruiting athletes under the Republic's foreign sports talent scheme, Loh admitted there should have been formal documentation spelling out exact expectations of Luan when he met the parents of the various throwers recruited, including E Xiaoxu and Dong Enxin.

However, Loh took issue with Pereira's description that he had acted "irresponsibly". "We acted to the best of our abilities," said Loh, who has helmed the SAA since 1982, except for a two-year period from 2004-2006. "There was no working paper (at that time) from the authorities, so it was not easy for us to reduce it into writing."

The veteran lawyer added that his association had been "indulgent" towards Luan, who apart from registering 17.17 metres in May 2003, failed to throw beyond

We knew Luan Wei was 17 years old when he arrived. How to place him in the mainstream schools? His English is poor, or none at all, and not good enough for pre-university, nor upper secondary. No school here would accept him.

Loh, in response to questioning regarding promises made to provide Luan Wei with education here

Is there a good reason for me to go out and bluff them over an unaccomplished athlete at that time? I was not anxious to bring him (Luan Wei) in. I had two others to choose from. And if I couldn't deliver, there would be a big controversy.

Loh, on why he had no reason to lie to Luan Wei and his parents

17m since arriving here in 1999.

Pereira also described the SAA's lack of a progression criteria to monitor Luan's development as "shocking". But Loh replied: "We didn't have the luxury. (But) all of us have an intimate knowledge of the sport, so we know who are the potentials."

He insisted he did not promise citizenship to Luan "within a year" of the athlete arriving in Singapore as such issues were up to the authorities, and not him, to decide.

"It'd be crazy to do so because I'd be putting my name and reputation and my association at stake," said Loh.

He also described allegations by the NSA's former vice-president (training and selection) Steven Lee, and former national coach Guo Huaiyun, that promises were made to Luan's parents, including a coaching job for their son, as "serious lies". He said: "I can only postulate that they were concocting this as one is a disgruntled ex-official and the other a disgruntled ex-employee."

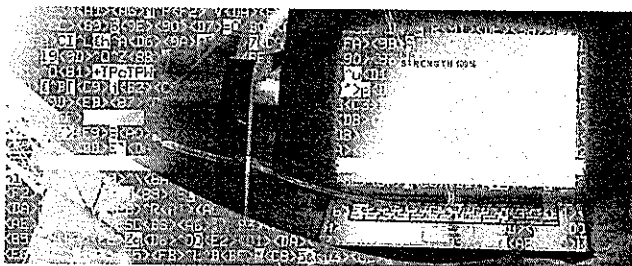
Loh also insisted the SAA's intention was for the China-born athletes to become full-time athletes, and not enrol in mainstream schools here, a claim Pereira is disputing. Hearing for the civil suit continues today.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE Bachelor of Computer Science

Admission
for
July 2010
Intake

Advanced standing and 3rd Year Direct Entry
for Polytechnic Diploma holders

Full-time Equivalent Degree offered in Ngee Ann-Adelaide Education Centre
Part-time Intensive Weekend Schedule



>> Professional Accreditation

- Australian Computer Society
- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
- American-based Association for Computer Machinery

>> Scholarship opportunities

INFORMATION SESSION

24 APR SAT 12.30PM - 1.30PM

FREE REGISTRATION or PROGRAM ENQUIRIES

ELENA YONG e: elenayong@naaec.com.sg t: 6738 2910 w: www.adelaide.edu.au/sg
97 Tank Road, Level 4 Teocheew Building, Singapore 238066

Ngee ANN - ADELAIDE
EDUCATION CENTRE



GROUP OF EIGHT
MEMBER

A PARTNERSHIP SINCE 1998

AVALON™ cleanse • burn • reshape FAT BURNER

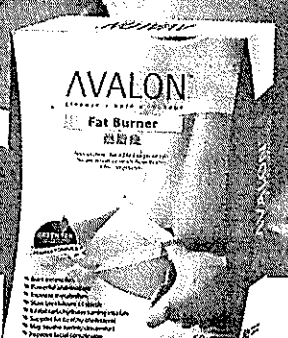


- Burn excess fat
- Powerful anti-oxidant
- Increase metabolism
- Slow breakdown of starch
- Inhibit carbohydrates turning into fats
- Support for healthy cholesterol
- No laxative, ephedrine, diuretic and appetite suppressant



Available at:

Enquiries: (65) 6515 9818
www.hibeau.com



NOW \$79.90