

Luan's poor attitude held him back, says coach Ma

SINGAPORE — The Singapore Athletic Association (SAA) appointed him national throws coach in January 2004, and he was set to work with the likes of shot putter Luan Wei.

But Ma Yongfeng said yesterday the China-born athlete displayed poor attitude during their training sessions and did not even turn up for his first session with the coach.

Luan, who was recruited under the Republic's foreign sports talent scheme in 1999, and his mother Zhang Ping, are seeking damages from the SAA for the loss of opportunities in education and athletics career as a result of his sacking in 2004 for poor performances.

Luan claimed that when he suggested to Ma to tweak his training programme because his back hurt, the coach told the thrower to wait till his back was injured, before any change was made. Replying to questions from the plaintiffs' lawyer Edmond Pereira at the Subordinate Court yesterday, Ma said: "As a coach, it is impossible that I would do such a thing."

He also said that achieving the SAA's ultimatum of 18 metres, or an average of 17.50m from five meets — a target set

for Luan in order for him to remain in Singapore — would have been possible if the thrower had stuck to the training plan designed for him.

Earlier yesterday, former SAA president Tang Weng Fei told the court that even if the athlete had not met the mark, the association would have considered keeping the shot putter, as long as Luan came close to 17.50m.

Tang said the SAA's decision not to support Luan for citizenship was because he did not attain the mark, adding that the call was "made by a responsible NSA (national sports association)". SAA director general Eric Song followed Ma on the stand and told the court the association had met two China-born athletes — Luan and hammer thrower E Xiaoxu — and their parents in October 2004 and underlined four conditions for them to continue staying in Singapore for a year.

While the plaintiffs produced evidence of a handwritten note by Song listing the conditions, he said he had written it for E Xiaoxu at her request, and did not recall doing the same for Luan. The hearing continues today. **LOW LIN FHOONG**

SSC CLARIFY OPENING DATES OF SPORTS FACILITIES

In "Making a Splash" (April 22, 2010), Singapore Sports Council's (SSC) Chief for Sports Facilities Group, Kenneth Hui, said the Bukit Panjang and Pasir Ris Sports Complexes are scheduled to open "mid-year next year", and "the year after", respectively. This is wrong. The SSC would like to clarify that the Bukit Panjang Sports Complex is targeted for operation in the second half of this year (2010), while the Pasir Ris Sports Complex is expected to be opened in mid-2011.

S.League Live telecast tonight @ 7.30pm

SPORTS BETTING

League	Home Team	Away Team	Match Kick Off (Singapore date/Time)
S.League	Etoile FC	SAFFC	Fri, 23/04/10, 7.30pm
S.League	Tampines	Geylang	Sat, 24/04/10, 7.45pm

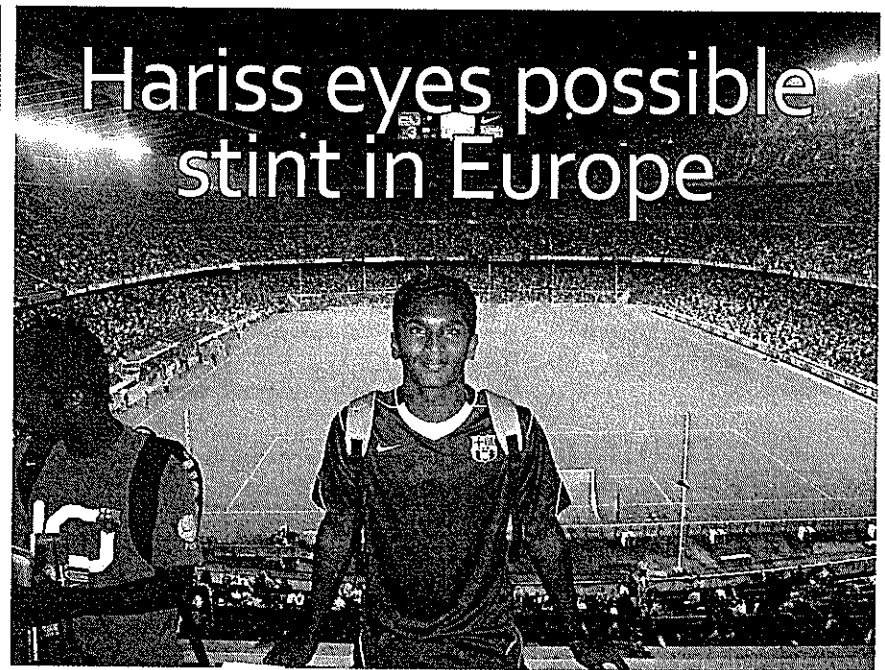
E Premier, E League Champ, Spanish, Italian, German, J League and K League matches are also on sale. For more details, please check Singapore Pools website.

LIVE TELECAST AT SPORTSBUZZ@PARADIZ

S.League	Etoile FC	SAFFC	Fri, 23/04/10, 7.30pm
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Trade Community Power and Growth



Hariss at the Camp Nou in 2007, where he spent a week at Barcelona's youth academy. PHOTO COURTESY OF IMSG

FAS in talks for talented midfielder to go abroad, parents give blessings

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SINGAPORE — Once the youngest footballer to turn out for Singapore when he made his debut in 1979 at the age of 17 years, three months and two days, Fandi Ahmad was offered a trial by European giants Ajax Amsterdam in 1982.

He impressed but, feeling homesick, he rejected the club's offer of a contract. Fandi eventually returned to Holland when he donned the colours of FC Groningen between 1983 and 1985.

Hariss Harun, who eclipsed Fandi's record when he turned out for Singapore against North Korea in 2007 at the age of 16 years and 217 days, hopes to follow in the footsteps of one of Singapore's greatest footballers and ply his trade in Europe.

And he has a chance.

The Football Association of Singapore (FAS) are currently in talks with Fifa-accredited player agents to possibly open the door for the talented midfielder to play overseas, preferably in Europe.

The FAS hope Hariss will set the blueprint for more players to follow in the months ahead. Speaking to MediaCorp yesterday, Lions' man-

ager Eugene Loo said: "(On Wednesday) we had initial discussions with a party with links to European clubs to see how we can work together to send Hariss to Europe."

FAS officials have met Fifa-accredited player agents Abdul Halim, from Off-Side Sports Management, and Mark Deery, of On The Line Sports Management, respectively.

When contacted last night, Halim said: "In addition to clubs in Europe, we also have links to premier clubs in Asia and Australia. But we are still only in the preliminary stages of discussion."

Deery also said On The Line Sports Management were in preliminary talks, and hoped to have something concrete by October. National team boss Radojko Avramovic has also reportedly sent DVDs of the midfielder's performances to Serbian club Red Star Belgrade.

Hariss is grateful for the effort. In 2007, he had a successful one-week stint in Barcelona's youth academy and was named the Most Valuable Player, and he is itching for a longer stint overseas.

"For me, it doesn't matter where I go. It's really just a matter of testing myself and improving," said Hariss, a final-year student at Nanyang Polytechnic. "It has been my dream to go overseas since I started playing football, and I'm very grateful to everyone who is trying to make this happen."

While Arema Malang's Noh

Alam Shah, SAFFC's Daniel Bennett and Home United goalkeeper Lionel Lewis have had trials and stints with foreign clubs, it is Fandi and V Sundramoorthy, who turned out for Swiss side FC Basel, that Hariss wants to emulate.

"What they did was something of the highest order, and to follow them by eventually playing for a European club is the ultimate dream," he said.

Hariss' family is supportive of his footballing dreams, though his father revealed that the youngster's mother has some misgivings.

Said 48-year-old Harun: "You know mothers, the first thing they'll ask is how long will their boy be away, and they'll worry about how he'll adapt to the food and the culture."

"But we have to let him go out and face the world on his own eventually, and while we want education to be his top priority, we are open-minded. The pros and cons of that decision will have to be carefully weighed."

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GOLF
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