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SINGAPORE NEWS

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Former shot-putter sues Singapore Athletic Association

By Low Lin Phoong, TODAY | Posted: 02 December 2009 0929 hrs

SINGAPORE: After four years, former shot-putter Luan Wei's civil suit against the Singapore Athletic Association (SAA) finally got underway on Tuesday.

Mr Luan Wei and thrower E Xiaoxu were recruited in 1999 by what was then known as the Singapore Amateur Athletic Association, under the foreign sports talent scheme. But they were dropped in 2004 when it claimed the pair's performances were not up to mark.

The duo sued the SAA in the High Court for unfair dismissal in 2005, but proceedings stalled after they could not raise the security for costs - a deposit required if a foreigner takes a Singaporean entity to court.

Lawyer Edmond Pereira then applied for the case to be heard in the Subordinate Courts, which requires less security for costs. While Ms E still could not raise enough money, Mr Luan Wei successfully pooled together the funds.

On the first day of hearing, Mr Pereira and SAA's lawyer, Mr Giam Chin Toon, concurred there was an agreement to bring the Liaoning-born Luan Wei here and train him to represent Singapore in international competitions.

The issue, according to both counsels, was with the terms of the agreement.

Mr Luan Wei's mother, Mdm Zhang Ping, told the court Tuesday that the association had made eight promises to her son - including Singapore citizenship within a year, English tuition, allowance and enrolment in a local university.

"Before he came to Singapore, Luan Wei was training and studying in Shanghai," she said.

"The most crucial point of our discussion (with SAA) was that if the child was not allowed to study, we wouldn't have come to Singapore."

But Mr Giam pointed out, the promises Mdm Zhang Ping claimed were made as listed in her affidavit differed from the notes of the meeting recorded when Mr Luan Wei, Ms E and their parents met with the SAA in October 2004.

The defence counsel also questioned Mr Luan Wei's achievements: The athlete, he noted, had won a silver medal and not a gold as he'd claimed, at a regional age group meet in Shanghai.

Now a physical education and social science student at Hunan University, Mr Luan Wei is claiming loss of earnings and expenses as a result of SAA's breach of contract.

No amount was indicated in the claim submitted by Mr Pereira.

The hearing continues Wednesday.

- TODAY/yb



Photos 1 of 1 Luan Wei is claiming loss of earnings and expenses as a result of SAA's breach of contract

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