

## **Experiences in being Resolute**

My heart palpitated. I was still in the cab which was on its way to Evans Road where the 2011 Inter-Schools Staff Badminton Competition was held. The annual sporting event for staff was organised by MESRC, Ministry of Education, This was the second time that I was participating in the competition.

In 2010, my colleague Marvin assembled a team comprising staffs who were avid badminton players. I was invited to join the team for the competition. Thoughts that came to my mind when I was approached was “Wow, I am deemed good enough to participate” to whether I would be fit and conditioned enough for the competition. I was certainly not the best player amongst the staff and there were much better players amongst the staff than me. Furthermore, the runway to the actual competition was not too far away and if I did take part, I must do my best. In any case, I was sporting to give an affirmative answer. With this, my fate was sealed. There was no turning back. I have to start exercising to keep fit.

That was in 2010. Vivid memories flashed back to the night before the competition. Marvin had texted us to remind us to be at the place of the competition on time. In addition, team members also emailed encouraging words to each other.

The day of reckoning finally arrived. That morning, I woke up in high spirits and a sense of optimism. “Just do your best and be focused I psychological admonished myself.

Whilst on the journey to my destination, I indulged in a casual conversation with the taxi driver who was affable and rather chatty. Noticing that I was adorned in the colourful sports attire (our team wore the same T shirt), he started a conversation on sports and he inquisitively enquired about the rackets and the models that I was having. We ventured to discuss on the topic of interest namely badminton and it turned out that we did share a common interest in playing badminton. We conversed on the various badminton tournaments that were held in the international arena. Both of us were also inspired by the legendary badminton player, Lin Dan who was also nicknamed, “Super Dan”. He is the reigning Olympic and World Champion

For me, I admire Lin Dan not only for his sporting prowess but also for his tenacity and determination. This was the player who would not throw in the towel so easily even when the odds were against him. He fought point for point and on many occasions went on to win the championship. Lin Dan was a resolute player.

Soon, the taxi arrived at the venue of the competition. I cordially thanked the loquacious taxi driver for his well-wishes and made my way to the sports hall. Many of the players from the respective schools were already assembled there and ready to sprint into competitive action. I spotted my colleagues at one corner of the hall and joined them.

Soon, the clarion call for the competition started. Our team was making its foray into the inter-schools staff badminton competition and I surmised we were there for staff bonding and also do our best. And we did our best as we emerged 1<sup>st</sup> runner only to lose out narrowly to the eventual champion. Actually, the semi-final was also a cliff-hanger. Our team was tied at 1-1 each. Winning the mixed doubles meant that we would be in the finals. Losing means that we would have to compete for third placing. And every time, Marvin and Diana clinched a point against their opponents, we cheered rapturously. It turned out to be a close match and our spirits soared when we marched into the finals which turned out to be another close affair. With the scored tied at 1-1 each, our first men's doubles comprising Andrew and Zhiliang lost out narrowly to their opponents by a score of 19-21 in the final set.

I was jolted back to my senses when the taxi-driver informed me that the taxi had reached its destination. After gathering my luggage, I made a beeline to where my team members were. The first men doubles were already half way into action. And from the looks of my other team members, I could sense that victory was not on my colleagues' side. The preliminary round was crucial as we had to win all our matches and emerged at the top before we could move on to the next round.

With the game ended, our mixed doubles action went into action and thankfully they won against their opponents. That meant that the final match, the second men's doubles was the determiner. To move on to the next round, we had to win.

Panic then engulfed our team as we realised that our star player, Kevin who was still in school has not arrived at the venue yet. Marvin thus had to make the decision to field Gary and I for the second men's' doubles. Momentarily, I had hoped that Kevin was there at the venue. However, I knew that he was no Superman and could not reach on time.

Kevin was indeed a talented badminton player and I had previously partnered him for badminton during the N1 Cluster Games Staff Competition. I recall that in 2007, I partnered him in the men's doubles for the cluster competition. Things went smoothly under the final when we met a pair of formidable opponents who liked us had won all their matches. Suddenly, I felt pessimistic and was a bundle of nerves. With Kevin's exhortations, I calmed down during the match. I had to stay resolute and determined.

We finally won against our opponents and with that win, which was crucial, we emerged Cluster Champion for badminton. Over the next few cluster competitions, I had the opportunities to partner him and as we had partnered before, I knew how to coordinate with him.

So, for this competition, it was left to Gary and me to battle it out with our opponents. When my opponents stepped into the badminton court, I could see that they were experienced and much younger players. They were ready in their full armour. One was a young, lanky, tall player who was agile and skillful. The other was a veteran in the game. This I figured from the sparring that they had prior to the actual match. Furthermore, Gary and I had hardly paired up with each other. In any case, I told myself to stay focused and do my best.

In the first set, we won against our opponents egged on and cheered on by my team members. However, in the second set, we lost our momentum and somehow our co-ordination and made many mistakes.

The final set was critical. We had to emerge the victor. We had to win all the matches in the preliminary round. Otherwise, we would be eliminated. I had to stay focused. I must not lose focus. Thus, in the final set, I resolved to stay focused and with the good pairing with Gary, we finally won. It was also heart rending that Kevin had then arrived and when we were finally declared the winners, I heaved a sigh of relief.

Subsequently, I took turns with Gary to pair up with Kevin and with concerted team commitment; we then emerged top of the table in the preliminary round. and eventually went through to the quarter finals, semi-finals and finals and emerged CHAMPION in 2011. The sense of elation was apparent and we did not hide our joys. The lyrics of the song "We are the Champions. We are the Champions resonated melodiously in my mind" We had exceeded expectations by winning the Championship. It was an experience in being resolute. It was also a good time of staff bonding.

On reflection, being resolute also means that preparation is needed. One cannot hope to go into a competition without sufficient preparation. Furthermore, although I was the Vice-Principal in the school, for the staff badminton competition, I took the input from my Captain and a very experienced player like Kevin. One critical success I reckoned was strong team spirit and rapport. No one dictated and there was room for discussion and consensus. We were indeed a performing team.

Indeed, I will always cherish the fond memories with my colleagues and the experiences in being resolute.

**Tan Chai Hok**





**2011 Inter-School Badminton  
Championship organised by MESRC,  
MOE  
CHAMPION**



**2012 Inter-Schools Staff  
Badminton Tournament  
organised by MESRC,  
MOE  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place**



**2010 Inter-School Badminton  
Championship organised by  
MESRC, MOE  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place**



**N1 Cluster Staff Games**

**Member of the Staff Badminton Team which emerged Champion in 2007. 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012. The school is also the Cluster Champion from 2007 to 2012. I relish and cherish the times in my present school and in the cluster particularly in working under good superiors (Principals and Superintendents), peer and good colleagues.**

**Tan Chai Hok  
2012**