

Who says sports and studies don't mix? Three of this year's National University of Singapore (NUS) graduates are proving they don't have to be mutually exclusive.
MALLIKA SRIRAM reports

ACHIEVER:
Mr Lim Shengyu, 25, managed to balance studies with his passion for basketball.
TNP PHOTO: JEREMY LONG



Giving his best shot

At 25, his resume boasts playing basketball with the Singapore Slingers in the Asean Basketball League (ABL) and winning the first ABL three-point shoot-out contest.

He also led the Singapore basketball team in scoring at the 2011 SEA Games in Indonesia.

In case those achievements are not impressive enough, Mr Lim Shengyu will be graduating from NUS on Monday with a first class honours degree in environmental engineering.

"I had a responsibility to myself and my family to do my best (in school), but there's nothing I look forward to as much as basketball," he told *The New Paper*.

"I wouldn't be the man I am now if not for basketball."

He was a Secondary 4 student in Bukit Panjang Government High School when he was spotted by the school coach and scouted to join the school team.

He was even offered a place in Hwa Chong Institution mainly because of his basketball



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skills. He was also selected to join the national youth team.

SKILLED

As one of the most skilled players on the national youth team, Mr Lim was invited to represent Singapore in global basketball camps organised by Adidas and North America's National Basketball Association (NBA) in China, the United States and India.

"I met NBA players like Jason Terry, Mo Williams and Kyle Korver, who taught us how to shoot three-pointers," he said of one of the more memorable experiences.

Mr Lim took a year off before beginning his studies at NUS.

"Basketball wasn't part of the plan after school," he explained.

"I was going to take the usual route and continue with my studies after national service."

However, after receiving an offer from the Singapore Slingers to play with them for a trial year, Mr Lim considered his options and discussed the opportunity with his parents.

"They were sceptical for a while, but I managed to convince them," he said.

"I promised that after deferring for one year, I would attend NUS."

And throughout his four years at NUS, Mr Lim continued to play basketball for multiple teams, including the Singapore national team, the Singapore Slingers, and the NUS team.

At his busiest, he was training up to 10 times a week, with each session lasting between two to three hours. He also had to wake up before 7am for his classes.

"(It) was one of the most challenging things I've had to do in my life," he said.

"It took a toll on me physically and mentally. I had to make a point of not sleeping for more than six hours a day... I was giving myself too much to do."

But he could not give up basketball.

He said: "I was motivated (to persevere) by my passion for the game."

His parents, who have two other sons, are proud of him.

His mother, kindergarten assistant teacher Yau Hwee Leng, said: "(We) are glad to have supported him... We feel very proud of him for completing his degree while pursuing his passion for basketball."

His love for the sport prompted him to take on a part-time job with SG Basketball during his last two years of university.

It offered him a "well-paying, interesting" full-time position as a business development manager immediately after he completed his studies. Mr Lim began his new job last month.

The secret to his success?

"Everything that I want to do well in, I put one hundred per cent of my energy into. The universe will find a way if you want it enough."