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Olympic-Psychologist

EMULATE SPIRIT OF AMERICAN DREAM TEAM, MALAYSIANS TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, July 9 (Bernama) -- Malaysian sportsmen should emulate the spirit of the "Dream Team", the millionaire American basketball players who play for the honour and pride of their country, said Datuk Lawrence Chan, the psychologist for the Malaysian hockey team.

"The millionaire players can control their ego and unite as a fighting unit just to get a medal in the Olympics. If the Americans can do it, I don't see why our athletes cannot do so," he said today.

Chan, who will travel to the Olympic Games with the hockey team, said he has always believed that Malaysians have the potential to be world beaters but it would only come through if they can overcome five shortcomings.

Mental toughness, strategy thinking or knowing the tactics to implement before and during games, stamina and fitness, skill and effective leadership or proper management of associations are areas that must be looked into seriously.

"Players must do SWOT thinking -- strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They must analyse their games, keep records of opponents so they will have an upper hand when meeting them the next time...but this is lacking here," he said.

Chan said proper nutrition is important in moulding a world class athlete but, sadly, local athletes pay little attention to this and normally fizzle out at the later part of a game due to tiredness.

"There is no more individualism. Even a singles shuttler must work hand in hand with his coaches, manager, teammates, nutritionist and physical trainer...this is a reason why our athletes don't go very far," he added.

Chan said he had met several American Olympians before and found that it was not the size of body that made them world beaters but their thinking and fighting spirit.

Besides athletes preparation, sports administrators must be more dedicated, committed and care for their athletes, said Chan, adding that miscommunication could become a major problem in any organisation.

"Leaders should have the quality to manage sports associations. If they practise the current management system in the commercial sector, they will close shop tomorrow," he said.

He also said the call by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Malaysian athletes must have the right attitude, be highly disciplined and dedicated was appropriate.

"Discipline is the key to success and we should not be intimidated by the big reputation of our opponents. We must discard our inferiority complex," he said.

Besides that, Chan also said players must not be afraid of pinpointing the weaknesses of their senior teammates although it could offend some.

Chan, who had worked with national shuttlers previously, said he would also lend his expertise to other Olympic-bound athletes while in Atlanta.

"Some of the shuttlers have requested my help. It should not be a problem as I have worked with them before...the pressure in the Olympics is tremendous and the players must be mentally prepared," he added. -- BERNAMA

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