

“Let me de-mystify a relatively unknown sport...”

Brown Joshua Leroy, an Accounting & Finance Diploma Junior, is a national floorball player.

Many people are not familiar with floorball. Can you describe it briefly?

It's like ice hockey. Very similar, just that it's a lot safer because of more rules and there's no ice. So players wear court shoes instead of skates. Each player has a stick except the goalie that is fully padded and has a helmet. It's played on badminton flooring in Singapore. Each team has 5 players and a goalie on court. The court is 40m by 20m and is closed off by boards, like a rink, about 50cm high. There are 3 periods in a game and are 20mins each. The speed of the game is very fast as in ice hockey, where goals can be scored from anywhere at any time. Go check this link for more info, www.sfa.sg

Tell us how you got started in floorball.

I was sort of in the school's music society at the time, which was primary 5, then a few of us got pretty sick of it and decide to boycott the practice and go try out for this new sport. At the time, it was sort of a demo and anyone who wanted to try could just go. So a bunch of us went to hit around and some of us really enjoyed it. Yes, it won my heart hands down. From then on, it was just a lot of training and participating in competitions.

Can anybody play this game well? Are there any physical or other attributes required to be in the top league?

Yes. Hand and eye coordination is important and you have to be a team player. Vision and awareness plays a great deal. On the physical part, when I started I was this fat pampered kid who couldn't run for nuts, and it got me in shape, I guess. Don't have to be very fit, just able to run for about a minute or so would be great already. Players in the league range from 14 to 40 years of age, so it is kind of for everyone. Starting young is always best, like me.

Was it difficult to get into the national team? Tell us the selection process.

Yes. My first training for the team was terrible. I was not physically fit, still a little oversized. I couldn't run as much or as fast as the rest. No doubt I was the youngest but at that level they only want the best and there no compromise on age. The head coach called up players from the different club teams in the Singapore league, whom he has been watching in the last few games. From then on, every training is an elimination process; if you don't get on well with the program, then you might be made to leave. From about 60 players, the final squad came down to about 18-20 players. Guess I was also a bit lucky to get in.

How many times have you taken part in competitions so far? Can you share some of the memorable moments in competitions?

For representing Singapore, it's is going to be my 4th time in May 2006 when the team will go to Sweden to play the world championships. In Singapore, I compete every year in the Singapore Floorball League. Most memorable would be when I scored my first

ever goal in the world championships in Zurich, Switzerland'04. We were playing against USA, I was the youngest in the squad at the time. Another memorable event happened in last October when I was in the under 19 team, which went to Riga, Latvia to compete in the under-19 world championship. It was the first time Singapore ever won a European team - we beat Netherlands and Hungary, 10-8 and 7-6 respectively. The under 19 competition was very important to me; firstly because I had taken a bigger role in the team now as I was one of the older guys, and secondly, I had to prove to myself that I had become a better player in every aspect since the 04 world championship. The goals we scored in Latvia were, I can't put a word for them, simply outstanding. Honestly, I can replay some of the goals in my head. Those were dear memories.

Tell us how you and your team prepare for a major competition?

For me I try to control my diet as best as I can. Fast carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables are really important for the muscles. And recently, I've been trying to gain more mass, because size has been a problem for me; so I've been eating lots of red meat. As for the team, most of the time, we're just training. But recently, we've been doing a lot of team bonding, after realising that older guys and younger players do not communicate too well. It is so good to keep the team tight, because a team in good spirits can turn the game around. I just play around a lot - at home, around the void deck and at my friend's church. I try to play whenever and with whoever I can, because I believe I can always learn something new, whether it's a new trick or just how to behave as a decent person. I believe floorball has taught me a lot in life, many important values.

Is it difficult to balance your commitment to floorball and study at TP?

No. I just got to stop being lazy. Sorry Ms Goh (note - his Accounting tutor). I will work harder for next semester.

Is there any chance of turning professional in this sport, like badminton and table tennis players?

For now, it is no. Singapore is not giving it a chance to grow. Funding from government is not much. NS men who are in the national team can't get on training because officers don't allow them to go for training. Sometimes I don't know why Singapore is not giving it a chance, especially when you have good Singaporean sports men who love and play the game well. They say it's not a core sport like soccer or badminton or table tennis. I get pretty frustrated talking about stuff like that - sorry for that.

Do you have any other comments?

I hope people who have started on it carry on playing for as long as they can and I salute all those that have other commitments but still put in their 110% into the game they love so much.