

Factor for sporting success

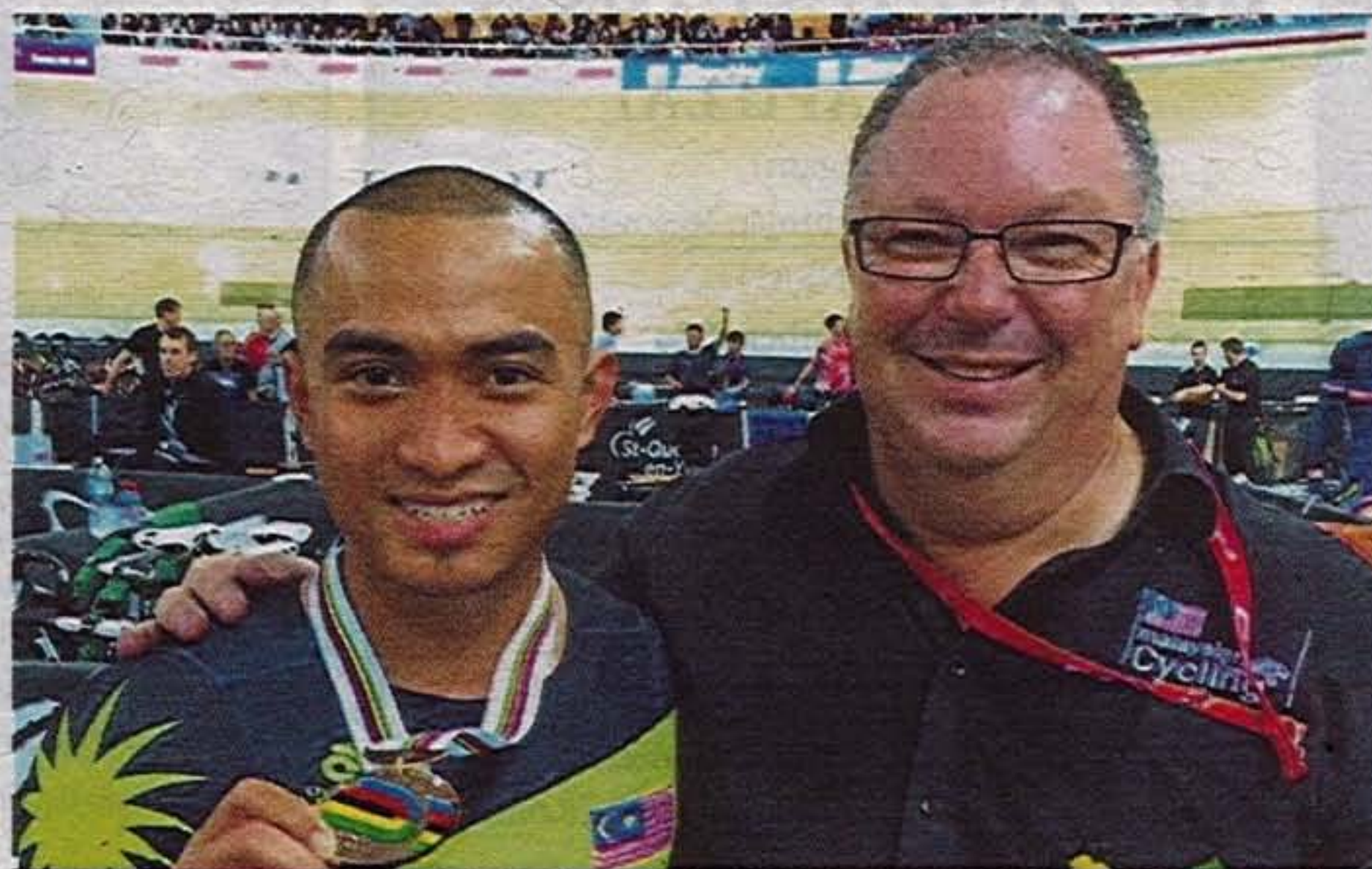
KUALA Lumpur 2017 is 40 days away but we have already recorded some unforgettable sporting achievements, including Azizulhasni Awang's maiden victory at the UCI Track Cycling World Championships and the Malaysian Speedy Tigers' qualification for a spot at next year's Hockey World Cup.

Sporting success is due to many factors, one of which is communication. In a Bernama report, director of Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) Sports Academy Prof Dr Shamala Subramaniam suggested that it is important for athletes and officials to acquire communication and public relations skills to enable them to communicate effectively with various sport stakeholders.

Sport involves multiple stakeholders, including athletes, officials, sponsors, media and fans who are in constant communication with one another.

Communication plays a crucial role during training sessions, team meetings and competitions, and when dealing with sponsors, media and the fans.

Take, for example, the utmost respect Datuk Lee Chong Wei has for his mentor Datuk Misbun Sidek and the close working relationship



that Azizulhasni Awang the "Pocket Rocketman" has with his long-time coach, John Beasley (*pic*). Such relationships stem from effective coach-athlete communication.

The live telecast of the Malaysia Cup final, branding and commercialisation of the Johor Darul Ta'zim FC (JDT), the reporting of our athletes during the Rio 2016 Olympics, the postponement of Malaysia's match for the Asian Cup Qualifier in Pyongyang and the 1997 Muslim activists' protest against the visiting Israeli cricket

team all fall in the realm of sport communication.

Communication in sport encompasses the whole spectrum of human communication, from intrapersonal and interpersonal to mass applications like journalism, broadcasting, public relations and advertising. It also entails socio-cultural aspects, including politics, nationalism, sporting identities, gender, race, equality and religion.

As demonstrated by the earlier studies conducted in the area, communication can help to improve

sporting performance and achievement. This has led to the inception of well-designed sport communication academic programmes and research in many leading higher learning institutions in the United States, Australia and China.

In Malaysia, awareness of the importance of sport communication is still relatively low. If we are serious about bringing sport in Malaysia to greater heights, then it is necessary for us to give greater emphasis to sport communication. For a start, sport stakeholders must be trained to become communicators who are able to demonstrate effective communication skills, every day, on and off the field.

Academia also has an important part to play in the development of sport communication. Studies on sport communication within the Malaysian context are scarce. Hence, scholars need to be bold enough to undertake new research in sport communication. Findings from such research could contribute to better practice and result in higher sporting achievement for our country.

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