

Game enough for a financial challenge

Students from local universities created a game show to spread money sense, reports **RUCHIKA TULSHYAN**

MONEY talks in today's world — and no one knows this better than the young generation which is capitalising on it. Three Singapore universities pooled their investment clubs in February this year to form an investment super-club, "Investment-Cube" (I-Cube).

This collaboration of the top financial minds from National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore Management University (SMU) and National Technological University (NTU), has resulted in the organisation of numerous large-scale financial events.

One such event was The Weakest Link in Dollars and Sense — a financial game show based on the popular British game show The Weakest Link. Complete with the infamous "voting out" of contestants by their fellow contestants, the seven rounds of the game were concluded on Aug 5. President of SMU's EyE Investment Interactive Club, Chan Ying Jian says: "The game show was an enjoyable way to promote our underlying cause to spread financial literacy."

But don't mistake the winners of this game to be veteran investors. In fact, a member of one of the two winning teams, Foo Say Wai, has not even started university yet!

The 22-year-old has just completed National Service in July and is all set to pursue a double degree in accountancy and business management at SMU. His interest in finance was sparked during a simulation of managing an investment portfolio when he was studying at Temasek Polytechnic. His love for all things related to finance stayed with him through his army days and he jumped at the chance of participating in I-Cube's The Weakest Link.

"Although I was a freshman, I was intrigued to give it a try," quips Say Wai. And he hasn't looked back since. He counts the prize money as one of the motivators in his initial involvement in the game but his determined spirit and supportive team members were factors that made him win.

"The game was quite tough for me so my team members were really important for us to win the game." Say Wai found out very quickly during the game that it took not only financial knowledge, but people skills to win — just as it is in the corporate world.

"Some people who went on to the bonus rounds and always answered questions right



Winning ways: Foo Say Wai (extreme left) and Dai Xiaoxiang (fourth from left) along with their team members who won The Weakest Link in Dollars and Sense contest. Mr Foo said that apart from knowledge, people skills helped them in their victory

were eliminated quickly, so it was a matter of keeping a low profile that got us into the winning position," says Say Wai.

This former Anglican High School student counts his victory in the competition a "very special win" as it happened the day after his twenty-second birthday.

Life after his victory has been quite busy for Say Wai. He intends to join SMU's Investment club and he also looks forward to completing his four years as an undergraduate student at the SMU.

"My motto in life is: 'Just go for it!' Give everything a try," exclaims Say Wai.

It is precisely this "never say die" attitude that helped Dai Xiaoxiang lead her team to be the co-winner of The Weakest Link competition. The third-year SMU student is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in business management, as well as another degree in economics. Making the SMU Dean's list for two years running

and attaining the SMU scholarship for her outstanding academic results, Xiaoxiang's dedication and perseverance brought her to the winning position in the competition.

Introduced to the competition by fellow SMU scholar Ying Jian, she used the opportunity to expand her knowledge about the current financial markets. Xiaoxiang did not find it hard to motivate her team, as some of her fellow members had already been investing in the stock market — something she intends to do after she's satisfied with her knowledge of investment.

"I don't see the point in me going in (to the stock market) and just trying my luck blindly," says Xiaoxiang.

Her preparation for the competition included reading up extensively on finance and the current markets, as well as delegating research among the team members. But the winning strategy, as with Say Wai's team, was

not centred primarily around financial knowledge. "The contest was not only about knowing the answers but also about maintaining a good relationship with other teams so that we were not voted out," quips Xiaoxiang.

Xiaoxiang's diverse interests include salsa dancing and music — she not only plays the violin and clarinet, but is also finance director of the SMU Symphonic Band.

So what are her plans for the future? Currently working part-time at an asset management firm, Xiaoxiang is hoping to participate in an exchange programme to study in the Netherlands next year.

"I like to travel a lot and I chose Europe because I want to find out more about different cultures," she says.

The prize money from the competition has contributed towards her plan for next year's exchange programme. Meanwhile, she's busy enjoying her third year in university.