

Winner of stock contest catches investing bug

Accountancy student can't wait to turn mock trades into real ones when she starts working

► **Leong Chan Teik**

ON THE first meeting, you would never guess that accountancy undergraduate Lee Chin Ser is passionate about football.

It turns out that the 22-year-old has been keen on the game since she was in primary school.

Neither would you have figured that behind her ebullience is an analytical mind that cuts finely through business financials.

She and two fellow students from the Singapore Management University (SMU) recently beat 57 teams from four universities in a stock analysis competition.

Participants presented their arguments for recommending a "buy" or "sell" on a stock.

The judges were from Kim Eng Securities, SMU, Nanyang Technological University, National University of Singapore and Singapore Institute of Management.

Ms Lee and her team-mates shared the top prize of \$1,500.

The win has got her more excited about the real world of investments. Over coffee at SMU, she says she cannot wait to open her investment account when she starts working next year and has money to invest.

Away from studies, she enjoys playing goalkeeper for SMU's women football team.

She says her love of the game may have its roots in Manchester, England, where she lived when her father was studying for a master's degree in engineering. "The football culture there is so strong, you can't help but absorb it."

Q *Moneywise, what were some highlights of your growing up years?*

A My parents, especially my dad, gave me whatever I wanted — Lego sets, Nintendo and Gameboy, for example. Benetton clothes were a staple in my wardrobe.

I was a spendthrift. For example, in Primary 6 or Secondary 1, I spent \$10 at one go to make special name cards to give away to friends. When I used up my pocket money, I asked for more.

I grew up in an HUDC flat in Jurong. Then we moved to a condominium in Upper Bukit Timah, then a double-storey terrace house in Yio Chu Kang, and finally to a townhouse in Loyang where we live now.

My family bought an investment condominium in Loyang during the property boom in the 1990s, so we were asset-rich instead of cash-rich. It has since been sold.

Q *Over the years, did the money situation stay constant?*

A My dad changed jobs a few times. His income became uncertain as the jobs were on a contract basis. My mum, a housewife, thinks my younger sis and I spend money too freely. She would tell us that dad's income was very decent, but it had to pay for things like food, groceries and mortgage repayments.



HAVING LEARNT THE VALUE OF MONEY since she was in secondary school, Ms Lee, who plays football, intends to save up to repay most of her study loan of around \$18,000.

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From Secondary 3 or 4, I began to save as much as possible of the \$40 a week I got as pocket money. I felt happy to see the balance in my account grow to thousands of dollars. Now, my pocket money is \$250 a month. On a good month, I spend only about \$80. At most, it's double that figure.

Q *How else do you accumulate savings?*

A I work as a teaching assistant to my professor for \$500 a term. Every holiday break, I work as an intern at PricewaterhouseCoopers or other firms. In SMU, the required period of internship is 10 weeks but I have chalked up 16 weeks already, and plan to do more.

Q *What do you spend on?*

A Not much. I don't go shopping often. I don't even have an MP3 player, as I prefer to listen to the radio.

In a few weeks' time, I'll travel to the University of St Gallen in Switzerland under an exchange programme for a month. It will cost \$7,000. I'm paying a chunk of it while my parents will foot the rest. This is an expense I don't want to save on because I can get this educational experience only as a student.

I have taken a study loan as my dad's CPF money is committed to repaying our home. I'm saving up to repay the loan of around \$18,000. My dad says he will pay but I insist on paying at least most of it. Monthly repayment starts a year after I graduate.

Q *After three years studying accountancy, how have your*

money attitudes changed?

A I have learnt how to better manage my money. I create a monthly budget to track my spending. By doing so, I spend less.

Also, I used to be averse to investing in stocks. I've learnt that it's not gambling as there are reasons behind movements of prices. If you do your research, your investment returns can be much more — so why not?

Q *What do you want to do after you graduate?*

A I'll probably be an equities analyst. You need to think a lot about the different companies with different strategies, and how that will affect profits, cash flows, etc. I find that very interesting.

I'm widening my investment knowledge by being an analyst for a fund that SMU students launched recently. We do research and do mock trades.

Q *When you start work, what would you dream of buying?*

A It wouldn't be a car. Public transport is so convenient.

Q *Many of your peers probably want a car in a hurry. Why don't you?*

A It's not worth it. There are better things to do with my money, such as invest it or buy a property. I don't attach a status symbol to a car. I watch F1 races, I think they are cool. But I can get good public transport, so there's no point in buying a car.

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