

Honorary Fellow A Citation

Ms Yu Chui-ye

'Good honing gives a sharp edge to a sword, while bitter cold brings out the fragrance of plum blossoms', as the saying goes. It implies that brilliance and skill sets are built on endurance of hardship and also toil and moil. With perseverance, even metal and rock could be engraved and a sword could be honed sharp; and only after bracing hardships could one truly feel the aromas of flowers and appreciate what is hard-earned. The above aptly narrates what Ms Yu Chui-ye has gone through to achieve her success today. Though having had a traumatic experience in her early teens, Ms Yu had overcome the predicament with resilience and a positive mindset. After strenuous training, she managed to clinch a total of seven gold, three silver and one bronze medals in wheelchair fencing competitions in four consecutive Paralympic Games. The odyssey parallels the honing of a perfect sword or the carving of precious stones. She is the first local para-athlete to have won the highest number of gold medals in the Paralympic Games, thus winning her the affectionate title 'Queen of Fencing', a well-deserved salutation for her stunning achievements.

A wheelchair sportswoman, Ms Yu was born in Hong Kong. She was diagnosed with bone cancer at age 11. The bone of her left leg was at first responding well to treatment until she suffered accidentally an injury resulting in bone fracture. The mishap led to constant inflammation and after prolonged medical treatment, there was still no sign of improvement. Eventually, she took the difficult decision of having her left leg amputated and getting fitted for a prosthesis. Never admitting defeat, she was determined that she would not be hindered by a lost leg. Her courage, fortitude and optimism eventually paid off and fueled her future success.

After amputation of her leg, Ms Yu went through an arduous period. Hoping for a speedy recovery, she joined the Hong Kong Sports Association for the Physically Disabled at the age of 16. At first, she took swimming lessons but later enrolled in a wheelchair fencing programme. Because of her outstanding performance, she was invited to receive structured training at the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI). In no time, she became an elite wheelchair fencer in the Institute. Ms Yu worked harder than others and did her best to polish her technique. The fencing sword in no time started to shine. Just one year after joining HKSI, she participated in the Wheelchair Fencing World Cup in Italy and won two silver medals. Later in the same year, she participated in another Wheelchair Fencing World Cup in Hungary, and clinched one gold and one silver medals. These remarkable results immediately made Ms Yu a shining star in that sector of sports. Three years later, Ms Yu, still a secondary school student, set off for the 2004 Athens Paralympics, her debut in the Games. There she won four gold medals respectively in the Women Individual Foil and Individual Épée, and Women Team Foil and Team Épée competitions, becoming the first fencing sportswoman to have pocketed four gold medals in one Paralympics. The victory could judiciously be described as 'conquering the whole world with just one sword'. In 2008, she garnered one gold and one silver medals in the Beijing Paralympics. Four years later, she represented Hong Kong for the third time to participate in the Paralympics in London. There she grabbed two gold and one silver medals. In 2016, she participated again, for the fourth time, in the Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro, and took home two silver medals. In these four Paralympic Games, she won a total of seven gold, three silver and one bronze medals,

an achievement so far unmatched by others, and a sports legacy very much applauded and happily discussed among the people of Hong Kong.

Being an alumna of CUHK, Ms Yu goes after her goal with all her heart in pursuit of excellence. When she first snatched four gold medals at the Athens Paralympics, she was awarded a scholarship under the University's Sports Scholarship Scheme to pursue undergraduate studies. In 2008, she completed her studies at the Department of Geography and Resource Management. She then continued her postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Education and obtained an MA degree in Sports Studies in 2010. During her years at CUHK, Ms Yu shuttled between the campus and the Hong Kong Sports Institute, juggling the demands of both studies and training. Others might find such a routine taxing but not Ms Yu. When giving her words of wisdom to her juniors at CUHK, Ms Yu said, 'One should, while in the university, commit oneself to studies no matter what. Furthermore, one should take studying as an interest. In so doing, you will not only be able to broaden your horizon but will also derive joy and satisfaction in the process.'

Ms Yu is a shining example of going where one's heart leads and never admitting defeat. Although missing one of her calves, the optimistic lady did not lose her fighting spirit. The night before her amputation operation, Ms Yu even chatted with her left leg, 'I will miss you but the doctors have already done their best. Maybe it's time to say goodbye to you.' The leg was gone, so she just decided to make friends with her prosthesis. She never blames or complains. To Ms Yu, going through life is like going through a competition. What counts is not technique but

mindset. Manage well your stress and emotions before going into a game or tackling any life problems. If you cannot control your emotions, you will never be able to control your opponents. The strategy for winning is thus to keep calm and battle on. Do not attempt to snatch a quick victory but take your time to raise your scores in the game point by point. Adjust your mindset, dare to try and brave any defeat. Only with this mentality will you be able to scale new heights. Though you could not choose your fate, you could decide your attitude in life. Do not hurt others, and stay optimistic. Then you will be able to enjoy life. This is her secret to a successful life.

Besides winning medals and achieving crowning glory in wheelchair fencing, Ms Yu's success in life could be reflected by the numerous honours bestowed on her, among which are: Hong Kong Sports Stars Awards, Hong Kong Ten Outstanding Young Persons Award, Medal of Honour and Bronze Bauhinia Star by the HKSAR Government. Ms Yu was named Asian Female Athlete of the Year by the Asian Paralympic Committee. On account of her qualifications and experience in wheelchair fencing, she was appointed Chair of the IWAS (International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation) Wheelchair Fencing Athlete Council. All these honours are given in recognition of her exceptional performance and her unremitting spirit. She has set a good example for all athletes and young people in Hong Kong.

'How can plum blossoms emit fragrance without going through the severe cold winter?' This saying symbolizes the onerous journey Ms Yu has gone through so far. With perseverance, she turns hardship into hope, and continues

to thrive despite adverse circumstances. Mr Chairman, Ms Yu is an outstanding athlete and distinguished alumna of the University. She hones her skills in fencing and sets off with all her heart in pursuing excellence in sports. She has overcome all sorts of hardship and achieved exceptional success. She has unleashed all her strength and energy in sports and in return obtain phenomenal results. With her sword, she wrote her own story stroke by stroke, which has encouraged countless athletes and young people to climb the ladder of success. In recognition of Ms Yu's athletic supremacy and indomitable spirit, Mr Chairman, it is my great pleasure to present to you Ms Yu Chui-yee for the Honorary Fellowship.