

Tournament sets its sights on a big fundraising target for Operation Santa Claus

Squash players aiming to make a million

Lana Lam

Dozens of squash players will work up a sweat in the hope of raising HK\$1 million for charities in Hong Kong tomorrow.

The 12th annual Wing Ding squash tournament will boost the coffers of the 16 beneficiaries of Operation Santa Claus, a charity appeal organised by the *South China Morning Post* and RTHK.

The squash tournament is named after Yuen Kam-wing, a physically-handicapped man who worked at the Hong Kong squash centre in Admiralty during the 1980s and 90s.

He died in 1998, aged 33, due to complications with his illness.

Tournament co-ordinator Tim Everest said the event paid tribute to a man who, despite his poor health, always remained positive.

"The whole idea is about remembering the spirit of Wing, a severely handicapped man who smiled every day," he said.

"He was fiercely optimistic and he was such an example of hope. He always felt he was lucky to be alive."

In keeping with that spirit, the wall-bangers on the squash courts at the Hong Kong Football Club tomorrow



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people can get pretty gloomy. One day, I might need someone's help and I would hope that someone would make these philanthropic efforts, too."

The tournament was founded in 1998 by two of Wing's friends, Phil Head and Nick Rickett, and the event became a major donor to Operation Santa Claus six years ago.

Since 2003, it has raised more than HK\$1.6 million for Operation Santa with a record result last year of more than HK\$500,000.

"One million seems like an extraordinary amount this year, but once we build it, I can't see why we can't get to four, five million," Everest said.

"The spirit of giving is very strong in Hong Kong. I've got a business to run but you've just got to make time."

"The key to all this is passion, and it's one of the most enjoyable things I do all year."

The event raises money through entry fees, raffle tickets, donations and an auction tomorrow evening after the tournament.

Major raffle prizes and auction items include two Cathay Pacific business class tickets to Bali and week-long stays in luxury resorts in Thailand, Indonesia and Japan.

HKshopOnline.com has joined in by pledging one third of its profits from the sale of selected gift baskets.

Everest, who runs a fur trading company, confirmed yesterday that the money raised so far had already exceeded last year's effort with a big hand from insurance giant Aviva and the fur industry.

"I think Wing probably knows about the tournament," he said.

"He would have a cherubic face looking down from heaven. To think that someone can be remembered 12 years after passing away, I think he would be 10 feet tall."

For more information, visit www.wingding.hk



Tim Everest, organiser of the Wing Ding squash tournament, gets in the fun spirit of the event which will raise cash for Operation Santa Claus. Photo: May Tse

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How you can give

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- Donations of HK\$100 or more are tax-deductible. If you'd like a tax receipt, please send the completed donation form and original bank receipt, with your name, address and phone number, to the above address
- Contact us at osc@scmp.com or 2680 8159 or visit us online at osc.scmp.com

One million seems like an extraordinary amount. But the spirit of giving is very strong in Hong Kong

Tournament coordinator Tim Everest on the fundraising target

row will play in outrageous outfits as each of the 14 teams of 10 players has been given a team colour.

One year, a man played in a lime-green "mankini", complete with matching feather boas.

"This tournament is a fun event but once we get on court there's quite a competitive edge," Everest said.

The event starts at 11am with hours of non-stop action as teams play 13 three-minute games without a break.

"It's a mad dash for points," Everest said, inviting the public to watch the tournament and join the fun. "The whole concept is using sport to do something constructive, to put a smile on faces because