

Celebrities praise healing power of sports

Prince Harry, rugby superstar Dan Carter of the New Zealand All Blacks and other international guests gathered at a charity summit at Tokyo Big Sight on Aug. 9 to describe how sports transformed their lives.

The purpose of the ISPS Sports Value Summit — Special Edition was to discuss what sports and charity can do for society.

The event was held by the International Sports Promotion Society, also known as ISPS Handa, which was founded in 2006 by Japanese philanthropist Haruhisa Handa, the organization's chairperson.

Over the years, ISPS Handa, originally established to help those with disabilities enjoy and participate in sports, has grown into an influential charity that supports an array of organizations and events in Japan

and abroad, based on the belief that sports have the power to change society, unite people and contribute to the pursuit of world peace.

The event started with a beautiful performance by the Stellenbosch University Choir. Stellenbosch University is a renowned research-centered international institute in South Africa that is both academically distinguished and committed to nurturing responsible leaders with the expertise and skills to improve society. The choir is made up of 120 students with different backgrounds and a broad range of academic disciplines, reflecting the diversity of the university, which has an enrollment of 32,500, including more than 3,700 students from 104 countries.

In his opening remarks, Handa touched on the power of sports in welfare and emphasized the importance of charity and welfare activities being continued by the private sector, which can offer a variety of support that governments cannot.

“To do that, we need inspirational icons, such as the speakers gathered here today. People like them can encourage those who engage in various activities to help others,” he said, emphasizing that the sense of happiness and satisfaction brought about by such encouragement is what motivates people to continue to make the effort.

The first lecture was given by Sophie Chandauka, who chairs Sentebale, a charity organization founded by Prince Harry and Lesotho's Prince Seeiso in 2006. Its activi-

ties have focused on meeting the needs of children and young people in Lesotho and the surrounding region who are often challenged by economic, social, health, mental and gender issues.

In addition to Sentebale's history and mission, Chandauka explained how philanthropy helped her personally, sharing her life story as a girl born into a family in Zimbabwe that suffered from extreme economic and social hardships.

“There was one thing that made a difference and changed my life. From the age of about 11, I received a generosity of spirit of perfect strangers, some of whom I have never met. They were the people who believed that I, as a young child, deserved to be loved and to be given the opportunity to live up to my greatest potential,” she said, emphasizing that someone's generosity can make a difference in the lives of others.

The second lecture was given by Steve James, who served as a maritime warfare officer in the Royal Australian Navy until he was severely injured on duty. His injuries required dozens of surgeries to treat, but it was through sport that James recovered, both physically and mentally, with support from the Invictus Games, an international multisport event for wounded, injured and sick service members. After supporting his long recovery, the Invictus Games inspired James to share his experiences with others. He participated in the 2022 Invictus Games in The Hague, winning a gold medal in discus and a bronze as a member of the Australian wheelchair rugby team. “I encourage everybody to be involved in sport in a way that helps the



Haruhisa Handa (third from right), founder and chairperson of the International Sports Promotion Society, poses with (left to right) Dan Carter, Sophie Chandauka, Steve James, Prince Harry, Ignacio Nacho Figueras and Wim de Villiers at the ISPS Sports Value Summit — Special Edition, for charity on Aug. 9. ISPS

person grow rather than necessarily winning,” he said.

A panel discussion moderated by Handa tapped the experiences of four speakers from around the world: Stellenbosch University Rector and Vice-Chancellor Wim de Villiers, internationally recognized polo player and Sentebale Ambassador Ignacio Nacho Figueras, Carter and Harry.

Carter said that what he was most proud of among the things he achieved during his rugby career was “the fact that I was able to inspire the next generations.” In addition to many charity activities, he established the DC10 Fund last year in partnership with UNICEF to support children in need.

Figueras recalled the passion he felt from

Harry in a polo match held in England in 2007 to raise money for Sentebale. “I was inspired by his drive and his commitment to make kids' lives better. I've been very lucky to be part of this charity as an ambassador since 2013.”

Harry, who helped establish Sentebale and the Invictus Games and is involved in many other social activities around the globe, said, “My life is charity, always has been, always will be.” He also stressed that the healing ability of sport is extraordinary.

Handa concluded the session by saying: “There is no better cure than to go outside, feel the air, make friends and have a purpose in life. The power of sports can help even those who are at rock bottom.”



Left: Philanthropist Haruhisa Handa opens the ISPS Sports Value Summit — Special Edition with a speech on Aug. 9. Right: Handa gestures to the panelists during one of the sessions at the summit. ISPS