

Max Maeder and DBS CEO Piyush Gupta banter over Olympic Village muffins, role models and exercise routines



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After his historic performance at the Marseille Marina, Olympic Bronze medallist Maximilian 'Max' Maeder returned to Singapore to much fanfare.

From the moment he landed at Changi Airport to the celebratory parade on the open-top bus, the 17-year-old is the talk of the town.

On Thursday (Aug 15), Max was at the Marina Bay Financial Centre for a fireside session with DBS CEO Piyush Gupta.

An auditorium of excited attendees waited patiently for Max's entrance, with many submitting their questions for the upcoming Q&A segment.



DBS CEO Piyush Gupta and Max Maeder sharing a laugh during the fireside chat at the Marina Bay Financial Centre on Aug 15.

PHOTO: AsiaOne/Dennis Palit

How's the muffin?

As he scrolled through the list of questions, Piyush pre-empted Max by mentioning that the number one question for the day was related to the Olympic Village.

He replied: "Is it about the muffin?"

This sent the crowd laughing. They wanted to know if the muffin was simply hype or actually out of this world.

For those unaware, the chocolate muffins served at the Olympic Village was all the craze and arguably became something of a cultural icon and highlight of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

"I'm really embarrassed about this. I didn't know it was such a big deal!" Max said.

He explained that he's not much for sweets so decided to give the muffins a pass instead. Looks like the audience would have to get the answer from other Singaporean Olympians then!

Given the relaxed setting, the 43-minute chat continued in this fashion, with plenty of quirky and fun topics raised from the audience's questions.



Max was all smiles

together with his parents, Hwee Keng (second from right) and Valentin (right most), at the event.

PHOTO: AsiaOne/Dennis Palit

Role models

When it comes to role models in life, Max has two. And they happened to be sitting front row at the event.

"I had the beautiful leading example of my parents and that helped set a very good personality and character to strive towards," he said.

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Piyush's follow-up question was regarding the type of parents they were.

Disciplinarian or chill? It seemed like Max was keen on being tight-lipped.

But he eventually broke into a smile as he looked towards them in the crowd, saying: "Well, there is both of them. You may ask them who is who."

Again, the audience giggled in amusement. Max certainly had a knack for engaging a crowd.

He continued to speak about the connection he has with his parents.

We saw it first-hand on Aug 9 at the Marseille Marina, when he took home the bronze medal for Singapore.

He mentioned what went through his mind the moment he got out of the water after his final race.

"I arrived at the beach and [was] hit with a wave of cheers and the longest hug of my life with my mother," he said.



Say cheese! Max poses with the audience during the fireside chat on Aug 15.

PHOTO: AsiaOne/Dennis Palit

Exercise routines

Kitefoiling is a physically demanding sport, especially on one's core and leg muscles.

It's no surprise that some in the audience wanted to understand more about Max's training routine.

He didn't reveal too much, saying: "I follow whatever my trainer tells me! You do squats, leg exercises, you name it."

What he did share was, because of the size of his legs, a common issue he faces is to find pants that actually fits him well.

Later on in the fireside chat, the topic of exercise came up again.

This time, people were wondering if Max could teach them simple stretches that could be done at the office desk.

"I could only deliver you one, because that's all I do," he admitted.

That's when Max got off his seat, with hands on his hips, squatted for a split second and jumped.

He achieved an impressive height, with the slightly stunned audience letting out a gasp.

Under her breath, a woman next to me told her colleague: "We definitely can't do that."

When the audience posed a question on life advice, even Piyush wasn't sure if Max, given his age, would be suited to answer.

Max started his response with a caveat, mentioning that he's "in no position to give good advice", but he was more than happy to provide his opinion.

And with regard to taking an unconventional route in life, Max's words were simple: "Give yourself a chance."

"I promise you. You will be surprised by your own capabilities."