

Right here waiting

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Coach Hendrawan will discuss Chong Wei's future when he returns

By RAJES PAUL

KUALA LUMPUR: National badminton coach Hendrawan will patiently wait for Lee Chong Wei's (pic) return so that they can both discuss his future in badminton.

Indonesian Hendrawan, who has formed a close bond with Chong Wei since taking charge of him in the last few years, is happy with the three-time Olympic silver medallist's progress as he undergoes treatment for early-stage nose cancer in Taiwan.

Hendrawan said the 35-year-old Chong Wei felt something was wrong during the Indonesian Open in Jakarta in the first week of July. Just days before the Indonesian Open, Chong Wei had put up a fantastic show to win the Malaysian Open for the 12th time at home.

"Chong Wei really pushed himself to win the Malaysian Open and I asked whether he still wanted to compete in the Indonesian Open. Chong Wei still had the fire in him and wanted to win the title for a record seventh time," said Hendrawan.

But Hendrawan found Chong Wei struggling during the second round against Anders Antonsen of Denmark although he still pulled through before going down to Kento Momota of Japan in the semi-finals.

"I've never seen him so tired before. It was unlike him. Chong Wei left for home to find out what was wrong," said Hendrawan.

"When I returned home (July 9), Chong Wei told me that he had something urgent to tell me. I went to his house and he broke the news. I was devastated but told him to get a second opinion.

"Chong Wei came back with a second opinion from another doctor two days later and it was confirmed that it is cancer.

"We spoke about his treatment and Chong Wei found out that only a few countries had the best treatment for nose cancer and Taiwan was one of them. They have the best modern facilities there and most advanced medication."

Two weeks ago, Hendrawan and Chong Wei's former coach Datuk Tey Seu Bock visited him.

"I'm so happy that his treatment is coming to an end. I'm looking forward to his return to



Kuala Lumpur. Once he has recovered completely, Chong Wei and I will discuss his plans for the future," said Hendrawan.

Seu Bock said it was difficult to accept Chong Wei's illness at first.

"I've known Chong Wei since he was a junior and I questioned why it had to happen to him.

"He is the fittest player in the national team," said Seu Bock.

"He did not look too good when I visited him recently but now, he's back to his usual self. Chong Wei is a fighter and I'm happy to see him being so positive. He is truly an example to others."

National doubles shuttler Goh V Shem said the players knew about Chong Wei's condition

and were hoping for the best.

"He will always be our hero. We hope he will recover soon and be healthy again. Stay strong Chong Wei," said V Shem.

National doubles shuttler Vivian Hoo said all players missed his presence at the training centre.

"We were sad when we found out. He is an inspiration to us and we hope he will continue with his fight. He must rest well and recover soon," said Vivian.

Many others expressed their wishes too – sports officials and media from abroad, local and international fans – and all hoped Chong Wei will be back and even challenge himself to have a shot at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.