

For Immediate Release



AUB sends off two of its students to 2012 Olympics

Beirut, Lebanon- 15/05/2012 - The American University of Beirut held a send-off ceremony on May 16 for two of its students who will be representing Lebanon in tae kwon do and table tennis at the 2012 Olympics in London.

Andrea Paoli, a business junior, and Tvine Moumjoghlian (BA in economics, 2010), will be heading to London in July to represent Lebanon in tae kwon do and table tennis respectively.

AUB celebrated their accomplishment during Athletes' Night 2012, a festive ceremony that is annually organized by University Sports and the Office of Student Affairs at AUB. This year it attracted a host of dignitaries, including British Ambassador Thomas Fletcher, President of the Lebanese Olympic Committee Antoine Chartier, Secretary General of the Lebanese Tae Kwon Do Federation George Zeidan, President of the Table Tennis Federation Salim El Hage, and head coach of the Tae Kwon Do national team Habib Zarifeh, as well as AUB President Peter Dorman and Provost Ahmad Dallal.

During the ceremony, which was held at the Charles Hostler Student Center Auditorium, AUB's Most Valuable Player of the Year and the Athlete of the Year were also announced.

Ghaleb Halimi, director of University Sports and organizer of the event, led the packed auditorium through a full agenda of speeches, video clips about the champion athletes and preparations in London for the Olympics, as well as the award presentations.

"Tvine and Andrea are striving to ensure that the Lebanese national anthem is played in the great city of London," said Ambassador Fletcher. "Here in Beirut we will be cheering the Lebanese athletes and I wish them the best of luck at the games."

The ambassador also noted, "Great Britain is preparing to welcome Great Lebanon, and the United Kingdom will be receiving a United Lebanon. The Olympics are an amazing spectacle - as the world's finest athletes battle to call themselves the world's best athletes. London is ready to make these the greatest games ever."

The Olympians were honored with special awards and cheers from the crowd of fellow student athletes, family and friends.

"I have been preparing for this for more than two years, and qualifying was one of the biggest moments in my life. It's been my dream since I was born to be in the Olympic Games and to raise the Lebanese flag there," Paoli said.

Between practicing twice a day for two to four hours, and traveling for competitions and training camps, Paoli admits it takes a lot of work and sacrifice, as well as technique,

strategy, power, and strength to make it to the Olympics. This proves to be a lot of pressure, she said, but when she's competing, all other thoughts fade away as she concentrates on her goal: to win.

"Sport is also about courage and determination and this is what I've seen in Tvine and Andrea," said Fletcher.

Tvine Moumjoghlian has been playing table tennis since she was nine years old, encouraged by her father, a Lebanese table tennis champion for 17 years. Her biggest achievement was her victory in the West Asian Championship in 2011 through which she qualified to go to the Olympic Games.

"I think this is a great honor and opportunity for me to represent my country in the biggest international event. It's a very heavy burden on my shoulders, but this is my dream. However this was not only due to my personal efforts, but the collective efforts of my club Homenetmen, my family, especially my father - who is at the same time my coach - my friends, and finally the Lebanese Table Tennis Federation. And I am forever thankful to them," said Moumjoghlian.

AUB sports director Ghaleb Halimi also expressed his pride in the two Olympians saying, "You've started the first step in the long road, which in itself is an achievement and I wish you both the best of luck."

Moumjoghlian added: "I hope that by representing Lebanon to the world, as it deserves to be represented, we will help the world recognize that we have a lot of excellent local talents that have international standards, and that Lebanon should not just be associated with concepts like political instability and war. I hope I will achieve good results against the world champions."

After honoring the Olympians, the enthusiastic crowd awaited the announcement of The Most Valuable Player awards as well as other special sports awards, which went to 25 students who received trophies for their sports achievements.

Halimi explained that the Most Valuable Player recognizes "the best of the best" from each sport for both men and women, and the Athlete of the Year Award celebrates one athlete who represents a good model of sportsmanship, excellence in sports and leadership skills. These awards were created 12 years ago.

Dean of Student Affairs Talal Nizameddin, said, "Sports bring out the best in people, show teamwork, leadership, honesty, and integrity in the players and, with hard work, we can make it to the pinnacle of our ambitions."

Awards were given out for leadership to Nayef Sindian, sportsmanship to Azihiwe Cooper-White, and for the top scorer Aksana Yordanov; meanwhile, the 2012 Athlete of the Year Award went to Moumjoghlian's brother, table tennis player Avo Moumjoghlian.

ENDS

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

- 1- [L-R] Andrea Paoli (tae kwon do) and Tvine Moumjoghlian (table tennis)
- 2- Wajih El Sheikh, MVP of the AUB Junior Basketball team, is hoisted up in the air by his teammates
- 3- [L-R] Paoli, President of the Lebanese Olympic Committee Antoine Chartier (in red tie), President Dorman, Moumjoghlian, and Ambassador Fletcher

For more information please contact:

Maha Al-Azar, Associate Director for Media Relations, ma110@aub.edu.lb, 01-353 228

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>

Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon