

DOMINANT SYAHIRAN SEALS HIS 3RD GOLD

Teenager's winning sequence continues with an 'unexpected' third silat title in three weeks

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Syahiran Jeffry capped off a memorable month yesterday, when he won the Class J (up to 75kg) junior (Under-17) title at the Singapore Open Pencak Silat Championship at the Pasir Ris Sports Hall.

It was the teenage pencak silat exponent's third gold medal in as many weeks.

The 15-year-old also triumphed at the April 24-29 World Junior Pencak Silat Championship in Songkhla, Thailand, and the May 5-6 Belgian Open Pencak Silat Championship in Schoten.

Said Syahiran: "I thought I might have been able to win one or two of the competitions, but not all three. I totally did not expect this.

"Today, I felt a bit of pressure, and I was nervous because I needed to prove that my previous wins were not by chance.

"I just told myself I could do it, focus on myself, and remembered the effort I put in training."

The Jurongville Secondary School Secondary Four student, who stands at 1.84m, said his highlight was the win at the World Juniors.

"That was my first time competing in Class J after moving up from Class G (up to 63kg), so I was nervous and a little scared," he said.

"And in the final I was thrown



Syahiran Jeffry (right) won the Class J (up to 75kg) Under-17 title in the Singapore Open Pencak Silat Championship. PHOTO: SINGAPORE SILAT FEDERATION

onto the mat in the first round by my Thai opponent, so I was behind on points from the start. But I just told myself to focus and relax, and I managed to get the win."

Overwhelmed with emotion after being crowned a junior world champion, Syahiran said the tears flowed freely when he embraced his father, who had travelled to Songkhla to watch him compete.

Perhaps he felt he had proven a point. After all, Syahiran said he has been trying to emulate his older brother, Syakir.

Syakir, who recently turned 17,

competes in the Class K (up to 79kg). He also competed at the Singapore Open, but in the senior category, and was eliminated in the quarter-finals.

"When we were younger, our coaches were always full of praise for him, and recommended he join the national (junior setup)," said Syahiran.

"This made me jealous and I wanted to prove that I could be as good as my brother.

"So I trained really hard, until I was finally called up to the national team too about a year ago."

The sibling rivalry, insists Syahiran, is healthy.

"We're very close," he said. "Sometimes, he gives me pointers on how to better my game, and I'm really thankful for that."

Syahiran is the latest young Singaporean silat exponent to claim international success in recent years.

Sheik Farhan, who is still only 20, won back-to-back world titles in 2014 and 2016, while Alfian Juma'en, 21, won back-to-back SEA Games golds in 2013 and 2015.

While Syahiran is too young to compete at the Aug 18-Sept 2 Asian

Games in Indonesia - silat will make its competitive debut at the quadrennial Asiad and the minimum age is 17 - Singapore Silat Federation chief executive Sheik Alau'ddin has high hopes for him.

Said Syahiran: "The seniors inspire me. I've watched videos of their fights, watched how much they really want to win, and their reactions when they do.

"I want to go far, just like them. Hopefully, one day I can fight beside them."

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SYAHIRAN JEFFRY, 15, on his 17-year-old brother Syakir, who competes in Class K (up to 79kg).

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