

# Ferdous seeks support in world quest

Yogaraj Panditurai

Even with national service looming, Sheik Ferdous is not going to relax on his gruelling silat training regimen as he guns for a gold medal at next year's Kuala Lumpur SEA Games.

But before he enlists on July 8, he added another gold to his collection when he defeated Vietnam's Pham Thanh Tam 4-1 in the Class I (85-90kg) final at last weekend's 2nd Asian Pencak Silat Championships held at Bedok Sports Hall.

Ferdous is the son of two-time silat world champion Sheik Alau'ddin. In a case of double elation, his younger brother Sheik Farhan also won gold after beating Akash Pathak from India 5-0 in the Class J (90-95kg) final.

Ferdous, 20, is now hoping his exploits can earn him a national service deferment so that he can focus on becoming a world champion.

He said: "Only those that are guaranteed to win gold are given deferment so I'm not sure how my application will turn out."

"Besides the SEA Games (August next year), other important championships (September's Asian Beach Games and December's World Championships) are coming up in the next few months and they are important for my preparations."

"I can only hope my gold medal will be proof of how far I've come, especially as it was my first time competing in that weight class and

I won it at my first go. That gives me some confidence that I might be considered for deferment."

In a show of his dedication, Ferdous moved up four weight classes in less than a year, piling on 15kg in the process, on his father's advice that he stands a better chance of becoming a world champion in the heavier classes, which have fewer competitors.

Weighing 70kg during last June's SEA Games, he is now a hefty 85kg.

Ferdous said: "Around July last year, I started going to the gym five times a week and took supplements to bulk up. There were even times where I had to force myself to eat a lot and it was difficult at the start to keep up the routine."

"But my dad kept pushing me, and he was the one who told me to go up the weight classes. I just kept telling myself it would all be worth it and thankfully, I hit my target weight in April."

Sheik, who is also the Singapore Silat Federation's chief executive officer, hopes his son's medal-winning potential and hard work can impress the authorities sufficiently to process the deferment.

He said: "Ferdous sacrificed a lot in the last year and it'll be a real waste if he can't take part in the championships coming up in September and December. Those are good opportunities to develop his potential and he's doing well in the new weight class now."

yogarajp@sph.com.sg



Sheik Ferdous won the Class I (85-90kg) title in the Asian Championships last weekend in Singapore after moving up four classes in less than a year. An NS deferment will aid his goal of becoming world champion. ST FILE PHOTO

# Hard-earned golds for S'pore's silat warriors

Silat exponent Muhammad Nur Alfian Juma'en is making a habit of winning major titles after suffering sheer agony.

Last weekend at the 2nd Asian Pencak Silat Championships, Alfian defeated Vietnam's Nguyen Duy Tuyen 5-0 in the Class G (75-80kg) final but only after fracturing his right hand in the first round – courtesy of a kick by his opponent.

Last year, he won SEA Games gold after suffering a deep cut on his left foot halfway into the final.

But the 19-year-old is willing to brave the pain, saying: "Everything comes with a price to pay. If this is how I must win, then what do I do? I just have to accept it."

Despite the early setback against Tuyen, Alfian did not realise how badly hurt he was. He said: "It was uncomfortable throughout the bout but I didn't want to show it in case my opponent realised I was injured."

"I never imagined it'd be a fracture. After the match, the medic said it was just a swelling. But it was only after an X-ray at the hospital the next day did I find out I fractured my third and fourth metacarpal."

But Alfian was rewarded for his grit. Apart from winning the Asian Championship gold to help Singapore rack up eight golds in total, he was also named the best male athlete.



Alfian Juma'en and Nurul Suhaila both clinched gold at the 2nd Asian Pencak Silat Championships. Singapore won eight golds in total.

Another big winner was Nurul Suhaila Saiful. The 21-year-old picked up her first career gold medal when she beat Vu Thi Chi from Vietnam 5-0 in the Class D (60-65kg) final as well as the best female athlete award.

Suhaila said: "In my last three competitions, I reached the final but lost every one of them. This time, I was really hungry for gold and told myself, 'Do you want another silver again?'. It was do-or-die for me and I'm relieved that I pulled it off."

Singapore placed second in the overall medal tally with eight golds, nine silvers and six bronzes. Vietnam's 13 golds, six silvers and four bronzes made them champions while Thailand settled for third (two golds, five silvers and six bronzes).

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