

# THE STRAITS TIMES STAR OF THE MONTH

PRESENTED BY 100 PLUS



June winner: **Alfian Juma'en**

## CHAMPION'S FRACTURE NO SETBACK

He won final despite hand injury in Asian silat c'ships

Nicole Chia

A coin-sized lump remains on the back of silat exponent Alfian Juma'en's right hand - a reminder of the pain he fought through to win the Class G (75-80kg) title at last month's Asian Pencak Silat Championships at Bedok Sports Hall.

During the first round of the final, the 19-year-old used his right hand to parry a kick from his opponent, Vietnam's Nguyen Duy Tuyen.

The kick caught Alfian on the back of his hand, and he soon found his hand "trembling vigorously" by the end of the second round.

He decided against icing his injured hand after the first round, as he did not want his opponent to notice and capitalise on his weakness.

It was not until the next day that the two-time SEA Games gold medallist learnt that he had fractured two bones in his right hand.

"I didn't know it was a fracture; I thought it was just a normal bruise," said Alfian, still sounding incredulous as he recalled the incident.

"I didn't know what the injury was. It just felt very painful, but I didn't worry too much during the match as I just wanted to do my best and win gold for my team."

Alfian, who turns 20 in October, was also named the best male athlete of the 2nd Asian Pencak Silat Championships.

For his grit and tenacity, Alfian is The Straits Times' Star of the Month for June.

The award is an extension of ST's Athlete of the Year accolade, which was launched in 2008. Both are backed by F&N's isotonic drink 100Plus.

Said ST sports editor Marc Lim: "Choosing ST's Star of the Month wasn't an easy decision, given that many athletes had also done well.

"Alfian was the best male athlete of the 2nd Asian Pencak Silat Cham-



ST sports editor Marc Lim and F&N general manager Jennifer See presenting June's ST Star of the Month award to silat exponent Alfian Juma'en. PHOTO: GIN TAY FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

pionships, and the fact that he fought hard and won the gold medal despite his fractured hand makes his feat all the more remarkable."

But Alfian is no stranger to pushing through the pain barrier to win big. At last year's SEA Games on home soil, he won gold despite suffering a deep cut on his foot half-way into the final.

Comparing both situations, he said: "During the SEA Games, I could see that I was bleeding, so I could calm myself down because I knew what the injury was.

"I was more worried this time (during the Asian Pencak Silat Championships) because I didn't

know what had happened, and the pain in my hand was one that I had never felt before."

Alfian is still not fit enough to resume contact sparring during training. Nevertheless, he is confident of making a full recovery in time for the World Pencak Silat Championships in Bali in December.

"If I suffer a bigger injury and still win the competition, I think I wouldn't mind the sacrifice," he quipped.

"But of course, I hope I don't get injured... I want to win the gold."

SUCCESS LESSENS THE PAIN

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ALFIAN JUMA'EN, two-time SEA Games silat gold medallist, on the lengths he is willing to go to, in order to win his bouts.

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