

BEST HAUL AT ASIAN BEACH GAMES

Silat's 10 medals, muay thai's two help S'pore to big improvement from previous best of 4

Nicole Chia

From just four medals to a whopping 12, Singapore athletes have recorded their best medal haul at the Asian Beach Games, which concluded yesterday in Danang, Vietnam.

Silat exponents contributed 10 of them – two golds, two silvers and six bronzes – while muay thai fighters added a silver and a bronze to easily eclipse the nation's previous best of two golds and two bronzes at the 2014 edition in Phuket.

A delighted chef de mission Clifford Wong said: "Across all sports, our athletes exhibited resilience and their best efforts in representing Singapore among some of the top athletes in the region."

Some of the medallists were unexpected. For instance, muay thai fighter Cheryl Gwa earned a surprise bronze on her international debut at the Games.

Her performance in the women's light-flyweight (45-48kg) division earned plaudits from Mervyn Tan, president of the Amateur Muaythai Association Singapore.

He said: "We fielded Cheryl because we wanted her to gain some international exposure, but she went a step further and won a medal. She may be new to the international scene but with further training, she will go far."

Gwa admitted she had been "quite nervous" in her first international competition, but enjoyed the experience.

She said: "It was a good experience to compete and soak in the atmosphere of an international competition."

"I wasn't expecting a medal, but I was hopeful – I just wanted to do my best and see how it worked out."

"I'm glad I managed to bring a medal back."

Compatriot Bryan Tee won a silver medal in the men's light-flyweight (45-48kg) event.

While Gwa's bronze was a pleasant surprise, Sheik Farhan Sheik Alau'ddin's gold in the silat men's Class H (80-85kg) competition was

somewhat expected. After all, he is the reigning world champion in the Class J (90-95kg) event.

Yet, Farhan had his obstacles to overcome – in particular the challenge of competing on a sand pitch, instead of the usual competition mats.

Said the 18-year-old: "The sand was very unstable; I took one step and could feel my body sinking in, so it was quite hard but I'm glad I managed to adapt to it."

His gold added to the gold in the women's artistic category by Nurul Khairunnisa Azlani, and Farhan is eager to retain his world title at the 17th World Pencak Silat Championship in Bali from Dec 2-8.

He added: "I'm sure (retaining the title) is what everyone will expect of me, and it's also what I'm expecting of myself. I want the gold."

"I know more people will be watching me this time, but I'm just taking it as another competition that I want to win, so I don't feel any extra pressure."

Apart from the silverware, silat chief Sheik Alau'ddin hopes his charges took home with them the motivation to train hard for future competitions.

He said: "At the Asian Beach Games, they could see that their opponents were all hungry for victory no matter what surface they are fighting on."

"This will be good momentum for our athletes as they work towards good results at the World Championships and next year's SEA Games."

nicole@sph.com.sg



Above: Singapore's muay thai fighters Cheryl Gwa (left) and Bryant Tee show off their Asian Beach Games medals. PHOTO COURTESY OF GOH WAN XIU

Left: Singapore silat exponents Nurul Khairunnisa Azlani (far left) and Sheik Farhan Sheik Alau'ddin clinched golds for the Republic in Danang. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

ASIAN BEACH GAMES MEDAL HAUL

2

Gold.

3

Silvers.

7

Bronzes.