

 sports silat

 SAZALI ABDUL AZIZ

His back was against the wall.

First, Singapore silat exponent Shakir Juanda was up against the hometown favourite, who was backed by almost 1,000 vociferous countrymen in the small Lila Bhauana Arena in Bali yesterday.

Then Shakir did not get off to the best start in his Class I (85-90kg) final at the World Pencak Silat Championships.

Within seconds of the starting gong, he found himself dumped to the mat by his Indonesia opponent Firdhana Wahyu Putra.

"From then on, I tried to keep my cool and composure, focus on breathing techniques, and try to keep up momentum... But I was behind on points almost all the way," the 28-year-old told *The New Paper* over the phone.

Fired up by a pep talk by national coach Muhammad Figri, Shakir eventually overcame Firdhana to claim his second world title.

Another Singaporean, Sheik Farhan, also won his second Class J (90-95kg) world title after beating Vietnam's Mach Quoc Hung.

Revealing what his coach told him, Shakir said: "Before the start of the final round, he reminded me how hard I trained for this, three times a day, enduring the intense in-camp training, and sacrificing so much."

PSYCHE

"I was trailing on points, but the gold was within reach. So there was no way I was going to give up. So when the gong sounded, I was like a crazy man.

"And, with 45 seconds to go, I managed a scissors (takedown) on Firdhana and pulled to within a point of him.

"With time running out, I just tawakkal (kept faith) and tried another takedown, and I managed to drop him again."

Three points ahead of his rival with just seconds to go, Shakir used his experience to see out the match.

He could not contain his emotions once the final

Shakir bounces back to claim second silat world title, along with teen Farhan

A comeback to cherish



Sheik Farhan (far right) and Shakir Juanda (above) kissing Singapore Silat Federation CEO Sheik Alau'ddin after winning their respective weight-class finals at the World Pencak Silat Championships in Bali yesterday. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PERSISI

gong sounded.

"Abang Sheik (Alau'ddin, Singapore Silat Federation CEO) was celebrating with the coaches, so I just ran and jumped on top of them," said Shakir.

"The feeling was indescribable. I did feel a lump in my throat and almost teared up, but I managed to control myself."

With their wins yesterday, Shakir and Farhan matched the achievement of silat great Sheik Alau'ddin, who won world titles in 1990 and 1994.

Farhan, Sheik's third-youngest child, had triumphed in Phuket almost two years ago, while Shakir won his first world title in Chiang Rai in 2012.

This is the first time since 2004 — when the world championships were hosted by Singapore — that the Republic's silat exponents have delivered more than one gold medal at the

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— Shakir Juanda, on what his coach told him

global meet, which features 41 countries this time round.

When asked how he felt, Farhan, who turns 20 next Friday, coolly replied: "Job done. Time to head home.

"To be honest, the previous win was sweeter because I was the only Singaporean left.

"It was my first senior competition and I had turned 17 just a month before.

PROUD

"But of course, I'm still very happy and proud to win this gold for my father, family, team and country... This time, it feels more natural."

A jubilant Sheik said: "Overall, I'm very happy because of the performance of the athletes and the team behind them... Everyone has been excellent."

msazali@sph.com.sg

CoachSG to improve coaching standards

 SWETHA SUNDARARAJAN

Sport Singapore (SportSG) will launch CoachSG in May 2017 as part of its efforts under Vision 2030 to boost the standards of coaching in Singapore.

It is already looking into possible courses for coaches of all levels, ranging from grassroots to elite.

At a media briefing yesterday, director of CoachSG, Troy Engle, 55, said: "Coaches play a vital role at all levels of the sport eco-system.

"They are one of the most important influencers for the next generation who are starting out in sport.

"This is a means to bring more coaches into our system so that we can offer them these development opportunities."

COURSES

Besides theories of coaching, the programme will also include courses on first aid and basic sport science.

Deputy Director of CoachSG, Low Jiaren, 37, hopes this initiative can draw coaches to a common ground, in order to give the public a different idea of coaches.

He said: "There are very good coaches and there are coaches who deliver not as well.

"We want to level up these coaches to balance things out.

"When people see value, they will realise that coaching is a valuable and noble profession."

Those interested can visit www.sportsingapore.gov.sg/CoachSG for more information.

swethas@sph.com.sg