

PAIN CAN'T STOP WORLD CHAMPIONS

S'pore silat exponents Farhan and Shakir overcome injuries to return to the top of the podium

May Chen

Doubts lurked in the corner and injuries put Sheik Farhan Sheik Alau'ddin's and Shakir Juanda's participation in question. Yet they failed to stand in the way of two silat world titles for Singapore.

Farhan and Shakir won their respective finals at the World Pencak Silat Championships in Bali yesterday, victories that meant Singapore finished with two golds, one silver and eight bronzes at the annual event.

Farhan swept to a 5-0 victory over a familiar foe, Vietnam's Mach

Quoc Hung, the same man he beat 3-2 last year to win the Class J (90-95kg) title.

Shakir, the 2012 world champion, also found his way back to the top of the podium with a 5-0 win over Indonesia's Firdhana Wahyu Putra in the Class I (85-90kg) final.

The scores might suggest otherwise, but a week before the tournament, it was unclear if Farhan would even be able to take part.

The 19-year-old, who recovered from a knee dislocation in March, strained the same knee just before the competition began.

On came the ice packs and down went the painkillers, but the uncertainty remained.

Said the Nanyang Polytechnic student: "I was scared because I didn't know how I was going to be able to compete. But I didn't have time to worry about the pain."

Pain was secondary, for his great-

er concern was to prove that his maiden world title last year was no fluke.

He said: "The second time round, you feel like you have more to prove. I knew in my heart that I could do it again."

For team-mate Shakir, success is even sweeter after enduring the bitterness of injury.

The 28-year-old was heartbroken when he had to withdraw from last year's SEA Games on home soil due to a knee injury. Another setback came five months ago when he had to undergo ankle surgery.

He said: "It's been very tough. I've been through a lot and the rehabilitation I had to go through was also quite tough."

"I believed in myself and trusted the staff at the Singapore Sports Institute who took care of me."

"All the hard training and sacrifices have paid off."



From far left: Silat world champion Shakir Juanda (Class I), bronze medallist Muhammad Nur Alfian Juma'en (Class H) and world champion Sheik Farhan Sheik Alau'ddin (Class J) at the world event in Bali. PHOTO COURTESY OF SHEIK ALAU'DDIN

Singapore Silat Federation chief executive officer Sheik Alau'ddin, Farhan's father and a former world champion himself, said the team will continue to work towards better results at next year's SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur.

He said: "This is good development, but we cannot sit on it. We'll work harder and look for better achievements."

"We want to be better. It's not easy, but we will work very hard to make sure that the athletes' mental preparation and skills are all in good shape."

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REPEATING THE FEAT

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SHEIK FARHAN SHEIK ALAU'DDIN, the back-to-back silat world champion in Class J, on wanting to build on his maiden world title.