

SHEIK, RATTLE AND GOLD

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**Silat's Sheik
Ferdous sees
his debut SEA
Games as the
first step to
emulating
his famed
father Sheik
Alau'ddin's
successes**

Report by : / SAZALI ABDUL AZIZ

When he heard The New Paper's request, Sheik Alau'ddin let out a hearty laugh.

"You want him to attack me for a photo?" the two-time silat world champion asked.

"I'm sure he'll love it.

"It's not every day he gets a chance to beat up his father.

"Usually I'm the one who hammers him."

If 17-year-old Sheik Ferdous relished the chance of flinging his father across the mat, though, he did a pretty good job of hiding it.

Time and again, he executed several silat take-downs on Alau'ddin with a steely look on his face.

But a grin every now and then perhaps betrayed his stoic exterior.

Ferdous, the second son of former silat champion Alau'ddin, will be making his South-east Asia (SEA) Games debut later this month.

And the spotlight is bound to be on him when the silat competition kicks off on Dec 9.

After all, Alau'ddin won gold at four SEA Games before retiring from competitive silat in 1999.

Ferdous, however, insists there is no added pressure on him as he embarks on his first major Games.

He said: "Of course, on some occasions I do feel the weight of his name, because people might expect me to perform as well as he did.

"But in the ring, I don't think about that. I just focus on what I have to do.

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"Anyway, I'm still young, so I don't think people expect me to win gold yet."

Ferdous will be Alau'ddin's second offspring - he has six children - to compete at the SEA Games.

His eldest daughter, Nur Syafiqah, was part of Singapore's silat contingent in Indonesia two years ago, but returned home without a medal.

The Singapore Sports Council Hall-of-Famer makes little effort to hide how proud he is of Ferdous, who he says has a chance to win medals in both the artistic and tanding (combat) categories.

He says, like him, Ferdous is disciplined and crazy about training.

Like him, Ferdous also loves to dabble in other forms of martial arts - the youngster also trains in muay thai and thang ta (a weapon-based martial art).

DIFFERENCES

But Alau'ddin points out there are one or two differences between father and son.

For example, he wants his son to bulk up so he can compete in the heavier weight categories, in which he ruled for a decade in the 1990s.

At the SEA Games, Ferdous will compete in the 65-70kg (Class E) weight class.

"I've asked him to put on more weight because I think he can do better in a heavier class," said Alau'ddin, who despite being 46, is still built like a tank.

"But you know lah, young men nowadays. They want to look lean and good, not big and strong."

On top of that, Ferdous still lacks that all-important big-game mentality, even if he makes up with it with a sound skill-set.

"When it comes to a match, (mentally) he can turn it on but sometimes he goes soft," said Alau'ddin.

"It's a problem for many of our local silat fighters now actually. They can't seem to fire themselves up."

Alau'ddin says he is as demanding of all his children - none more than Ferdous - outside the sport as he is in it. So far, it has paid off.

Last year, Ferdous scored 10 points in his GCE 'O' Level examination, and got into a Biomedical Science diploma course at Temasek Polytechnic.

Ferdous acknowledged the tough love with a wry smile, saying he knows his father "pushes me and my siblings because he only wants the best for us".

Said Alau'ddin: "I'm very hard on him (Ferdous). I don't want him to be a brat, to smoke or join gangs. I want him to take over from me."

"I want him to push himself in Myanmar, and if he can bring glory to Singapore, I'll be a very proud father."

Ferdous is cautious about what he hopes to achieve in silat, but says that a successful outing in Naypyidaw would be a great first step.

"To match what my father did in silat is tough because of all his achievements over the years," he said.

"But I do hope to eventually win a SEA Games gold medal, and be a world champion one day.

"If I achieve that, then maybe I can aim even higher."

FACTFILE

NAME:
Sheik Ferdous
Sheik Alau'ddin

DATE OF BIRTH:
8 March 1996

HEIGHT:
1.77m

WEIGHT:
70kg

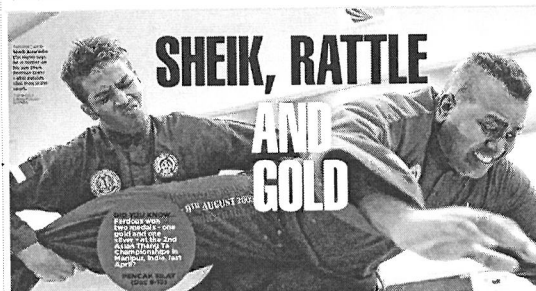
FAVOURITE ATHLETE:
Sheik Alau'ddin (for silat).
Cristiano Ronaldo

FAVOURITE FOOD:
Fried kway teow with cockles

PET PEEVE:
Over-sensitive people.

DID YOU KNOW...
Ferdous won two medals - one gold and one silver - at the 2nd Asian Thang Ta Championships in Manipur, India, last April?

KENGAR SILAT
(Dec 9-15)



TOUGH LOVE!
Sheik Alau'ddin (far right) says he is harder on his son Sheik Ferdous (near right) outside silat than in the sport.

TNP PHOTO: LATASHI GOBI NATHAN