

Asian Games gold will do it nicely

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ALVIN FOO » SILAT

That's what is needed, not a world title, says Sheik, to win top honour

BY

NOT a world title, but an Asian Games gold — that is what silat's technical director Sheik Alauddin thinks will land an exponent the coveted Sportsman or Sportswoman of the Year award.

Despite winning a record 18 awards on Thursday, including the Sportsboy and the Sportsgirl of the Year crowns, the sport missed out on the top sportsman title again.

That honour went to badminton's Ronald Susilo, who beat silat's Imran Abdul Rahman and others to win.

Sheik said yesterday: "I remember in 1994, I won a world title and sailing's Ben Tan won the Asian Games gold — he got the nod.

"We've tried several times, with myself in 1994 and 1999, Abdul Kadir Ibrahim in 1997, and Imran in 2004.

"It seems like we only have a chance in odd years, when there isn't an Olympics or Asian Games."

Silat is not an Olympic sport and is omitted from the 2006 Asian Games, but is gunning to be part of the 2010 Asian Games.

In response, Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) secretary-general Chris Chan said: "We regard a world title as higher than an Asian Games gold, with the Olympics as the highest.

"But that's only one aspect. We also look at other factors, like the whole year's performance, the quality of opposition faced and the num-

ber of countries competing."

The winners were chosen by a selection committee chaired by SNOC president and Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean on Thursday.

But going by the joyous mood at training yesterday, the issue was, at best, a minor grouse.

That's because silat won the most awards, and bettered their previous best of seven from 2003.

Said a delighted Saiedah Said, 20, who won the Sportsgirl of the Year award that came with \$8,000: "I was having dinner with my family when the news broke. At first, I couldn't believe it. I'll be using the money for my studies."

The 2003 South-east Asia Games bronze medalist capped a memorable 2004 by winning a World Championship gold last December.

For Sportsboy of the Year Mohamed Saifuddin Julaimi, 17, it was triple joy as his twin brother Saifullah and sister Nur Dinniyati, 19, also clinched meritorious awards.

The Institute of Technical Education (Bedok) student, who finished second at the World Championships, plans to save the money for his school fees.

Sheik said both Saifuddin and Saiedah have the potential to win golds for Singapore at all competitions.

It was important, he said, for Saifuddin to sustain interest throughout his national service stint. For Saiedah, she has to stay healthy and maintain her winning form.

He added: "From a sport struggling to exist in Singapore, we now have a building, sponsors, a proper set-up, professional administrators, and the recognition — the next step would be Asian Games inclusion."



PHOTO:

BRYAN VAN DER BEEK

CLASS ACT: Silat's 18 awards include that of top Sportsgirl, Saiedah Said (left), and Sportsboy, Mohamed Saifuddin Julaimi.