

World champ not enough?

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World champ not enough?

No Sportsman of the Year nominee, not even silat's Shakir, who won world c'ship

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IF BEING crowned a world champion is not enough, it's hard to imagine what is.

That was the reaction of two-time silat world champion Sheik Alauddin, when asked to comment on the Singapore National Olympic Council's (SNOC) decision to disregard 2012 world champion Shakir Juanda as a potential Sportsman of the Year nominee.

"Obviously, the SNOC panel feel that winning a world title isn't enough," said Sheik, the chief executive of the Singapore Silat Federation.

"If they say the quality of competition is not high enough, then what kind of quality are they expecting?"

"I'd like to know how they assessed the nominees and the World Pencak Silat Championship."

For the third time in the 46-year history of the Singapore Sports Awards, a Sportsman of the Year will not be crowned at the Singapore Expo Max Atria on June 11.

Yesterday, the SNOC announced the nominees for the 12 award categories, honouring the best in Singapore sports last year.

The Sportsman of the Year category was left conspicuously vacant, as none of the four athletes nominated by their respective National Sports Associations were deemed to have made the mark.

The other three are paddler Gao Ning, sailor Colin Cheng and wushu exponent Seer Wee Key.

"The male athletes have done well, but the bar has been raised," said Jessie Phua, chairman of this year's Singapore Sports Awards.

"Do we calibrate to a lower level, just to award an athlete? No we don't. We want the recipients to be truly deserving of that recognition. So if we don't think anyone is deserving enough, we won't do it for the sake of doing it."

Reaching the pinnacle

Of the four nominees, Shakir, who won the gold medal at last November's World Pencak Silat Championships in Thailand, was the only athlete to have reached the pinnacle of his sport last year.

Phua said that while Shakir's efforts were impressive, they did not qualify him as a Sportsman of the Year nominee due to the "quality of the world championships".

"There are (various) definitions of a world championship," she said.

"We cannot begrudge an athlete for his (competition) environment, but we must consider the quality of the competition."

When asked what the criteria were for assessing competitions, Phua cited the case of 2008 Sportsman of the Year Gao Ning.

"When Gao Ning won, the award was given to him because of the attained a world ranking of number nine," she said.

"It was the first time a local table tennis player broke into the top 10... it has to be ground breaking."

En route to victory, Shakir beat athletes from Russia, United Kingdom and Holland, all with 5-0 victories, before clinching the gold with a 3-2 comeback win over Vietnam's Le Si Kien, the defending champion.

Sheik, who was nominated for Sportsman of the Year twice but never won, said there should be no question about the pedigree of the World Pencak Silat Championships and the manner in which Shakir won his title.

"The tournament had over 20 countries participating; it was of the highest quality, I assure you," he said.

"To win the world title is so difficult now, because Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia are all very strong."

"Also, there are a lot of new countries coming up. Shakir had to fight for his life to win the gold."

"I invited the Singapore Sports Council to attend the championships because I wanted them to see the real thing, but they didn't come."

"Shouldn't we reward local athletes who win world tournaments? Or must silat be an Olympic sport before it is properly recognised?"

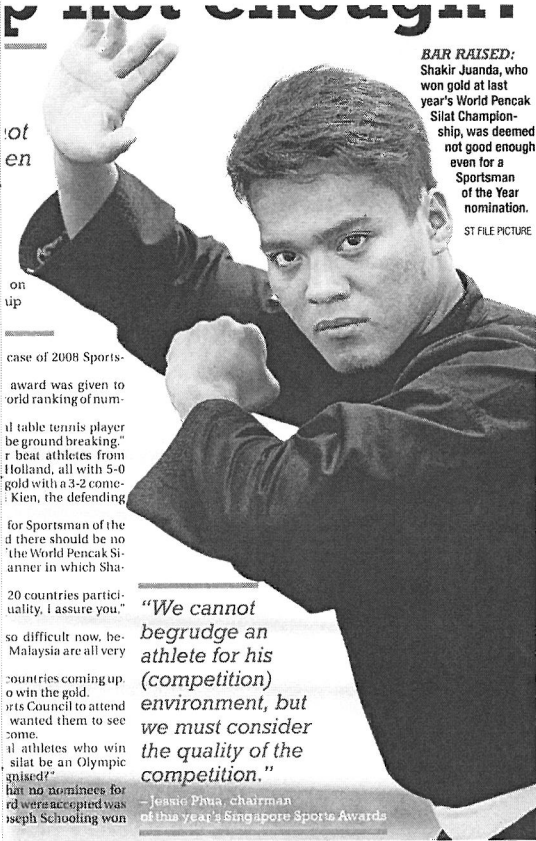
The other two occasions that no nominees for the Sportsman of the Year award were accepted was in 2009 and 2010. Swimmer Joseph Schooling won the award in 2011.

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— Sheik Alauddin, CEO of

Singapore Silat Federation, on the World Pencak Silat C'ship

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