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Heavyweight pugilist wins all his bouts to capture highest honour

SILAT

SINGAPORE'S Sheik Abdul-din won the highest honour in the martial art of silat olahraga when he won the men's Open category at the World Championships in Handayani on Sunday.

The 27-year-old Sheik was the undisputed top gun in the field of 27 countries as he won all his fights by unanimous 5-0 margins.

There were 12 weight categories in the men's division and five for the women. But the men's Open - for fighters over 90 kilograms - is the most coveted at any martial arts competition.

Singapore received an added bonus when Hidayat Hoeni struck gold in the 55-60kg category. The Republic also won eight bronzes.

This is the second time that the hulking 1.96-metre, 100kg Sheik has won a world title. The first was at the 1990 World Championships in Holland, where he won in the 80-95kg category.

But Sheik was up against the biggest and toughest guys in the full-contact competition this time. Anything goes in silat olahraga except punches and kicks to the face and groin.

Among the contestants entered in the 27-country field were newcomers from Holland, Australia, Germany and the United States. Although their techniques were quite unpolished compared with the Asian competitors, the Western fighters were generally bigger and packed a mighty wallop in their fists and feet.

Sheik, who is married with

two children, received a bye in the first round and came up against Australian Michael Ring in the second phase of the knockout competition.

Said the fitness coordinator with Club HDB: "The Australian was much bigger than me. I had not fought against him before so I was quite cautious in the first round as I did not know his style."

"I had a measure of him after that and I went all out in the second and third rounds. He landed a couple of good blows on me, too, but I managed to throw him down."

In silat, punches which land are rewarded with one point, kicks with two points while a body drop - which can be done through a leg sweep or a throw - receives three points.

Sheik walked off a comfortable winner and faced his toughest encounter against Indonesia's Boni Setia Budi in the semi-finals.

Indonesia, home of the sport, was crowned the overall team champion with a haul of seven golds.

Boni was one of the favourites for the Open crown, together with Sheik. But the Singaporean showed his arch-rival who was the boss.

Said Sheik: "There was no quarter given. Although punches to the face are not allowed, I received three early on in the fight."

"After that, I threw caution to the wind. My only thought was to beat him."

Sheik was given a unanimous verdict by the five judges. With the toughest hurdle out of the way, he romped to a comfortable win over Malaysia's Moesin Musa in the final.



Sheik Abdul-din wins all his fights by unanimous 5-0 margins in the World Championships in Handayani.