



JONATHAN ON CLOUD NINE

Malaysian stuns Olympic champion Xuan Vinh for 10m air pistol gold

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IT is not every day that a Malaysian can upstage a reigning Olympic champion in sports.

Jonathan Wong recorded the biggest result of his career when he upset Rio Olympic champion Hoang Xuan Vinh for the men's 10m air pistol gold medal at Subang Shooting Range yesterday.

The 25-year-old Malaysian posted a 238.30 total over 24 rounds in the final to edge Xuan Vinh (234.10 points), who won the same event in Rio, by 4.20 points, while Myanmar's Kyaw Swar Win finished third on a 214.8 series.

Jonathan led from the start and had opened a 4.0 total lead going into the 24th and final round where he held his nerves in front of his family and fans to race ahead to victory. In the Rio Olympics, Jonathan failed to make the final, which Xuan Vinh won, when he finished 28th out of 46 shooters.

It is Jonathan's first ever gold medal in the Sea Games in his fourth outing. On Tuesday, Jonathan took silver in the 50m pistol event.

This is not the first time Jonathan has overcome the 42-year-old Xuan Vinh for a title. In the Southeast Asian Championship (SEASA) in May, at the same venue, Jonathan won the 50m pistol discipline, while the Vietnamese, who took silver in this event, finished fifth.

Jonathan attributed his success to South Korean coaches Park Sang Soon and Park Cheol Wan for his most memorable shooting outing.

Sang Soon, who had coached the national shooting team in the late-1990s, and Cheol Wan were hired last December to help the Sea Games squad.

"It is really fascinating to win the gold today as I did not expect it. I was actually worried as I was not in the right mental

state yesterday after failing to win the 50m event," said Jonathan yesterday.

"I already had no energy in me before taking the final shot today. A lot of things were in my mind. There was pressure.

"From the stands, I heard Sang Soon shouted: 'extend the lead'.... it gave me the confidence.

"I knew I had won after my final shot... I just stood still for a moment... my entire body was numb to the core... I am really excited as I thought it was impossible to beat an Olympic champion."



The Melaka-born said he met his psychologist on Friday as he was not feeling confident.

"My psychologist told me not to worry about anything even if I lose. He said just focus on doing my best.

"I dedicate this win to all Malaysians, especially my parents, siblings, uncles, aunts and my grandfather, who had never seen me shoot before."

Jonathan said Sang Soon and Cheol Wan turn things around with their coaching methods.

"They helped me a lot in terms of mental strength. Shooting is all about mind games and today, I won it because of the coaches," he said.

Jonathan, an aerospace engineering student of University Putra Malaysia, hopes the victory over Xuan Vinh will give him the confidence to attain bigger results.

"I want to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, but first, I want to prepare for next year's Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and Indonesia Asian Games," Jonathan added.

In the men's trap, Bernard Yeoh took silver with 42 birds with Thailand's Phachonyut Yodchai winning gold on a 44 total, while Singapore's Zain Amat at

third with a 33 series.

In the women's 50m rifle three-position, seasoned campaigner Nur Suryani Taibi ended up with a bronze medal with a 434.60 total.

Singapore's Jasmine Ser won the title with a 451.20 total, followed by Thailand's Ratchadaporn Plengsaengthong (449.30).

Malaysia ended their shooting campaign with four gold, five silver and three bronze.

Other gold medallists were Ezuan Nasir Khan (men's 50m rifle prone), Benjamin Khor (men's double trap) and Alia Sazana Azahari (women's 25m pistol).



Jonathan Wong