

She's up to speed

Zaidatul springs a surprise as Khairul fails to take off

THE fancied flopped while the unheralded delivered the unexpected.

SEA Games 100m gold medalist Khairul Hafiz Jantan failed to take off in the men's blue-riband event while Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli stole the show by reaching the women's 100m semi-finals.

Expectations were high on Khairul to make the men's 100m semi-finals in the Commonwealth Games but "The Speedy Jantan" couldn't rise to the occasion.

He only managed a poor 10.50 to finish fourth in the ninth heat.

The 19-year-old Khairul, who has a personal best of 10.18, said a false start affected his concentration.

"I've a phobia of false starts as I was disqualified in the final of the Asian Championships (in Bhubaneshwar, India) last year," said Khairul.

"I clocked a poor time. I apologise to all Malaysian fans for failing to live up to expectations," he said.

While Khairul was left ruing what might have been, the day certainly belonged to the pint-sized Zaidatul – who was only included in the Malaysian athletics squad



for Gold Coast at the last minute.

She gave Malaysia something to cheer by clocking 11.64 to finish third in the fifth heat to qualify for semi-finals.

But that was as far as Zaidatul could go, as running twice in three hours took a toll on her

when she finished seventh with a time of 11.84 in the semi-finals.

Zaidatul is only the second Malaysian woman sprinter after G. Shanti to qualify for the semi-finals in the Commonwealth Games.

Shanti, who holds the 100m national record of 11.50, did it at 1998 KL Games.

The 24-year-old Zaidatul said: "This is my first competition this year and I've justified my last-minute selection for the Games.

"Running with the top sprinters helped me clock a good time in the heats.

"But I could not keep up with the pace in the semis due to a lack of rest."

SEA Games gold medalist Jackie Wong Siew Cheer fell short in the men's hammer throw, managing only 14th with a throw of 64.35m – way off his national record of 65.90m.



Taking a breather: Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli cooling down after competing in the women's 100m semi-finals at the Carrara Stadium yesterday.