

# Silver glory

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## Cyclist Nor Effandy so close to grabbing gold in road race

By AFTAR SINGH

**SHAH ALAM:** Malaysia came within a wheel of a historic Commonwealth Games gold yesterday as cyclist Nor Effandy Rosli produced a stunning finish on the opening day of events.

He sprinted neck-and-neck to the finish line with Australia's Jay Sweet and Canadian Eric Wohlberg in the 184km road race.

But he came in second behind the Australian. Sweet, Nor Effandy and Wohlberg were all timed at 4'31:56.

Still, winning the silver was sweet for Nor Effandy as he is the first Malaysian to win a Commonwealth Games cycling medal.

The unfancied Malaysian even got the better of many world-class cyclists.

Pre-race favourite Neil Stephens of Australia failed to finish, while other Australians like Scott McGrory (eighth) and Stuart O'Grady (15th) all fell by the wayside largely because of the heat.

Stephens' rear-wheel punctured. Although he managed to rejoin the pack, he could not find the energy to stay in the race for long.

Nor Effandy was so happy he was in tears. "I'm really too happy about the silver. I never thought I would win a medal.

"I was just hoping to finish among the top 10 in the race," said the 31-year-old Kuala Lumpur City Council clerk.

In his debut at the Victoria Games four years ago, he failed to finish the race.

Nor Effandy said he won the silver because he used the right tactics. He was in the second pack until the last three laps.

"I then pushed hard to join the first pack," he said.

He caught up with the first pack of four riders comprising Sweet, Wohlberg, David George of South Africa and Paul Esposti of Wales.

"With two laps remaining, I was tired but I was not about to give up. I stayed with the pack until the last kilometre ... then I rode as fast as I could.

"I will remember this day for the rest of my life," added Nor Effandy as he was

hugged by his father Na Rosli.

Team manager Shahrein Zainal Abidin also rushed to hug the cyclist.

"No one gave us a chance before the start of the Games," he said. "This is beyond our expectations; we have created history."

Coach Ng Joo Ngan was equally happy. "The hard work has paid off," said the man who has been national coach for 20 years.

"The last one week, Nor Effandy has been training very hard and I had the confidence that he would do well."

Commenting on Nor Effandy's feat, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysian athletes had every chance to win if they tried hard.

"I was told this (winning the silver) was unexpected but I believe it would spur other athletes to do better.

"Maybe some of our athletes do not have a chance to win but if they try they can succeed," he said.

Asian Cycling Federation president Datuk Darshan Singh was delighted.

"Nor Effandy went against the odds to get the medal. He proved that Asians are as good as other international riders," he said.

For his efforts, Nor Effandy will receive RM40,000 under the National Sports Council Incentive Scheme.