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Games-Boxing (Wrap Up)

CANADIANS RULE OKAY IN THE RING

By: Azhar Ghazali

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 18 (Bernama) -- It was a day and night of joy and heartbreaks at the Shah Alam's Malawati Stadium as the 16th Commonwealth Games boxing competition enters its vital round to determine the finalists for all the 12 categories.

Starting later than usual at 2.45 p.m. today in view of the Friday prayers for Muslims, the heart-pounding action went deep into the night with local hero Sapok Biki booking the first ticket into the final.

Simultaneously, Sapok also wrote Malaysia's boxing history by becoming its first ever boxer to qualify for the final and effectively securing at least a silver for a nation that is not known for its boxing prowess.

Holding high a portrait of the Malaysian Prime Minister, Sapok attributed his victory to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and fellow Malaysians.

"I'll be very happy if the Prime Minister could here at the finals. It will definitely spur me even more," said Sapok, whose joy, was, however, soured by the defeat of his team mate Adnan Yusoh.

Adnan was the first to break into tears. Believing that he had won, Adnan was quick to celebrate at his corner. His joy evaporated seconds later when the referee raised the hand of his opponent, Tanzania's Michael Yomba.

Canada's Andrew Kooner, so dominant in earlier rounds, was next to cry after losing closely to Cameroon's Herman Ngoudjo 16-17. Kooner's defeat, however, had little effect on Canada's show of supremacy at the Malawati Stadium.

With six boxers in the finals - Jeremy Molitor (67kg), Mark Simmons (91kg), Marty O'Donnel, Michael Strange (63.5kg), Scott MacIntosh (71kg) and Troy Amos (81kg) - looked set to repeat its four-gold feat at the Victoria Games.

Victoria Games gold medalist Strange, Molitor, O'Donnel, Amos and Simmons look good bets for gold. MacIntosh, however, looked to face an uphill battle with a final confrontation against England's Chris Bassey.

Bassey was in superb form in his bout against Scotland's Jaxkie Townsley. He was on his way to record the highest points scored in the competition after entering 43 points against five.

The referee, however, decided to stop the fight seconds before the end of Round 5 to prevent further injury to Townsley.

England's Audley Harrison was the other superb performer in the semifinal round, knocking out Justin Whitehead in Round 3, setting up a clash with Michael Macaque of Mauritius.

It was a black day for Australia when all its boxers - James Swan (57kg), Casey Johns (63.5kg), Justin Whitehead (91+kg) and Lynden Hoskings (67kg) -- failed to make the finals.

The stadium's gates were open for free entrance but the announcement was perhaps a little too late to make any strong impact. About one-eighth of the 10,000-seater were filled, mostly by stadium personnel and Sukom volunteers.

There would also be no charge for the finals on Sunday although the good seats would be given to those with tickets. -- Bernama

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