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Games-Shooting (Nurul Huda)

NURUL HUDA WINS MALAYSIA'S FIRST EVER SHOOTING GOLD

By: Jamaluddin Muhammad

LANGKAWI, Sept 18 (Bernama) -- Nurul Huda Baharin today became the first Malaysian to win a shooting gold in Commonwealth Games history, and she did it in record fashion at the Langkawi International Shooting Range Malaysia here.

The gutsy policewoman scored 494.8 points in the women's individual air rifle final to set a Games record although she was still recovering from a right arm injury.

Her score is 6.1 points higher than the previous mark of 488.7 set by Fani Theofanus of Cyprus in Victoria four years ago.

It was an emotional scene as Nurul Huda wept in joy immediately after the event and teammate Abdul Mutalib Abdul Razak, the silver medallist in men's pairs air rifle, joined her in saying a prayer.

Abdul Mutalib then led his teammates and spectators to sing a patriotic song "Barisan Kita" and shout the "Malaysia Boleh" slogan.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin were there to share the moment of glory.

"Congratulations," Dr Mahathir told Nurul Huda.

Nurul Huda entered the final as the topseeded shooter after hitting 394 points in the 40-shot qualifying round, just six short of the maximum score. Bowes was second in the qualifying with 392.

Nurul Huda led all the way in the 10-shot final even though she just managed to get 8.8 points for the first shot which kept her ahead of Bowes by just 0.4 point.

However, the Malaysian recovered quickly to register scores of 10.4, 10.3, 10.8, 10.6, 10.2, 10.5, 10.0, 9.2 and 10.0.

"I was nervous and accidentally pulled the trigger and shot for 8.8 points," she said.

"Her mental was strong. That's why she could recover from the upset first shot quickly," said her mental trainer, ASP Nordin Idris.

Bowes finished the 10-shot round with 10.4, 9.9, 10.1, 9.0, 10.8, 10.2, 9.9, 10.1, 10.3, 10.6 for an accumulated score of 493.3, missing the gold by 1.5 points.

Nurul Huda, who finished 13th out of 107 shooters in the air rifle at last July's world championship, fractured her right arm in a motorcycle accident in Kuala Lumpur on Aug 10.

"I didn't expect anything - to win gold or break the Games record in view of my arm condition," she said.

"All I want to do is shoot the best for Malaysians and I dedicate this medal to all Malaysians," she said.

Nurul Huda said she could still feel the pain in her arm while shooting but she did not feel under pressure despite the tough fight as she just concentrated on her target.

"Nurul Huda shot very well," said Bowes.

Later, Dr Mahathir presented the gold to Nurul Huda at the medal presentation ceremony at the shooting range.

-- BERNAMA

JM YBY