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Sapok fights his way to gold

MALAYSIA were targetted to win seven gold medals at the Commonwealth Games. Boxer Sapok Biki made it happen yesterday when he beat Kenya's Moses Kinyua in the 48kg category at Malawati Indoor Stadium.

Sapok led from the first to the fifth and final round to register an impressive 13 points victory for Malaysia's only boxing gold.

Cheered on by about 8,000 people, which included Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, Sapok took a narrow 3-2 lead over Moses in the first round.

Also present were Sapok's parents Biki Kinyau and Limah Jamba, who flew in from Kuching courtesy of Malaysia Airlines.

"I was trying to determine his tactic and style in the first round and I am glad I still won three points," Sapok said.

The 24-year-old Sapok turned on the power in the second round and won four points, while Moses could only manage one.

It was clear from the third round that Sapok was going to win as he collected seven points to take a comfortable six-point lead.

Moses came back strongly in the fourth round to score four points and narrow the score at 16-11.

Knowing he was in the lead and that his opponent would try to collect as many points in the fifth and final round, Sapok switched to the hit-and-run tactics and wrapped up the bout 19-13.

"The Kenyan was faster than me but all his punches did not hit the target, while I made every punch count," Sapok said.

After being declared winner, Sapok, as he did after his semifinal bout, performed a victory jig inside the ring holding aloft Dr Mahathir's portrait amid thunderous applause from the crowd.

Sapok's parents and other boxing officials, including Malaysian Amateur Boxing Association president Tan Sri Isa Samad, were shedding tears as they came down to congratulate him.

"I dedicate my victory to the people of Malaysia, especially the boxing officials, because if not for their support I could have not won the gold," Sapok said.

He expressed his thanks to Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah for coming.

"I hope my victory will encourage more youths to take up boxing. I believe there are many out there who have the talent and potential to win at this level of competition," he said.

Sapok's next target is to win a medal for Malaysia in the Asian Games in Bangkok in December.

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