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Brothers in arms

Roommates Zain and Choo's success is down to their strong friendship

By Terrence Voon

BANGKOK - WITH his shoulder swollen and bruised, Mohamed Zain Amat knew he had little chance of retaining his gold medal in the men's double trap event yesterday afternoon.



THREE GOLDS EACH: Zain (front) and Choo (back) captured two team golds, and 'swopped' the trap and double trap individual crowns. Choo won the double trap, while Zain captured the trap. -- ST PHOTO: EDWIN KOO

He turned to his teammate and close friend Choo Choon Seng and said: 'Go win the gold for us, brother.'

Choo did exactly that. The 35-year-old shot down the individual men's double trap title in confident fashion, confirming the Republic's dominance at the clay shooting range at the 24th South-east Asia Games.

Earlier in the day, Zain and Choo, together with Tan Chee Kiong, snapped up the team double trap gold with a total of 368 birds.

Thailand were a distant second with 348, while Malaysia picked up the bronze with 332.

But Zain's shoulder was already in an ice pack by then.

WHAT SEA GAMES WINNERS WILL GET

- Individual gold: \$10,000 (\$5,000 for every subsequent gold)
- Team event gold: \$15,000
- Team sport gold: \$30,000

'I've fired over 700 rounds a day since we arrived. I don't think I can make it anymore,' said the police regular, wincing.

True enough, the 31-year-old could only fire a combined total of 155 birds and ended up fifth in the individual final.

But his fellow Singaporeans were more than up to the task.

Said Choo: 'The three of us went in as a pack - whenever one of us was down, the other would cover for him.'

The plan worked. In the six-man final, he gunned down 41 birds out of a possible 50 to grab the gold with a one-day total of 165.

Tan took the silver with 162, while Thailand's Khamgasem Athimeth was third with 159.

The gold medal was Choo's third, after his team golds in the trap and double trap events.

Zain, too, was on three golds, after winning the individual trap on Wednesday.

The two share more than just the medal count after the end of the trap events. They are also roommates here, performing an unusual morning ritual together during the competition.

'We sang the Majulah Singapura together every morning in order to inspire ourselves,' revealed Choo, an executive officer with Nanyang Technological University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The two friends also shared meals together and would take turns to play deejay in their room - selecting music from their laptops to motivate each other.

'We've been 'dating' each other for five years now,' joked Choo. 'He's like a brother to me.'

In a strange twist of fate, both men ended up winning each other's 2005 SEA Games titles.