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Costly error

Gai reports gun malfunction but a member of the jury manages to fire it, so shooter penalised

By Terrence Voon

BANGKOK - FIRING in his pet event yesterday, Singapore's Gai Bin had the gold medal firmly in his sights.

But a disputed gun malfunction cost him not just the individual title, but also the team gold in the 25-metre standard pistol event.

There was no hint of the calamity to come when the 39-year-old lined up in the Sport Authority of Thailand's 25m range in the morning.

Still buzzing from his individual gold medal in the 10m air pistol event the day before, Gai fired an opening score of 99 points out of a possible 100 in the first 120-second series.

All seemed well, even when the China-born shooter trailed Vietnam's Hoang Xuan Vinh by one point at the end of the second series.

But disaster struck in his first 20-second series. Gai could not fire his seventh shot and raised his hand to indicate a malfunction.



BAD LUCK: A glum Gai Bin after forfeiting the remaining four shots in his first 20-second series, which could have earned him 40 points. -- ST PHOTO: EDWIN KOO

A member of the air pistol jury then approached him to check on the fault.

Under International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) regulations, if the jury member manages to fire the gun in one try, the shooter would be penalised for making a false declaration.

The official squeezed the trigger. And to Gai's horror - and Team Singapore shooters and supporters - the gun went off.

Subsequently, he had to forfeit the remaining four shots in his series, which could have earned him 40 points.

Gai pleaded with the officials, but the decision to penalise him stood. The penalty proved costly.

'I could have won two golds, but such unfortunate things are normal in shooting.' - GAI BIN, who lost his chance of winning the 25m pistol individual and team golds after his gun malfunctioned.

Gai eventually finished 11th on 537 points - 26 points behind winner Prakarn Karndee of Thailand, who scored 563.

The team gold also slipped out of Singapore's grasp. The trio of Poh, Rafiee Sairi and Gai shot a combined total of 1,646 to settle for silver - 11 points behind winners Thailand, who had 1,657 points.

Gai could barely contain his unhappiness.

According to him, the bullet had not entered the chamber properly during that fateful shot.

'The official asked me to put the gun down on the table. The impact from that may have caused the bullet to slide into the chamber,' he said. 'That's why it was able to fire.'

Said teammate Poh, who witnessed the incident from his firing point five lanes away: 'Malfunctions are common. I knew about his situation, but I had to concentrate on my shoot.'

Poh kept his cool, securing a silver for Singapore with a score of 559.

But Singapore team manager Lim Meng Kiaw bemoaned Gai's ill-luck.

'It's unlucky that a malfunction happened to us on the actual day of competition,' he said.

'But it's good it did not affect the team too much as they managed to scramble to a silver.'

The disappointment was in sharp contrast to the team's joy on Wednesday, when they collected a record five golds in the shooting competition.

Yesterday, aside from the two silvers in the 25m pistol event, Singapore managed only a team bronze in the women's 10m air pistol event from Fan Xiaoping, Zhao Huijing and Pheong Siew Shya.

Instead, it was hosts Thailand who enjoyed a golden harvest, sweeping all six golds on offer in the team and individual events of the women's 10m air pistol, 50m rifle three positions, and men's 25m standard pistol

After three days of competition, Singapore's shooting team had a return of five golds, four silvers and three bronzes.

Gai vowed not to let the incident affect his performance for the other events today.

'I could have won two golds, but such unfortunate things are normal in shooting,' he said. 'We will push them aside and do better from now on.'

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