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Sunday April 22, 2007

The champ is still learning

Story by RASHVINJEET S.BEDI

**Dear Sunday Star, I write to introduce to you my friend, mentor and coach Adam Shahir Kayoom, a Malaysian who has achieved so much in the martial arts arena. It would be great to highlight his phenomenal successes and achievements to inspire all fellow Malaysians. Among his shining accolades is winning the World Muay Thai Champion WPMF Middleweight 2006. He's also responsible for introducing the incredible martial art of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu to Malaysia, being the head instructor of the programme at a club in KL. — Charles Wong**

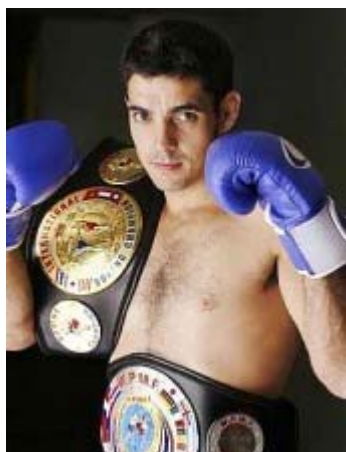
AT the tender age of five, Adam Shahir Kayoom was hyperactive and was said to have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Having a penchant for sweets did not help, and he was constantly climbing walls and generally wreaking havoc.

Generally *nakal* (naughty), as Adam himself puts it wryly, he channelled his extra energy into sports, enrolling in judo at the age of five and Taekwondo when he was seven.

He also played football, rugby and *sepak takraw*, swam and was a skateboarding fanatic.

“Sport, to me, is a way of life. It has the ability to shape not only the body but also the mind and the spirit,” he says.

It is martial arts, however, that he became hooked onto and his life and career today revolves around it. He is primarily involved in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (JJS), Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and Muay Thai, but he is also adept at Taekwondo, Judo, Aikido, Karate, Olympic Wrestling (Greco-Roman) and Traditional JJS.



Adam Shahir Kayoom

And Adam, who is of Malay-Australian parentage, is going places with his martial arts, having being crowned champion of the 2006 World Muay Thai Middle Weight Championships and the 2006 Muay Khmer Middle Weight Championships.

He also made it to the top 10 ranking in the 2006 Muay Thai Fighters list at Rajadamnern Stadium Bangkok, Thailand.

These are not mean feats, considering he had to face the lethal Thais on home ground. For the Khmer title, he had to face the Cambodian champ who had won 175 out of 182 fights.

But it hasn't been easy for the 29-year-old who was born in Kuala Lumpur and raised in Australia during his teenage years to get this far in his martial arts career.

He had to work his way through, learning martial arts single-handedly and without a cent of sponsorship and he had to make tough decisions such as leaving a job in designing and not to further his studies.

“My heart wasn't in it although it's good to have an education to fall back on,” says Adam, who was usually training when he wasn't at his designing work.

In 1999, he decided to go to Brazil to master Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

“I saw how effective it was and the way it could dominate all sorts of fighting. I saw how a smaller man defeated a bigger man without suffering a lot of damage. You don't have to pound your opponent. You dominate them through submission. It's more humane,” he explains.

“To best learn an art, you should go to the country where it originated. To understand it, you must immerse yourself in the culture. It is fun to learn culture as well.”

Adam who can speak Portuguese and Thai and who likes dancing and cooking in his spare time, spent a total of one year in Brazil between 1999 and 2001, living in Rio De Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Porto Alegre.

“Any form of travelling is a good teacher. If you are alone, you have to learn to be your own best friend,” he says.

He also spent three years in Thailand learning Muay Thai, and he now supports himself by teaching MMA. He hopes to one day compete in the Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC), a prestigious competition involving people from all spheres of martial arts.

“I have to work, so I’ll get there slower, but I enjoy the journey of learning,” he says.

Recalling his younger days, Adam says he played all sorts of games although it was always individual sports, which he preferred.

Team sport doesn’t give you the window of opportunity to look at yourself, he says.

“You could turn a blind eye and blame others. If you lost in a fight, however, you probably missed a shot because you didn’t set it up. You can’t say the coach didn’t set up the shot. The truth is rawer and it is a chance to improve.”

But Adam doesn’t mind losing, as long as he learns from it.

“It happens all the time (losing). If not, how are we going to learn? Failure is a chance to succeed and that’s real. If you’re not learning, then you’ve never lost. Even monkeys fall off trees. And God designed them for that purpose,” he points out.

Adam is as ready to receive pain as inflict it on his opponents, and in the course of his martial arts vocation he has suffered numerous injuries including broken bones in his legs and arms, chipped teeth, dislocated shoulder, neck injury, sprains and twists.

It is important to remain positive all the time, he stresses.

“Don’t beat yourself up. Be grateful. The fact that you put your foot in the ring shows you have already won,” says Adam, a towering and commanding figure who stands at 183cm tall and weighs 77kg.

Ever the willing teacher, he demonstrated the correct fighting and defending techniques to this writer. They are not hard to learn as long as you put your heart and soul into it, and even his fiancée is “obsessed” with MMA and JJS, he says.

“All it takes is spirit and stamina to have every opportunity to be good as I am. But don’t you dare think you are better than me. Martial arts is about learning humility and respect. Don’t put anyone above you or below you.”

Those interested in learning Mixed Martial Arts or Brazilian JJS can e-mail Adam at [adam\\_kayoom@hotmail.com](mailto:adam_kayoom@hotmail.com) or call him at 016-2875345.