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IT'S ALL IN THE MIND: AMITA

Teen fencer credits better mental stamina for winning her second World Cup title in Guatemala

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Singapore fencer Amita Berthier believes improved mental strength was key to her winning a second Junior World Cup title on Sunday.

The teenager, who started school at the University of Notre Dame in September, beat Belarus' Hanna Andreyenko 15-3 in the women's foil final of the Guatemala leg. She was second last year.

Her first title came in the Havana leg in Cuba in December last year.

When asked what helped her to go one better than last year's silver, Amita told The Straits Times: "Just

having a stronger mindset, and maintaining mental stamina, especially with balancing university studies and fencing training."

She also enjoyed the intriguing challenges posed by different fencers in Guatemala, where there were 17 competitors from 12 countries across four continents.

"It is always interesting to have the opportunity to meet fencers from different regions whom you normally don't meet frequently at other World Cup (legs)," said Amita, who turns 18 next month. "A variety of fencing skills are at play, and I find every bout exciting."

She was in dominant form in the knockout stages, beating United States' Christina Gong 15-5 in the quarter-finals, outclassing Maxine Esteban of the Philippines 15-4 in the semi-finals, before making light work of Andreyenko, 18.

Her triumph in Central America

follows a couple of breakthroughs on the international stage this year.

In April, she was part of the foil team - along with Maxine Wong, Tatiana Wong and Nicole Wong - who won a silver at the World Junior and Cadet Fencing Championships in Verona, Italy, despite being ranked 13th out of 26 teams.

FASCINATING CONTEST

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AMITA BERTHIER, Singapore fencer, on the varied styles of her opponents.

In February, she reached a career-high No. 2 in the world junior rankings. Last year, she won the individual gold on her SEA Games debut in Kuala Lumpur.

Fencing Singapore vice-president Yau Wee Sian said Amita's win "once again proved her mettle".

"Her sacrifice and commitment to fencing are most admirable despite having a heavy school workload," he said. "She had to rush back from the (Aug 18 to Sept 2) Asian Games to start her first day at school in the US."

"With the recent launch of the Fencing Singapore Olympic Pathway Programme, we hope to inspire and bring out the best in our athletes who are committed to the next level. Amita's results are a constant encouragement that Singaporeans can make it on the podium."

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Left: Amita Berthier, wearing her 2017 SEA Games tracksuit, with her gold from the Junior World Cup leg in Guatemala. PHOTO: SINGAPORE FENCING

Below: Amita in her 15-8 loss to China's Huo Xingxin in the individual foil round of 16 at the Asian Games in August. She was in the women's foil team that won a bronze. PHOTO: LIANHE ZHAOBAO



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GIST(ENGLISH)

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