

# Thais dig in to keep an Asian game at the Asian Games

By Raj Mohan Viswanathan  
The Associated Press

**P**ALEMBANG, Indonesia — Of the Asian games at the Asian Games, *sepaktakraw* should get some billing as a festival event.

With origins in rural southeast Asian provinces — several countries lay claim to creating it — *sepaktakraw* is like an aerial soccer or hands-free volleyball where players can use their feet, knees, heads, elbows, or shoulders to propel a woven, synthetic ball. No hands.

The name of the game is a literal translation. Proponents explain that it's a combination of languages with *sepak* coming from the term used for kick in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, and *takraw* being the Thai word for the woven ball.

While the acrobatic, overhead kicks and athletic, somersaulting leaps to the height of the net are eye-catching, the sport's place on the Asian Games program is far from secure.

At the 2018 games co-hosted in Jakarta and Palembang, only eleven countries entered the team regu — or team of teams — competition.

With the next Asian Games travelling to China, there has been speculation *sepaktakraw* will be cut from the program.

Understandably, that notion has not been well received in Thailand, winner of several gold medals in this tournament.

"This is one of the sports that really



shows the athleticism and it is really exciting to watch," Sakha Siriwat, gold-medal winner in the team regu, said. "It is very thrilling and also it's a sport with such a long heritage, so it should not be dropped.

"It's a very exciting sport to watch."

Thailand coach Kamol Tankimhong sounded confident *sepaktakraw* would be retained for the continental Olympic-style games, which attract more than 11,000 athletes in 40 sports.

"We have great confidence in the international federation, and the Asian federation — they are working hard so that we raise the awareness of the sport," Tankimhong said.

*Sepaktakraw* is played by groups of two or three who try to score points by hitting the *takraw* above the net and into the court about the size of a badminton space as the opposing players attempt to block.

The atmosphere was electric as Thailand beat arch rivals Malaysia in the opening men's team regu, a rivalry that has lasted decades.

Malaysia swept all the gold medals in 1990 and 1994 but Thailand has dominated the event ever since.

After the Thai men won the team regu, Thailand's women beat South Korea for gold in the team event. Vietnam and Myanmar took bronze.

Thailand won the men's team doubles

**SAVING SEPAKTAKRAW.** Kantana Nanthisen (right) of Laos kicks a ball against Thailand's Anuwat Chaichana (left, #1) during a men's *sepaktakraw* team doubles final match at the 18th Asian Games in Palembang, Indonesia. The name of the game is a literal translation. Proponents explain that it's a combination of languages with *sepak* coming from the term used for kick in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, and *takraw* being the Thai word for the woven ball. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

over Laos, while Indonesia and Japan picked up bronze medals.

The Singapore-based International Sepaktakraw Federation (ISTAF) has members from 31 national associations and oversees all disciplines, including the game adapted to the beach.

"Wherever it has taken root, *Sepaktakraw* enjoys cult status," ISTAF says on its website. "Southeast Asia may be the birthplace of the sport and the stage for its greatest champions, but an enormous variety of regional tournaments and domestic events have sprung up around the globe.

"From the *Sepaktakraw* Swiss Open and the Chicken's Cup in Germany ... the proliferation of competition has grown the talent pool substantially."

Siriwat, who has won gold medals at three Asian Games, is hopeful the performances in Palembang help the sport keep its place on the program.

"It will be a sad occasion if it is not in the Asian Games anymore," he said. "I would feel sad for the younger generation. I won't be able to show the world how *Takraw* is played or how it is supposed to be played."

## China's Su Bingtian wins 100 meters in Asian Games record

By John Pye  
AP Sports Writer

**J**AKARTA, Indonesia — Su Bingtian gave world junior champion Lalu Muhammad Zohri a taste of what it's like to race against the fastest men on the continent.

The Asian record holder from China was the hot favorite for the Asian Games gold medal in the 100 meters, but the crowd in Jakarta was there to support their 18-year-old local hopeful from the earthquake-ravaged island of Lombok.

Su took command early and controlled the race with 40 meters to go, finishing in a games record 9.92 seconds — one-hundredth outside his continental mark.

"I don't mind about the time, it was about getting the win," Su said. "I knew if I got a good start, no one (here) can beat me."

He didn't get a great start, but had the experience to keep his cool.

"I felt a lot of more pressure here," he said. "I don't think I'll feel that much at the world championships."

Tosin Ogunode, younger brother of 2014 champion Femi Ogunode, got silver for Qatar in a photo finish from Japan's Olympic relay silver medallist Ryota Yamagata after they both finished in 10.00.

Su and Zohri progressed steadily into the final, posting matching times in their opening heats, and progressing comfortably into the final through the semis.

That's where the similarities ended.



Zohri, who won the 100 at the world juniors in Finland in July to become an instant star in Indonesia ahead of the games, was slow out of the blocks and never made it up before placing seventh.

Still, his 10.20 was a personal best and an important learning experience.

In a surprising women's 100 final, Nigeria-born Bahrain sprinter Edidiong Odiong dipped late to finish in 11.30 and edge India's Dutee Chand (11.32) and 2014 champion Wei Yongli of China (11.33) in a photo finish.

World championship silver medallist Salwa Naser won the women's 400 in

50.09, improving the meet record she set in the heats. Her win was at the expense of another junior world champion. India's Hima Das, who won the world junior title in Finland in July, collected silver in 50.79.

China picked up other titles with Olympic silver medallist and world champion Gong Lijiao defending her Asian Games shot put title with a best mark of 19.66 meters and Wang Jianan, a bronze medallist at the 2015 world championships, setting a games record 8.24 meters in the long jump.

Sudan-born world championship bronze medallist Abdalelah Hassan won the men's 400 for Qatar in 44.89 seconds from

**FAST FEET.** Su Bingtian of China celebrates after winning the men's 100m final during the 18th Asian Games at Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta, Indonesia. Su took command early and controlled the race with 40 meters to go, finishing in a games record 9.92 seconds — one-hundredth outside his continental mark. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangué)

Muhammed Anas Yahiya of India.

World champion Rose Chelimo won the women's marathon for Bahrain in 2 hours, 34 minutes, and 51 seconds, and Hassan Chani led Abraham Cheroben in a 1-2 finish for Bahrain in the men's 10,000, finishing in 28 minutes, 35.54 seconds. Lakshmanan Govindan finished third but was later disqualified for stepping onto the infield during the race and the bronze went to Zhao Changhong of China.

The chants of "Indo-ne-sia, Indo-ne-sia" grew louder when local hope Emilia Nova finished second to South Korea's Jung Hye-lim in the women's 100-meter hurdles.

The cheering intensified for the local hope after Japan's Keisuke Ushiro completed his win in the decathlon and the women's 100 finished.

Zohri got left behind at the start of the final and didn't have the strength of the older athletes to make it up, but notched it up to experience as he looks forward to the world championships next season and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

"I was not disappointed," he said. "I was happy to be running here in front of the home fans and I learned from Su Bingtian — he has very good technique."

## A new worry for smokers' families: "Thirdhand Smoke"

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sure by implementing tobacco bans. At least 41 states and the District of Columbia have implemented local smoke-free laws, according to the lobbying group Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights.

Although the majority of these laws are meant to address secondhand smoke exposure, an unintended benefit of the ordinances is a reduction in thirdhand smoke, said Stanton Glantz, professor of medicine and director of the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California, San

Francisco.

Reynolds American Inc., the second-largest tobacco company in the United States, declined to comment on the study. The Altria Group, the leading U.S. cigarette manufacturer, did not respond to requests for comment.

Mujeeb said more work must be done to better understand the risks of thirdhand smoke. Researchers still do not know the threshold of exposure that leads to harm. Other potential pollutants in the environment need to be

identified as well to "properly characterize the risk of thirdhand smoke," he said.

Miller is skeptical of the threat thirdhand smoke poses to his family, but with the help of medicine, he hopes to break the habit his kids remind him is proven to kill.

"I think [there are] far worse things that are going on than any tar on my hands," he said.

*Kaiser Health News, a nonprofit health newsroom whose stories appear in news outlets nationwide, is an editorially independent part of the Kaiser Family Foundation.*

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