INJURED AND LIMPING, HE SOAKS IT IN

Postgrad student has experience of his life, as do others on fifth day

BY LIN XIN YI

His hobbling began at 6:40 am when he left his four-room flat at Pasir Ris Street 11 to take a cab to Upper Jurong.

But multiple ligament ruptures on his right ankle or not, Venkateshwaran Ramam, 43, was determined to fulfill his role as a Youth Olympic Games (YOG) torchbearer.

The Nanyang Technological University post-graduate student received the torch from another relay runner at Nanyang Link.

The downhill leg of the relay provided Venkateshwaran - sporting an ankle guard and armed with a crutch – an added challenge. Yet, he could see only the bright side to his slow but steady advance.

Unlike most torch-bearers, whose 100m run ended in a flash, he was able to soak in the backing of some 50 supporters who lined the street during his 40-second run.

“I felt it was destined,” said the YOG volunteer. “I got maximum benefits. Had I been okay, the moment would have been over in 12 to 15 seconds.”

His positive attitude has been a feature since he injured himself – ironically, during the Games’ opening ceremony rehearsal on July 30, when he missed a step at The Float@Marina Bay.

The day after the rehearsal, he was stretchered out of his home and taken to Changi General Hospital in an ambulance because he could not walk.

In typical fashion, Venkateshwaran made light of his predicament.

“Before that, I’ve never been on a stretcher. Like the torch relay, I got a new life experience,” he said with a laugh.

He was involved in the fifth day of the torch relay, which saw the flame travel through south-west Singapore.

It began in the morning when the torch was lit by Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugartnam at Satil Military Institute.

“The enthusiasm is very real and it’s infectious,” said Mr Tharman, the guest of honour.

The YOG occasion was indeed the perfect pick-me-up for Muhd Ajmal Alman, who had just recovered from a fever.

Although he was not at his best, the Malaysian hurdler was not prepared to give the relay a miss.

Ajmal and Brunel’s Amanda Liew were two of nine competitors from South-east Asia to carry the torch at the Chinese Garden yesterday.

“I feel very lucky to be a part of this. There are so many YOG athletes but only a few of us got to do this,” said Liew, a swimmer, who arrived in Singapore on Tuesday.

“This has been a great start to my YOG experience.”

Singapore’s volleyball captain Joelle Lim, 18, sailor Ng Sue Shen, 15, and former Olympian runner C. Kumalan, 67, were also given the honour of carrying the torch yesterday.

The torch relay ended at Singapore Polytechnic, where the cauldron was lit by Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office Lim Boon Heng.

Factory operator Chew Choon Lin, 61, was in the 1,500-strong crowd at the community celebration after taking half a day’s leave.

She said: “I might not be able to participate in the YOG, but I can be one of the cheerleaders.”

Brunel swimmer Amanda Liew carrying the Youth Olympic Torch in the Chinese Garden, accompanied by athlete Sittideth Khanthavong of Laos. PHOTO: SPH-SYOGOC/JOSEPH NAIK

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