

On top of the world

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Azizul's numero uno for London world meet

By LIM TEIK HUAT

KUALA LUMPUR: Azizulhasni Awang (*pic*) will head to next month's Track World Championships in London as the world's No. 1 ranked men's keirin cyclist.

Azizul has now joined shuttlers Lee Chong Wei, Roslin Hashim, Koo Kien Keat-Tan Boon Heong, squash queen Nicol David and lawn bowler Safuan Said as Malaysians to ever hold the accolade of being ranked No. 1 in world sports.

The 28-year-old Azizul reached the zenith of cycling in the latest UCI world rankings in keirin with a 508-point total.

The Melbourne-based cyclist, who was third previously, is only four points ahead of reigning world champion Francois Pervis of France. Kiwi Edward Dawkins, the silver medallist at last year's World Championships, is third on 494 points.

"It's a big honour for myself and for the country to be ranked world No. 1 in an Olympic year," said Azizul.

"It's the recognition of the hard work I put in training and competitions ... the process in getting there," said the Terengganu-born cyclist.

Azizul now hopes to maintain his top spot until the Rio de Janeiro

Olympics in August.

"I won the bronze medal in the World Championships in Paris last year. It will be a big boost to my Olympic gold hopes if I can get on the podium in London again," said Azizul, who is already assured of an Olympic berth in keirin as Asia's top-ranked cyclist.

Despite having to miss five weeks of training due to flu and a muscle tear, Azizul managed to claim two bronzes in the sprint and keirin at the Asian Championships in Japan last week.

National head coach John Beasley hopes Azizul will be in a better physical condition for the London



World Championships.

"This (No. 1 ranking) is good news for Malaysia. Azizul had to overcome sickness and injury before the Asian Championships. I really didn't expect him to come away with a medal, let alone two.

"I'm sure he will be in tip-top condition for London," said the Australian coach.

■ MEN

Keirin: 1. Azizulhasni Awang (Mas) 508 pts, 2. Francois Pervis (Fra) 504, 3. Edward Dawkins (Nzl) 494, 4. Fabian Hernando Puerta Zapata (Col) 490, 5. Nikita Shurshin (Rus) 485, 6. Maximilian Levy (Ger) 459, 7. Joachim Eilers (Ger) 452, 8. Yuta Wakimoto (Jpn) 439, 9. Matthew Baranoski (US) 425, 10. Hugo Barrette (Can) 404; *Selected:* 28. Muhd Shah Firdaus Sahrom (Mas) 320.

Sprint: 1. Matthew Glaetzer (Aus) 595 pts, 2. Denis Dmitriev (Rus) 566, 3. Jeffrey Hoogland (Ned) 543, 4. Max Niederlag (Ger) 512, 5. Maximilian Levy (Ger) 473, 6. Edward Dawkins (Nzl) 468, 7. Damian Zielinski (Pol) 447, 8. Sam Webster (Nzl) 446, 9. Jason Kenny (Bri) 426, 10. Quentin Lafargue (Fra) 420; *Selected:* 23. Azizulhasni Awang (Mas) 320, 40. Muhd Shah Firdaus Sahrom (Mas) 270.

■ WOMEN

Keirin: 1. Anna Meares (Aus) 569 pts, 2. Monique Sullivan (Can) 550, 3. Lee Wai Sze (Hkg) 540, 4. Stephanie Morton (Aus) 533, 5. Guo Shuang (Chn) 527, 6. Lee Hye-jin (Kor) 488, 7. Kristina Vogel (Ger) 480, 8. Simona Krupeckaite (Lit) 464, 9. Lin Junhong (Chn) 462, 10. Ekaterina Gnidenko (Rus) 460; *Selected:* 18. Fatehah Mustapa (Mas) 352.

Sprint: 1. Kristina Vogel (Ger) 633 pts, 2. Stephanie Morton (Aus) 585, 3. Guo Shuang (Chn) 565, 4. Zhong Tianshi (Chn) 560, 5. Anastasia Voynova (Rus) 540, 6. Lee Wai Sze (Hkg) 535, 7. Elis Ligtlee (Ned) 534, 8. Simona Krupeckaite (Lit) 482, 9. Lin Junhong (Chn) 457, 10. Kaarle Mcculloch (Aus) 451; *Selected:* 16. Fatehah Mustapa (Mas) 358.