

Ziyad finds calling in sports

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KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's latest hero Muhammad Ziyad Zolkefli is a Paralympics gold medallist after winning the shot putt event with a world record throw of 16.84m on Saturday.

He is a natural athlete who excels in many sports despite his intellectual disability.

His father, Zolkefli Othman, said a person with disability needs to find their calling to boost their confidence.

"For Ziyad, it's sports," he said yesterday.

"He loves to hear the crowds cheering and idolises nine-time Olympic champion Usain Bolt. He always watches his races.

"Ziyad is a responsible son. His siblings follow his examples. Even though they have minimal living space, he never neglected his chores."

At the age of 16, he attended SM Teknik Tanah Merah in Kelantan. It was here that he picked up shot putt at the behest of a school teacher.

After the SPM examinations, Ziyad opened a stall near Jalan Chow Kit selling *char kuay teow*.

He worked hard to help his family and in 2013, after winning the IPC Athletics World Championships in Lyon, he used that money to build his parents a home behind the hospital quarters they had been living in for years.

Three years on, he is now an Olympic gold medallist and will be given a reward of RM1 million and a lifetime monthly pension of RM5,000 by the government.

Naza Corporation Holdings are also rewarding all gold medallists with a

Kia Sportage and a suite at Trion 888, Equine Park.

When asked if they would move from their current abode, Othman said: "We're not sure. This place has a lot of memories for us. My kids grew up here. But success brings rewards. We shall see what happens in the next few days."

Ziyad will be getting married to Zafirah Nasir, whom he met while taking up a computer course in November last year.

Knowing Ziyad:

- Went to a regular school until the age of 12.

- His parents only realised the level of his disability when he was 10.

- He is the eldest of four siblings. His father, Zolkefli Othman, was a night market trader while his mother, Siti Arfah Abdul Rashid, was a nurse at Gombak Hospital.

- Zolkefli was told to find something Ziyad was good at to boost his confidence.

** This article first appeared in the Malay Mail Afternoon E-Paper yesterday.*

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— Zolkefli Othman



Ziyad as a teenager and as a baby.