

Bullied champ's last laugh

Showing flawless style and poise, Eleftherios Petrounias of Greece was the only gymnast in the rings final to hit the 16-point mark, relegating the 2012 champion Arthur Zanetti of Brazil to the silver medal on Monday. PHOTO: REUTERS

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RIO DE JANEIRO • Bullied as a child for his height, Greek gymnast Eleftherios Petrounias hit back at his tormenters on Monday as he claimed the Olympic rings gold in Rio.

The 25-year-old flexed his muscles with a display of power and control to crush his rivals with an unbeatable 16.000 points.

"We worked so hard for this result. It came as I expected," he said.

Before the Games, he had revealed how he had been bullied and is now involved in an anti-bullying campaign.

"I was bullied about my height. But now it does not bother me, because I know that if I were taller, I could not do what I do as a gymnast," said the 1.64m gymnast, who added the Olympic gold to his world title in artistic gymnastics.

The 25-year-old edged out 2012 champion Arthur Zanetti of Brazil in the final, who lost out on the top prize by 0.234 of a point while Russia's Denis Ablyazin had to settle for the bronze (15.700).

Petrounias, showing off his bulging biceps and the Olympic rings tattooed on his upper back, delivered a routine that combined moments of perfect stillness with a rapid series of somersaults.

He became the first Greek since Dimosthenis Tampakos in 2004 to win the rings. It was his country's second gold in Rio.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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