



POC Online

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Peping - Divac Meet



IT was all fun and photo ops when Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) President Jose 'Peping' Cojuangco met with Serbian counterpart Vlade Divac last September 10 at the POC office.

Talk of course, centered around sports, although the discussion was informal and very light-hearted.

"It was just 45 minutes of light conversation," said POC spokesman Joey Romasanta of the meeting. "It was fun. Everybody was smiling."

The two sports officials exchanged ideas, briefed each other regarding their respective National Olympic Committees (NOC) and how the two countries could help each other in improving and promoting sports.

Divac admitted that government support to Serbian sports is lacking, a practice which he plans to change since he said he is close to current president Boris Tadic.

"Sabi niya sa akin pinababago daw niya ang batas. Dahil malapit siya sa president nila, madali ng mabago ang mga problema nila sa sports," Cojuangco recalled of his conversation with the 7-foot-1 Divac, one of the early European players to suit up for the NBA.

Divac was also proud of his country's achievements in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, where Serbia competed as an independent nation.

Serbia won a silver medal in swimming courtesy of Milorad Cavic, while bronzes were won by the water polo team and world number 4 netter Novak Djokovic.

Definitely not left out during the meeting was the topic of basketball.

Although considered one of the tough teams in the sport (the Serbs stunned reigning world champion Spain, 66-57, in the ongoing EuroBasket tournament in Poland) - Divac said Serbia is still looking at hiring foreign coaches to "teach our own coaches about the fundamentals."

He added, "the basketball federation should surely put someone we could learn from."

The retired NBA player said he plans to share Serbia's sports program to the Philippines especially in the fields of tennis, volleyball and archery.

Cojuangco was elated with the exchange of ideas he had with the Serbian sports leader.

"It's already a start. We opened that door to have mutual cooperation with them so let's see what we can learn from them," the former Tarlac congressman said.

The meeting would not have been complete without the souvenir photos.

"We didn't let him go without posing for some pictures," said Romasanta with a laugh. "Even if he is already a sports official, he remains as one of the most admired basketball players in the NBA."

Other POC officials present during the gathering were Manny Lopez, Steve Hontiveros, Julian Camacho, and Sultan Jamalul Kiram III. Roel Velasco, bronze medalist in the 2004 Athens Olympics, also met Divac at the POC office.

Divac came to town as part of the NBA Generation greats that played against a PBA All-Star selection in the NBA Asia Challenge at the Araneta Coliseum last Sept. 11.

The meeting between the 41-year old basketball superstar and Cojuangco was arranged by Romasanta through Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP) led by executive director Noli Eala, and Serbian coach Rajko Toroman of the RP Smart Gilas team.

The 41-year old Divac played for 16 years in the NBA, suiting up for the Los Angeles Lakers, Charlotte Hornets (as part of the Kobe Bryant trade) and the Sacramento Kings. He formally retired in 2005.

Known as one of the most outspoken NBA players and a popular humanitarian, Divac was appointed government adviser in Serbia for humanitarian issues last year.

Then February of this year, he was elected as president of the Serbian Olympic Committee after incumbent Ivan Curkovic made a last-minute withdrawal.

“Even if he is already Vlade Divac, he still knows how to listen,” Romasanta said. “He is such a colorful personality and knows how to speak his mind.”



Vlade Divac visits POC office



Powerlifting

Superwoman

BOYS, beware of this superwoman.

Patricia Llena, only 15 years of age, won three gold medals and plucked a bronze in the recent 2009 World Sub-Junior & Junior Powerlifting Championships held in Ribeirao, San Paolo, Brazil.

Llena beat out five other lifters in the women's J18 60-kg. division, where she won the gold in the 170 kgs. in squat, 170 kgs. in deadlift, and 420 kgs. in total lift.

Her 80 kg lift in the bench press, however, was only good for a bronze medal finish, although her lift established a new Asian sub junior bench press record.

Nonetheless, her feat is quite an achievement considering that this pride of San Antonio, Nueva Ecija competed in her very first international tournament.

Llena was the lone RP bet in the tournament that attracted lifters aged 14 to 18 from a total of 30 countries.

The teener, who began lifting weights at the tender age of four, made waves earlier when she set three new Philippine records in the last National Open Powerlifting Championships.

Llena lifted 170.5 kg. in the 60 kg. category, raised 77.5 kg. in the bench press and finally, did 175.7 kg. in the deadlift.

In the world meet, finishing second and third behind Llena were Kendra Miller of the US and Yana Talybora of Russia with identical total lifts of 405 kgs.

Miller ran away with the gold in the bench press with 87.5 kgs. and bagged the silver in the deadlift with 157.5 kgs.

Talybora meanwhile, also got the silver in the deadlift (167.5 kgs) and squat (87.5 kgs) plus another bronze in the bench press (150 kgs).

Shooting



NATHANIEL `Tac` Padilla is still on target after all these years.

The veteran shooter booked a record 16th straight stint in the Southeast Asian Games when he ripped the national rapid fire pistol record during the qualifying meet held for the Laos meet.

Padilla, 45, fired 577 points to surpass the old record of 572 which he himself established during the monthly qualifying competitions of the Philippine National Shooting Association (PNSA) at the PSC/Marines range in Taguig City earlier this year.

Along with seven others who also qualified, Padilla will be part of the national shooting team aiming to heavily bounce back from its performance in the 2007 edition of the Games in Thailand, where Filipino shooters failed to win a gold.

The son of two-time shooting Olympian Mariano `Tom` Ong, Tac was only 12 when he won his first international gold medal in the Benito Juarez Junior competition in Mexico City.

Two years after, he made his SEA Games debut at the age of 14, followed by a string of successive competitive stints that was momentarily cut short during the 1999 Games in Brunei when shooting was scrapped from the event's calendar of sports.

POC joins 40th day mass for President Cory

