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Tribal Games go to Sierra Madre

by Shai Tamayo

BARANGAY LIBJO, INFANTA, QUEZON. October 16, 2009. By land and by sea, these tribesmen came in their raving red bahags, bows and arrows, ready and eager to take on the Sierra Madre Tribal Games (TG). After working months liaising with the Dumagat contingent, the fruit of TG Team's Glie Trasmana's efforts was sweet: the TG was well attended by enthusiasm with an ardent cultural component.

The Pacific Garden Lodge - a treat for the eyes, lungs and the spirit, combined jungle and ocean as the playground of the third leg of the 2009 TG. Katutubos aged 17 to 58 years, including tribal chieftains, gave their best shots in four events: Standing and Squatting Archery, Archery Assault Course, Sibat (Javelin) Throwing and Foot Relay Race.

As the Mangyans demonstrated their speed prowess in the foot race, the Dumagats, or "Agta," wowed everyone with the Sibat (Javelin). Of the 37 contenders, fourteen new champs surfaced, with quite a few bagging awards in two events. The archery events also showed promise. Richard Torgo hit the bull's eye in the Archery Assault, but could not beat the day's archery star, Balaybay Aumentado, who aced the standing and assault events. Torgo placed second and third in the standing and assault events, respectively.

Eager to be part of the action, three young female katutubos engaged in an impromptu foot race, a delightful display of spunk that probably made the Olympian gods smile.

There to witness, organize and inspire the affair was the TG team: POC's (Phil. Olympic Committee) Col. Jeff Tamayo; PSTA's (Phil. Soft Tennis Association) workhorses Mike and Sammy; UPHS's (University of Perpetual Help System) spark plugs Nerysa, Glie, Joy, et.al.; and ACB's (Asean Centre for Biodiversity) Nonoy Pollisco, Sahlee Bugna-Barrer, and Estelita Macalum. Joining them were the locals headed by Chief of the Samahan ng mga Katutubong Agta/Dumagat na Ipinagtatanggol at Binabaka ang Lupaing Ninuno (SAGIBIN-LN Organization), Conchita Calzado; and the NCIP Quezon Provincial Officer Roberto Almonte.

As in the previous TG, the forum was a significant event feature. The katutubo youth (students and others, females again!) fielded questions.

Some salient points: from Conchita, “It’s not in our culture to just think of ourselves. Inherent to our culture is to care for nature and people The times are telling us we must preserve our rich culture.... Before, everybody in the village and beyond shared all meals.... Nowadays, if you have nothing to pay, you starve...”

A young student asked: what can we do to protect the environment?

Tamayo, or “Ka Jeff” replied: “...It has to come from the heart. Begin with sincerity—to change, to do something Taking care of the environment will just be a small part of the whole once you are in the right frame of mind and heart. Understand that you can’t separate respect for the environment from katutubo culture. You must put things in proper perspective.”

Another woman katutubo added: “... if you speak intelligently about all these but it doesn’t come from the heart, then the words won’t have any meaning. ... It’s what we do that shows people how we regard each other, our culture, and that we take this preservation of culture seriously....”

“The bottom line,” reiterates Ka Jeff, “ is, simple living, high thinking... this is our hope. The signals are clear, we need to return to this.”



Tribal Games in Sierra Madre



Boxing

Freddie Roach praises RP women's boxing team

WORLD renowned trainer Freddie Roach has nothing but praises for the RP women's boxing team which is bound for two major international tournaments before the end of the year.

"I am really very impressed with your girls. I'm really surprised seeing your girls fighting," said the American trainer of boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao.

The Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (ABAP) was privileged enough to have Roach, a three-time Trainer of the Year awardee, as special observer during the recent box-off the team had in Baguio City to determine the composition of the RP delegation to the Asian Indoor Games in Vietnam and the 25th Southeast Asian Games in Laos.

The 49-year old Roach, along with Pacquiao's conditioning coach Alex Ariza, came over to the country after the Pacman decided to have the early part of training camp for his November 14 title showdown with Puerto Rican Miguel Cotto in Baguio City.

The country's summer capital has for a long time, served as training ground for both the men and women's boxing team.

National coach Roel Velasco named Josie Gabuco (pinweight), Alice Kate Aparri (light-flyweight), Annie Albania (flyweight), Nesthy Peticio (light-bantamweight) and veteran Mitchel Martinez (featherweight) to the team competing in the Asian Indoor Games set October 28 to November 7.

Of the five, Roach singled out Albania as the one who impressed him the most.

"She's the one," Roach pointed to Albania, a world championship silver medalist and lone 2007 SEA Games gold medal winner.

"Your girls can really fight and know what to do. They are even better than your boys," said Roach laughing.

But seriously, the American trainer said he believes it is in the women's side where the country has a very good chance of winning its first ever Olympic gold medal.

Women's boxing will make its debut in the Olympics in the 2012 London Games.

Basketball

RP Under-16 team confident of chances in FIBA-Asia meet

THE Nokia RP under-16 team is confident it can be competitive enough against the region's powerhouse squads when it sees action in the FIBA-Asia tournament slated next month in Johore Baru, Malaysia.

Coach Eric Altamirano expressed his optimism in the light of the almost year-long preparation the Nationals made for the first ever FIBA-Asia meet for under-16 set November 19-29.

"We're optimistic of our chances in the face of a very tough competition," said the former University of the Philippine Maroons stalwart.

"I know we have the right set of guys who have the right mind set for this kind of tournament."

Making up the team are Cederick Labing-isa, Dan Sara, Angelo Alolino, Kiefer Ravena, Cris Tolomia, Von Pessumal, Kevin Ferrer, Jeron Teng, Michael Pate, Raf Nayve, Rene Sta. Maria, Emmanuel Bonleon, Gabriel Reyes, Jeoff Javillonar, Paolo Romero, Prince Caperal and Nestor Bantayan.

The Filipinos have been bracketed in Group B along with Japan, Kazakhstan and Bahrain.

Perennial Asian champion China leads Group A along with Myanmar, India and Jordan, while Korea is in Group C together with Singapore, Syria, Kuwait and Malaysia.

Rounding up the cast are Iran, Chinese-Taipei, Thailand and Saudi Arabia in Group D.

Good thing that prior to the tournament, the Filipinos get the chance to size-up the opposition by way of a four-day pocket tournament set November 5-8 in Cebu City.

Dubbed the 2nd Nokia Pilipinas Youth Invitational basketball championship, the meet will have teams from Iran, Chinese-Taipei and Japan competing.

"The pocket tournament gives us an idea of how these teams look and play," said Altamirano.

A similar invitational event organized by the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP) and Nokia was held last year as part of the training of the RP Youth team under Franz Pumaren, with teams from Lithuania, China and Chinese-Taipei among those which joined.

Format of the tournament is single round robin elimination with the top two teams vying for the championship.

Opening day pits Iran against Chinese-Taipei and the Philippines taking on Japan.

On Nov. 6, Iran clashes with Japan before the Philippines vs. Chinese-Taipei game.

The final day of eliminations will have Japan going up against Chinese-Taipei and the Philippines battling Iran.

Basketball

RP team star encounters personal problem

Smart Gilas Team Pilipinas' preparation for coming international tournaments may have been put on crossroads after it was bared that the three-year-old son of American import CJ Giles was suffering from a heart ailment.

Giles, up for naturalization, was given the green light by the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP) to decide on what plans to undertake.

SBP executive director Noli Eala, in text messages to sportswriters, said he and Serbian coach Rajko Toroman have spoken with the 6-foot-10 Giles to find out how they could be of assistance.

Eala was quoted as saying Giles "is going through a difficult moment as his son's condition is uncertain at this time."

Though no official medical report has been released by SBP, reports said Jaden Giles, whom his father brought with him when he arrived in the country last September, has blood clots developing in his body.

Giles signed a one-year contract approximately worth P8.64 million, and is part of the national team playing as a guest team in the PBA Philippine Cup in preparation for different international tournaments, including the 2011 FIBA-Asia Championship, the qualifying event for the 2012 London Olympics.

Eala said that the former LA Lakers draftee is listed as "day to day" in the Smart Gilas roster, but has made it clear SBP president Manny Pangilinan is supporting Giles in this moment of personal turmoil.

"We decided to excuse him from practice to channel his energies to possible solutions for his son," Eala said.

Aside from the FIBA-Asia Championship, they will also compete in next year's FIBA-Asia Champions' Cup, a tournament for the top commercial teams in the region, and in the Asian Games in Guangzhou, China.

Golf

NGAP looks forward to 25th SEA Games, 2016 Olympics

OFFICIALS of the National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP) were obviously elated with the inclusion of golf in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Three weeks ago, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) selected golf and rugby to become part of the Olympic calendar beginning the 2016 Olympics. The two sports were chosen from a list of seven which included baseball, softball, squash, karate and roller sports.

NGAP president Leandro Mendoza said the selection of golf has been long in coming.

“This should have been done a long time ago,” said Mendoza. “Now we have another avenue to showcase the Filipino talent. I believe we have enough good players for the Olympics.”

Golf was last played in the 1904 St. Louis Games.

The International Golf Federation (IGF) has proposed a format of a 72-hole individual stroke play for both men and women, with a three-hole playoff recommended to determine the medal winners in case of a tie for either first, second or third place.

The world governing body for the sport also recommended an Olympic field of 60 players for each of the men’s and women’s competition, using the Official World Golf Rankings as the method of determining eligibility.

The top 15 world-ranked players would be eligible for the Olympics, regardless of the number of players from a given country, while beyond the top 15, players would be eligible based on the world rankings, with a maximum of two eligible players from each country that does not already have two or more players among the top 15.

But the Rio de Janeiro Games are still a long seven years from now.

The more pressing matter for the NGAP is the 25th Southeast Asian Games in Laos this December, with the federation finalizing its men’s roster at the conclusion of its four-round qualifier at the Riviera’s Langer course.

Spearheading the RP golfers’ campaign are Mhark Fernando, Jhonnell Ababa, Antonio Asistio II and Rufino Bayron.

The reigning national champion, Fernando finished with a five-under 279 for a six-stroke win over Ababa, his Calatagan teammate who beat out Asistio for the no. 2 spot with a 285.

Leader in the first two rounds of the meet, Asistio, sputtered with a two-over 73 to settle for third with a 286.

Rufino Bayron beat Peter Villaber for the final spot in the team. He finished with a 288.

RP taekwondo team puts up good fight

A breakthrough gold medal continues to elude the RP taekwondo team which put up a good fight, but failed to bring home a medal in last week's World Taekwondo Championships in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Kirstie Alora emerged as the best Filipino finisher in the 12-man lineup when she barged into the quarterfinals of the women's middleweight class.

Roberto Cruz's bronze medal (finweight) in the 2003 world meet was the last time the country made it to the medal podium of the biennial tournament featuring the best jins from around the globe. Cruz was also a bronze winner in 2001 and thrice came close to winning the gold but eventually settled for the silver in 1995, 1997 and 1999.

Criselda Roxas was the last Filipino standing, making it past the first round of the lightweight division against Venera Abdurazakova of Uzbekistan, 6-3, but losing in the second round against Chinese-Taipei's Chang Chueh, 9-5.

Jeffrey Figueroa (featherweight) and Japoy Lizardo (finweight) made it to the round of 16 before bowing out, while the rest of the team that included two-time Olympians Tshomlee Go and Toni Rivero, made early exits by crashing out either in the opening or second rounds.

Others in the team that saw action in the October 14-18 meet joined by a record 1,000 participants were Marlon Avenido, Nicole Mapilisan, Alexander Briones, Kathleen Alora, Karla Alava and Jyra Lizardo

This year's edition of the event also marked the introduction of electronic armor in determining the scores of competing jins.

In Memoriam

Dominic Cabalza, 42

THE Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) is in mourning again following another death in the family with the untimely passing of powerlifting official Dominic Cabalza.

The vice-president of the Powerlifting Association of the Philippines was gunned down by an unidentified man inside an eatery in Quezon City before dawn of October 17.

The sports official died on the spot from several gunshot wounds. He was 42.

A member of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class 1990, Cabalza is also the vice-president of the Asian Powerlifting Federation.

He is the second high-ranking official of a National Sports Association (NSA) to die this year after Robert Valdez of the Muaythai Association of the Philippines (MAP).

“We mourn the passing of Mr. Nick Cabalza who has been a tremendous workhorse as far as the Powerlifting Association of the Philippines is concerned,” said POC president Jose ‘Peping’ Cojuangco.

Police is still investigating if the incident is related to Cabalza’s work as a civilian agent of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP).

Cabalza’s death came just as Filipino powerlifters had been making the country proud the past few weeks.

Only last month, Cabalza led a three-man RP team to the 2009 World Sub-Junior and Junior Powerlifting Championship in Sao Paulo, Brazil that saw Patricia Llana emerge as world champion by winning three gold medals and a bronze.

Llana, a 15-year old honor student from San Antonio, Nueva Ecija, outclassed her five rivals in the women’s J18 60-kg division, making golden lifts of 170kgs in the squat, another 170kgs in the deadlift and 420kgs in total lift.

Her bronze came with a 80kg lift in the bench press.

A few weeks later, Lily Pecante and Antonio Taguibao led the Philippine team to a seven gold medal haul in the 2009 World Masters Powerlifting Championships in Ostrava, Czech Republic.