



NSA's prepare for SEA Games

ARCHERY

Though they are admitting that preparations have been far from ideal, archery officials expressed optimism of a strong showing in the Southeast Asian Games in Laos next month.

“I can say our team is half-demoralized,” said NAAP president Lenora Brawner. “Despite of the circumstances, we will try to bring home the gold.”

NAAP secretary general Terry Lim predicted at least two gold medals for the six-man squad.

Lim said Earl Benjamin Yap, a silver medalist in the previous SEA Games, is capable of ruling the men's compound event this time. Competing in the women's compound event, veteran Jennifer Chan is also fancied to win the gold, Lim said.

Brawner said the lack of equipment has hampered their preparations, leaving the archers with a very difficult task of at least duplicating the two-gold, one-silver, one-bronze haul in the previous SEA Games in Thailand.

The team will also be without top female archer Amaya Paz, a double-gold winner in the previous SEA Games, who declined from joining the squad, NAAP secretary general Terry Lim said.

Paz's absence meant the team will not be able to defend their women's compound team title, Lim said.

“We haven't seen anyone deserving to take her place,” Lim said, pointing out that the compound team lacks one player to compete in the team event.

Beijing Olympics campaigner Mark Javier is hoping to improve on his bronze medal finish in the recurve event.

The team also includes Dondon Sombrio and Fermin Barranachea, who are competing in the compound individual and team events, along with Yap.

Barranachea won a gold medal as a member of the recurve team in his only other SEA Games appearance 12 years ago in Jakarta.

The other female archer in the team is Abigail Tindugan, who was part of the women's compound squad that won the gold two years ago.

SHOOTING

In shooting, Filipino ace Nathaniel “Tac” Padilla will spearhead a five-man team to the biennial meet.

Padilla, who has won four SEA Games gold medals, will compete in the rapid fire, standard pistol and center fire pistol competitions, along with Ronald Hejastro and Robert Donalvo.

Mei Concepcion will see action in the men’s 10M air rifle, while Carolino Gonzales is the country’s bet in the free pistol and men’s air pistol competitions.

“I don’t want to commit,” said Padilla, who will make his 16th appearance in the SEA Games this year, when asked to give his prediction for the shooting team. “Our rivals are just very strong.”

Padilla said they also need to quickly adapt to the electronic targets that will be used in the SEA Games.

“We are still using paper for our training,” he said. “It’s different and we can’t do anything about it.”

Padilla said he is confident that there won’t be a repeat of his disastrous stint two years ago when he failed to win a single medal because of a jammed pistol.

“Now I have a new pistol and I feel confident about it,” he said.

Still, Padilla said the odds are stacked against them in the SEA Games with Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand bolstering their teams.

Singapore, he said, is sending a team made up of naturalized Chinese athletes, who were former members of the Chinese national team. Vietnam, according to Padilla, trained in China, while Thailand has hired a European coach to sharpen their shooters’ skills.

TAEKWONDO

The Philippine taekwondo team is taking its training a notch higher with a little more than a few weeks left before the 2009 Southeast Asian Games blasts off in Vientiane, Laos.

RP team mentor Rocky Samson said coaches are now focused on improving the athletes’ conditioning and strength workouts following his observations from the squad’s performance at the world championships in Copenhagen, Denmark two weeks ago.

“Performance-wise, malakas naman ang team natin. But kailangang itaas pa yung level ng conditioning at strength nila para kahit kanino mo iharap – physically malakas man or hindi – mas kayangkaya nila,” Samson said.

Samson added an athlete’s condition is put to test especially at the world championships, where they endure up to eight fights a day in order to win the gold medal.

“Kaya kailangang mas sanayin pa sila sa matagalang matches,” Samson said.

The 12-man RP team, bannered by two-time Olympians Tshomlee Go and Toni Rivero, however, failed to bring home a single medal at the said prestigious event. But they saw their perennial rival, Thailand, snaring one silver and three bronze medals.

Samson said they are not at all intimidated by the Thai’s world championships performance since the Laos SEAG Organizing Committee has allowed a maximum participation of nine athletes on both divisions out of 16 events.

“Most likely, sa mga one or two matches lang magkakaharap natin ang Thailand because they’re into lighter divisions. Lahat ng bansa pinaghahandaan naming,” Samson said.

“We had tougher matches at the world championships. Mostly mga nakaharap natin European countries agad sa mga opening bouts compared sa Thailand.

But we’re not using it as an excuse why we didn’t win a single medal. Talagang mahirap ang kompetisyon sa world,” Samson said.

Candidates for the nine-man SEAG team aside from Go and Rivero are Japoy Lizardo (finweight), Nicole Mapilisan (fly), Jeffrey Figueroa (bantam), Manuel Rivero Jr. (light), Samuel Morrison (welter), Marlon Avenido (middle) and Alex Briones (heavy) in the men’s division, and Jyra Lizardo (fin), Caryn Pilongo (fly), Eunice Alora (bantam), Karla Alava (feather), Camille Manalo (light), Toni Rivero (welter), Criselda Roxas (middle) and Elaine Alora (heavy).

RP ranking in football improves

The Philippine Football Federation is alive and kicking.

With the expected arrival of British coach Desmond Bulpin, who will be tasked to handle the program and training of the Philippine team, the Philippine Football Federation hopes the country's ranking in the world stage will steadily rise in the years to come.

Based on the latest standings, the Philippines is now ranked 155th in the FIFA-Coca Cola World Ranking, a marked improvement from its 190th place the previous year.

While the country is still way below the class of even ASEAN neighbors like Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, the big jump in the standings, according to PFF General Secretary Cyril Dofitas, is already a huge achievement.

"This is very encouraging for our national team, knowing that we have improved in the football world, our players will be motivated to play better," said Dofitas.

Dofitas attributed the improvement to several factors but the biggest of it all he said is "our attendance in the international competitions. We have been continuously participating in international tournaments."

"This is a very good way of telling the world that the PFF is doing everything to improve our image abroad," said Dofitas, who added that Bulpin is arriving this week to start molding the RP team into one big, fighting unit.

The other factor, he said, is the continuous strengthening of its grassroots and various programs.

"PFF strongly believes that the success of a football program will not come overnight, it's a long process. We should focus on the kids since given proper training and education, we're very sure they will embrace the sport till they grow up," added Dofitas. "Hence, developing young minds and bodies at an early age in the direction of the game of football is a must."

PFF technical Director Jose Ariston Caslib said the commitment of the coaches and players to upgrade their technical knowhow also contributed to the improvement despite budget constraints.

"The PFF hopes to create more football activities and seminars on the provincial level around the country as part of its development programs. In line with this is the continuous conceptualization of technical programs for coaches and referees," said Caslib.

"It has been a grueling yet very competitive year for Philippine football. This year marks many developments for the PFF," he added.

Earlier this year, an all Filipino football club was founded in the United Kingdom, the Philippine United Football Club (PUFC) – the first and only official all-Filipino club based in Europe.

Adopt an Athlete



The Philippine Constructors Association (PCA) donated financial support to the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) for the athletes participating in the Laos SEA Games.

Photo shows PCA President Tito Fernandez handing the donation to POC President Jose Cojuangco, Jr. with the Laos-bound athletes, PCS Directors Jun Sevilla and Marcelito Madrasto.