



# POC Online

The official weekly online newsletter of the Philippine Olympic Committee

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November 28, 2009 Vol. 1 No. 21

## Good chances for RP women's team

**T**he under-16 RP women's team hopes to duplicate – if not surpass – the semifinals feat achieved by its men's counterpart when it takes its turn competing in the FIBA-Asia Basketball Championships in Pune, India.

Bannered by Jonah Melendres and 6-foot-1 Danica Jose, daughter of former RP team mainstay Bobby, the Nationals face tall odds in the wake of tough competition in the November 30 to December 6 meet. However, they will be campaigning in the under-16 meet FIBA is staging for the first time, inspired by the decent showing of their men's counterpart, which finished fourth in the recently concluded tournament in Johor Baru, Malaysia.

According to RP women's mentor Patrick Aquino, "As long as we stick to our game plan and maintain our discipline on the court, we know we have a good chance. It's going to be a tough mission for us, but my girls are ready and confident of waging war against the best in the region."

Aside from Melendres and Jose, other mainstays of the team are Kitkat Nitorreda, Trisha Piatos, Tara Araneta, Jackie Tanaman, Lore Rivera, Trish Dy, Ginny Pioquinto, Elrica Castyro, Kai Javier and Cheskie Tantoco. Assistant coaches are Paul Du and Julie Amos, both former national team stalwarts.

The country is bracketed in Group A along with powerhouse China, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and the host country. Comprising Group B are Korea, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

After the single-round eliminations, the top two teams from each group advance to the semis.

## RP to compete in synchronized swimming

FOR the very first time, a Filipina pair is representing the country in the 8th Asian Swimming Championships in Foshan, China.

Jemima Tiambeng and Mary Aliza De La Rosa are seeing action in the synchronized swimming event, where they hope to break into the long dominance of powerhouse countries China and Japan.

The three-day event is a major aquatics championship held every four years among countries within the Asian region under the supervision of the Asia Swimming Federation, the governing body of aquatics in Asia.

Both Tiambeng and De La Rosa are going to the meet armed to the teeth.

Tiambeng has been into synchronized swimming since 2006. She competed in the 2007 Thailand National Age Group and Open Championships in Bangkok and won a bronze medal in the Malaysian Age Group and Open Championships (16-18 age group duet category). Jemima will be seeing action in the solo and duet free routine.

For her part, De La Rosa has been in the sport for the last three years. Mary Aliza vied in the Thailand National Age Group and Open Championships in 2007 and the Malaysian Open in 2008. As a varsity swimmer of St. Scholastica's College during her high school years, she helped the school win the WNCAA swimming championships for three straight years. She is also entered in the solo and duet free routine events.

The meet was first held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 1980 and the latest one in Singapore in 2006. In the SEA Games, it was introduced in the 2007 Thailand meet.

"We are hoping that we now have another sport that would become a source of glory for us. We are very proud because this year, the Philippines has competed internationally in all aquatic disciplines," said Philippine Amateur Swimming Association (PASA) president Mark Joseph.

"Synchronized swimming is a sport that we need to invest in because it will surely be in the calendar of events for the next SEA Games in Indonesia come 2011. Filipinas have the natural grace and beauty to excel in this new sport. We've proved this with ice skating, after all," he added.

One of the judges in the meet is Filipina Reina Rose Suarez. A FINA accredited judge, Suarez passed the FINA Judges School exam in Japan in 2007 and coaches the national training pool as well as the Philippine synchro swimmers participating in China. She got her coaching credentials from USA Synchro in Keuka College New York and attended several coaching and judging clinics for synchronized swimming in Bangkok (2005), Singapore, Thailand (2006) and Japan (2007).

Meanwhile, coach Maxima Hamsain will be attending a synchronized swimming coaches' clinic in the hope of enriching her knowledge and cascading the same to others for the future of Philippine synchronized swimming.

"These coaches will then impart to other local coaches what they had learned," said Joseph, who also noted that Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand have been pouring in a large amount of money to hire European, notably Swiss coaches, for their long-term preparations.

Currently teaching kids 12 years and under category in Assumption College, Hamsain used to be a P.E. teacher and swimming coordinator at St. Scholastica's College.

# RP athletic bet guns for gold in SEA

IS the best yet to come for long jump queen Marestella Torres?

The 28-year old Filipina bet promises so.

“Hindi ko pa nagagawa ang manalo ng ginto sa Asian Games at pumasok sa top eight sa World Championships. Prestige na sa amin sa athletics na mapabilang sa top eight sa world kaya ang mga ito ang nais kong makuha pa,” Torres bared during the thanksgiving party tendered for her by Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association (PATAFA) president Go Teng Kok in the aftermath of her gold medal win in the 2009 Asian Athletics Association (AAA) Championships in Guangzhou, China.

Torres topped the women’s long jump of the meet featuring the cream of the crop of athletics in the Asian region. She had a leap of 6.51 meters, besting China’s Chen Ya Ling and Masumi Sachiko of Japan for the plum.

Both Chen and Sachiko came with identical marks of 6.28 meters, but the Chinese trackster was awarded the silver as she made the leap in her first attempt. The Japanese bet reached the mark on her fifth try.

Although Torres’ winning jump was way below her personal best of 6.63 meters she set during the 2005 edition of the event, her gold ended the country’s 22-year drought in the AAA.

Track legend Lydia De Vega was the last Filipino to win a gold in the meet in 1987, when she romped off with wins in both the 100-meter and 200-meter sprints.

Torres previously won a silver and bronze in past stagings of the AAA. Other than the Asian Games and World Championships, Torres is also eyeing to break the long jump record in the Southeast Asian Games, where she will be competing less than two weeks from now in Laos.

Compatriot Elma Muros-Posadas holds the SEA Games mark of 6.52 meters which she set in 1999 in Brunei.

In the wake of her breakthrough gold in the Asian level, Torres feels confident about her chances of breaking the SEA Games record and winning a long jump gold medal for the third time in a row.

“Di tulad sa mga nagdaang taon na marami akong nararamdaman sa katawan, this year talagang malinis na malinis ako,” she admitted.

“Wala akong injury at maganda ang pakiramdam ko sa training ko. Kaya positibo ako na magagawa ko ang goal ko sa Laos.”

## RP golf team to target the gold

THE Philippine golf team to the 25th Southeast Asian Games declares there will be no repeat of a gold medal shutout in Laos this time.

Unfamiliarity by all competing countries of the newly-constructed Booyoung golf course, located in the Saythani District of the capital city makes the four-day meet a wide open race, giving members of the RP squad, led by team captain Pablo Soon, enough reason to feel confident about its campaign.

“We hope to bring a bacon back to Manila,” said Soon.

The playing venue, a par-72 course, was built for the purpose of Laos’ staging of the SEA Games, and will be tested for the very first time when golf competitions kick off on December 11.

“It will be the first time all participants will be playing in the course, so no one has the upper hand as far as familiarity of the venue is concerned,” said ladies coach Carmelle Villaroman, a SEA Games gold medal winner during the 1995 staging of the meet in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Comprising the men’s team are Tonton Asistio, Mhark Fernando, Jonel Ababa and Rufino Bayron. The ladies side is composed of Dottie Ardina, Mia Piccio and Ichiro Ikeda.

The country failed to win a single gold in the last edition of the biennial meet in Nakhonratchasima, Thailand, where it settled for three silver medals courtesy of Anya Tanpinco and the men’s and ladies’ teams. But Asistio, seeing action in the SEA Games for the first time, believes there won’t be a repeat of a gold shutout in Laos.

“Honestly, I think we have a very good chance of winning the gold,” said the soft-spoken Filipino golfer.

The Filipinos’ best finish in golf in the regional meet came in 1991 (Manila), 1993 (Singapore) and 1997 (Jakarta), where they bagged a total of three gold medals each. And as before, long-time nemesis Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore loom as the biggest threats to the RP golfers’ bid for pride and honor.

“These teams, especially the Thais, are really very, very good, so we have to be wary of them,” added Soon, also a director of the NGAP.

The team is set to leave on Dec. 8, and is scheduled to practice on the 10th, a day before competition gets underway.

Format is four to play, three to count in the men’s side, while the ladies class will adopt the three to play, two to count set-up.