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RP wins two golds in 1st Asian Martial Arts Games

IN the face of tough opposition, the RP contingent hardly blinked and won two gold medals in the recent 1st Asian Martial Arts Games in Bangkok, Thailand.

Answering the call for the Filipinos were taekwondo jin Jeffrey Figueroa and wushu bet Mary Jane Estimar.

The 23-year old Figueroa beat Rezai Hasan of Afghanistan, 10-7, to bag the gold in the men's bantamweight division. He became the first Filipino jin to win a gold medal in the Asian level since Ali Atienza in 1994.

On the other hand, Estimar posted a 2-0 win over Si Si Sein of Myanmar for the gold in the women's sanshou 52-kilogram division. Estimar was a silver medalist in the special wushu event of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The two stood at the forefront of the country's 2-6-10 medal haul in the week long meet.

"I think we did well considering that the RP team's training and preparations were interrupted several times owing to the uncertainty of the tournament due to the AH1N1 scare within the region," said RP Chef de Mission Dave Carter.

Unfortunately, the Filipinos' effort failed them to land inside the Top 10, as they only placed 12th overall.

Southeast Asian rivals Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia finished notches higher than the Philippines.

The Thais captured the overall title by winning 21 of the total 108 gold medals at stake, while Vietnam was at sixth spot with seven golds, 11 silvers and 21 bronzes. Indonesia had a 5-6-5 medal tally. Malaysia, which also bagged two golds, finished at 14th place, while Laos, host of the 25th SEA Games this December, was at 18th place.

The staging of the meet will probably be the first and last, as it is expected to be incorporated in the 2013 Asian Indoor Games.

Bahrain, Turkmenistan and Qatar are bidding to host the 2013 event.

Scenes from the 1st Asian Martial Arts Games



RP improves PARA Games performance

THE Philippine team to the 5th Southeast Asian Para Games lived up to expectations after finishing a decent fifth at the conclusion of the biennial meet at the Putra Stadium in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The differently-abled Filipino athletes copped a total of 24 gold medals led by the athletics pair of Jerold Pete Mangliwan and Marites Burce and the swimming trio of Arnel Aba, Bea Roble and Ernie Gawilan.

The team also took home 24 silver and 26 bronze medals.

In all, the total output surpassed the country's best finish of 22 golds which it achieved during the 2005 edition of the meet which was held in Manila. It was also a marked improvement from the 17 gold, 21 silver and 22 bronze medals the country won in the 2007 Para Games in Nakhonratchasima in Thailand, where the Filipinos also finished in fifth place.

"It's one of our objectives that everybody comes home with a medal," said RP Chef de Mission Ral Rosario.

Mangliwan, a former wheelchair basketball player, collected a gold in the men's 400m T52 event which he won behind a new meet record of 62.40 seconds. He got another gold in the 100m T52 class.

Meanwhile, Burce emerged champion in the women's discus throw and shot put F54 class.

Over at the pool, Gawilan was dominant, fishing a total of three gold medals in record breaking fashion by topping the men's 200m freestyle, 100m and 400m freestyle events, respectively.

The performance of the 18-year old pool sensation from Davao City earned him praises from Coach Tony Ong.

"Ernie was a big surprise for Team Philippines since we just wanted to test him on how he would react in an international competition since we're preparing him for the 2009 Asian Youth Para Games in Tokyo next month," Ong said.

Also winning two gold medals each over at the pool were Aba and Roble.

Other gold medalists for the Filipino delegation were tracksters Juanito Mingarine, Joel Balatucan, Prudencia Panaligan and Ann Grace Abeto, chess players Abraham Peligro, Sander Severino, Melchor Pizzaro, power lifter Adeline Dumapong and the table tennis tandem of Josephine Medina and Purification Mingarine.

Perennial champion Thailand again emerged overall champion with 148 golds, 67 silvers and 46 bronzes, followed by Malaysia (82-74-56), Vietnam (66-50-40) and Indonesia (26-21-14).

Completing the medal list are Singapore (13-5-3), Brunei (9-5-8), Myanmar (8-12-4), Cambodia (1-2-4), and Laos (0-1-1).

Swimming**Jackie “unretires”**

STUNNING swimmer Jackie Pangilinan decided to come out of retirement and don the national colors again.

Now back in training at Agua, a high-performance swim club owned by the coach of Beijing Olympics breast stroke gold medalist Rebecca Soni, the 23-year old Pangilinan is expected to be included in the RP swimming team set to see action in the 25th Southeast Asian Games in Laos this December.

“Jackie may meet the qualifying time of the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association (PASA) in time for the Laos SEA Games,” said PASA president Mark Joseph on this development which he describes as a ‘big boost for the RP women’s swimming team.’

Pangilinan retired from the pool last year after failing to meet the qualifying time in both the 100m and 200m breaststroke events of the Beijing Olympics, bombing out during the Speedo Grand Challenge in Irvine, California.

Not actively competing, she decided to complete her studies at Harvard University and graduated with honors. Jackie then hooked up with ICAP New York where she is currently a top executive.

However, the desire to represent the country again in international competitions the way she did during the 2004 Athens Olympics and the 2005 and 2007 SEA Games in Manila and Thailand, respectively, was a call too much for her to ignore.

The daughter of an American mother and Filipino father, Pangilinan won a silver and bronze medal in the Manila SEA Games and then added three bronzes in the Thailand edition of the meet two years later.

During the Athens Games, she reset the RP record in the 100m (1:12.47) and 200m (2:33.38) breaststroke events.

She once held five school records at Clifton High School in New Jersey and won three Ivy League titles in the 200m breaststroke while representing Harvard University.

Jackie was a recipient of the Harvard team’s Nancy Sato Award during her senior year.

Along with fellow US-based athlete Miguel Molina, Pangilinan became Philippine swimming’s second post-graduate tanker active in competition. Molina, the best Male Athlete of the 2007 SEA Games, graduated from the University of California.

Jackie’s plan includes not only the SEA Games, but the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou, China and the 2012 London Olympics as well.

“Both Miguel and Jackie have been discussing their Asian Games goals as early as now, and hope to be in London 2012,” Joseph added.

Wushu

Wang retires

THE country's bid in both the 25th Southeast Asian Games in Laos and the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou, China suffered a heavy blow following the retirement of gold medal potential Willy Wang.

Wang, a former world wushu bet champion and gold medal winner in the special wushu event of the 2008 Beijing Olympics informed Wushu Federation of the Philippines (WFP)' Julian Camacho about his decision.

The 27-year old Wang cited his desire to spend more time with his family and take care of his own business as the primary reasons for his decision to walk away from the sport that has been good to him.

"Mag-retire na raw talaga siya," said Camacho of Wang. "I actually persuaded him three to four times to reconsider his decision and told him to represent the country in this year's SEA Games and next year's Asiad. He thought for it for a month, pero ganun pa rin ang desisyon niya."

Wang is a nanquan (southern fist) and taolo (form) expert. He won gold medals in the 9th World Wushu Championships in 1997, the 7th Asian wushu meet last year and both the SEA Games in Manila (2005) and Thailand (2007).

However, it was his gold medal romp in the special wushu tournament in the Beijing Games that served as the highlight of his RP team stint. His victory in the Chinese capital only made him the second Filipino athlete to win a gold medal in a special Olympic event. Arianne Cerdena was the first to do it when she emerged champion in bowling, which was held as a demonstration sport in the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

Camacho, however, remains optimistic that the absence of a gold medal potential like Wang in the RP team roster will only be temporary as a number of promising wushu bets in the association's national training pool are expected to take his place.