



POC Online

The official weekly online newsletter of the Philippine Olympic Committee

Excellence • Respect • Friendship

September 5, 2009 Vol. 1 No. 9

RP swimmers meet the Pope

WHEN in Rome, go and have an audience with the Pope.

The Philippine swimming team may have not won a medal in the recent FINA World Swimming Championships, but brought home with it an experience even more precious than gold itself.

The eight-man RP squad captained by Miguel Molina (men) and Marichi Gandionco (women) had the privilege of being blessed by Pope Benedict XVI during their stay in Rome for the July 18 to August 2 swim fest.

Philippine Amateur Swimming Association (PASA) president Mark Joseph said that while meeting the Pope was definitely the most anticipated activity for the Filipino delegation during their breaks from the tournament, there was a 99 percent probability of its not happening.

Then came the miracle.

Paolo Barelli, the president of the Italian Swimming Federation and a good friend of Joseph, arranged for a private visit with Pope Benedict XVI and invited 250 – the Filipinos included – out of the record 1,800 athletes seeing action in the World Championships, for a trip to the Pope's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo.

“What a way to bond together in Rome than to have an audience with the Pope,” said Joseph, who came in for the rare and blessed experience along with Molina, Gandionco, Erica Totten, James Walsh, Daniel Coakley, Charlie Walker, Bobby Walsh, Kendrick Uy and coach Jason Calanog.

Added the PASA president, “It was truly an amazing experience. It provided a ‘peak experience’ for the Philippine swimming team composed of Catholics, an Anglican and a Mormon to come together and offer our intentions for Philippine swimming and to be blessed by the Pope.”

The team capped its campaign in the meet by resetting four new RP women's, and three men's records.

Pope Benedict XVI meets select group of participants (RP swimmers included) from the FINA World Swimming Championships



RP Dragon Boat team surges

THE successful Philippine Dragon Boat team will next take its act to two more international tournaments.

Following a two gold, one silver campaign in the recent 9th World Dragon Boat Racing Championships in Prague, Czech Republic, the Filipino paddlers are now bound for the King's Cup this month in Thailand and then on to the SAVA Sprints International in October in Singapore.

Their performance in Prague already surpassed the team's previous showing of one gold, one silver and two bronze medals during the 2007 edition of the meet in Sydney, Australia.

"Our paddlers did their best and succeeded in making the Philippines bigger in the world of dragon boat," said head coach Nestor Ilagan.

The Filipinos retained their title in the 200-meter premier open category with a record breaking time of 40.022 seconds, beating perennial rival China (40.125).

The previous record set by the RP team two years ago stood at 41.91 seconds.

A second gold came in the Premier Mixed 200-meter event with a time of 43.507 seconds, besting China (45.951) and Germany (48.635).

The silver medal was courtesy of the men's 500-meter team as the Chinese had their payback against the Filipinos by winning the gold.

The RP team failed to make the medal podium in the Premier 2,000m and 1,000m events, settling for ninth and fifth places, respectively.

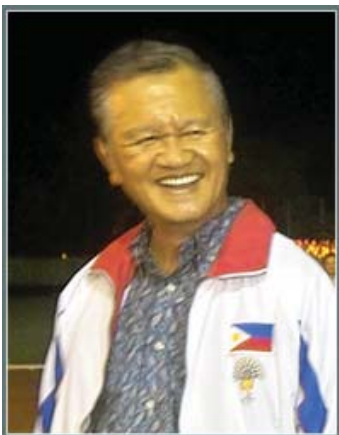
The ninth staging of the biennial meet featuring the top paddlers from around the world was held from August 26 to 31 at the Racice, Regatta Center, some 60 kilometers north of Prague.

SEA Games food: Taking no chances

BRING in the chefs.

Concerned about the spicy cuisine Laos has been known for, the Philippine delegation to the 25th Southeast Asian Games has decided to bring in its own set of cooks to take care of the Filipino athletes' daily meals in the December 9-18 meet.

The practice is nothing new.



Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Jose 'Peping' Cojuangco

During the 2007 edition of the biennial meet in Thailand, the RP contingent also brought in a group of chefs who catered to the needs of the athletes as Thai food is just as tasty and spicy as Laotian cuisine.

"How can our athletes perform well if they have not eaten properly?" asked Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Jose 'Peping' Cojuangco.

"This is the reason why we're hiring Filipino chefs again so our athletes could eat Filipino dishes just like what we did in Thailand in 2007," he added.

Even the POC chief himself had a hard time adjusting to food that features a lot of spicy stuff and ingredients.

"Ako mismo mahina ang tiyan ko sa mga ganyang pagkain. So just imagine kung `yung mga atleta na natin ang samain ang tiyan," he stressed.

But the former Tarlac congressman stressed that bringing in a group of cooks doesn't mean Filipinos are not appreciative of Laotian cuisine.

"We're just looking after the welfare of the athletes. Hindi naman lahat kasi ng mga yan sanay sa maaanghang na pagkain. So mas sigurado ka kung ang ibibigay mo sa kanila ay `yung lutong Pinoy mismo," said Cojuangco.

The POC president recalled how Filipino dishes were a big hit at the Athletes' Village during the 2007 SEA Games.

"Pati `yung mga ibang bansa nagustuhan din yung mga pagkain natin. Nakikipila na rin sila sa atin during the Thailand SEA Games. Minsan nga sila pa ang nauunang makakain," he said, recalling the experience with a big smile on his face.

Just like in Thailand, the RP contingent has already informed the Laotian SEA Games Organizing Committee of its desire to bring in Filipino chefs to man the Philippine kitchen.