

THE LOS BANOS (ALTERNATIVE) OLYMPICS 2000

by Paul David

On the fourth day of the Los Banos grand reunion the (Alternative) Olympics 2000 opened on the grounds of Bacacay, Bicol by the beach. (This was actually the original Olympics 2000, not the one in Sydney). The Olympic grounds were bursting with the bright colors worn by the Olympic delegates. A color represented each family branch. The Laicos wore festive yellow floral Hawaiian shirts; the Bolinases, blue; the Luis Los Banoses, red; and the Jack Los Banoses, orange. No sponsors (e.g. Adidas, Nike, Reebok) were allowed due to possible conflicts of interest (ala Michael Jordan and Reebok in the 1992 Olympics). The Laicos were represented by Tita Bingbing, Bambi, Rolly, Bingo, Jimboy, Mary Ann, Michael, Paul, Joy, Sarah and Ed. We had the fewest delegates but nevertheless had an undaunted fighting spirit.

The fairgrounds were on a wide grassy area surrounded by coconut trees by the beach. The air was fresh, the skies were blue, and it was a perfect day. The sports events were kicked off by the track and field relay. For this event, each team (family branch) had 15 players. Since all ages (10-40) and genders were participating in the Olympics, the events had to be altered slightly. From the starting line, the first player on each team would run about 30 feet on a track, around a pole, and back to the starting line. The second player would then hold onto the first player's waist and both would run the track again. And so on until all 15 players were running around the track with each one holding onto the waist of the player in front of him or her. The team that finished first with all 15 players connected, won. It was a hilarious event. Not all teams made it back to the finish line all connected.

The second event was a "caterpillar" event. This event was for younger and stronger players. Each team had 20 players holding onto each other by the waist to form a long "caterpillar," with a head (the front player) and a tail (the end player). The object of the game was for the head of one caterpillar to pull off the rival team's caterpillar tail (composed of the end player/s). When a part of the tail got disconnected, those tail players had to leave the game. After 10 minutes, the longest caterpillar won the game. It was an enjoyable event, but it got a little rough. Some players had their uniforms torn off. Some even started kicking the players from the other team to avoid being disconnected. It was quite an exhausting event but at the end everyone was laughing and had a good time.

The highlight of the Olympics was probably the water sports events on the beach. They were conducted in two separate groups—the boys and the girls. First was the freestyle swimming relay event. Balloon markers were placed about 50 meters out into the sea. Two players per team participated. The Laicos were represented by Jimboy and yours truly. Without any warm-up, the swimmers raced and gave it their all. The waters were shallow so the term "freestyle" was taken literally--there was a lot of running in the water, too, aside from swimming. The tides were moderate but still added resistance to the swimmers. The members of each family cheered loudly for their respective players. The race was very exciting. All the players made it back to shore without any misfortune. Jimboy and I finished third. The event was untimely because it was done right after lunch festivities. So after the race, all the players were extremely exhausted. One Bolinas cousin even

said that he thought he was going to die from exhaustion. As for me, I had a terrible headache after the hard swim.

The other water sport event was the kayak relay race. Each kayak accommodated two players. The race was two rounds around the balloon markers in the sea. There were four players per team. Our girls' team was represented by Bambi, Sarah, Joy, and Mary Ann. Our boys' team was represented by Mike, Ed, Rolly and yours truly. It was a fun race because for most players it was their first time to captain a kayak. After the water sport events, many of us took a break and enjoyed the cool waters of the beach under the hot sun.

Other Olympic events were the javelin-throwing contest, using a *walis tinting* (bundle of sticks tied together as a stiff yard broom) as the javelin; a shot put contest using a coconut as the shot put; an egg-breaking contest on a suspended canvas sheet, an egg race, a wet tissue-throwing contest (squatting on a pole on one foot), and others. It was just a fun-filled day.

I noticed that day that the Los Banos (Alternative) Olympics brought out the competitiveness of each family branch. It was as if each family branch protected their pride and greatness through the sport events. The Laico branch was handicapped that day because of a shortage of delegates. We may not have shown a gold-medal performance in the Los Banos (Alternative) Olympics 2000 but our fighting spirit was always present. We may not have shown our full strength that day, but deep inside, I know that the Laicos have always represented greatness and success in the Los Banos clan. The Laico pride lives on and I believe it will never tarnish.