



CARAGOLD

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Caraga Wrestling Team dominates with 13 Medals, secures Overall Title

By: CHARMANE MAE S. YU

Cebu City — The Caraga Athletic Delegation's wrestling team has once again proven its dominance by winning the overall championship for the third consecutive year at the 2024 Palarong Pambansa during the awarding ceremony on July 14, 2024, at SM Seaside City Wing. The team showcased an exceptional performance, earning a total of 13 medals: 7 gold, 3

Caraga athletes outperformed their rivals, maintaining their top position in wrestling. The team's impressive haul of gold medals includes 5 won by the girls and 2 by the boys, 2 silver medals won by the boys and 1 by a girl, and 2 bronze medals won by the boys and 1 by a girl. This success highlights the rigorous training and discipline of the wrestlers and their coaching staff.

"This victory is the result of the hard work and perseverance of our athletes," said Sir Jessie Arnigo, the team's coach. "We are incredibly proud of their achievements and the honor they have brought to the Caraga region," he added.

The wrestlers who contributed to the medal tally have been commended for their outstanding performances, demonstrating skill and sportsmanship throughout the tournament. The gold medalists include Monaliza D. Allego and Princess D. Allego of Bislig City Division; Regene G. Gonzales, Quinnie R. Bongado, JohnRick A. Abayon, John Kenneth L. Labial, and Jexes Bong B. Espuerta of Surigao del Sur Division; and Trixia Nicole Morilla of Surigao City Division.

Silver medals were earned by Surigao del Sur Division athletes Jexes Bong B. Espuerta, Shayne Carillo, and Leonilo Tecson. Bronze medals were secured by Surigao del Sur Division athletes Alex Jazz L. Mejia and Lance Matthew Abayon, and April S. Sumaylo of Surigao City Division.

Princess D. Allego, from Mabog National High School, was declared the Best Female Wrestler of the Tournament. Her outstanding performance set her apart from other wrestlers, making her a standout athlete in the tournament.

DepEd Caraga Region has commended all the wrestlers for their remarkable performances, demonstrating power and strength throughout the tournament. Their success has inspired young athletes in the region to pursue excellence in sports.

"Our athletes' achievements reflect their dedication and the exceptional efforts of their coaches and families," said Ma. Ines C. Asuncion, Regional Director of DepEd Caraga. "We are very proud of our wrestlers for bringing honor to the Caraga region and setting a high standard for others to follow."

The Caraga Athletic Delegation's consistent success in wrestling at the Palarong Pambansa 2019 in Davao City, 2023 in Marikina City and this year has strengthened their status as a powerhouse in the sport, setting a high standard for other regions to follow.



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3 CARAGA ATHLETES SHINE BRIGHT AT PALARONG PAMBANSA 2024

CaraGold's Rising Stars Defy Odds, Bring Home Special Awards

by Joveth T. Tampil

Three athletes from the Caraga region emerged as standout performers and claimed prestigious titles at the Palarong Pambansa 2024. This year's event, held in Cebu City, witnessed Caraga's finest rise to the occasion, earning accolades in the respective sporting events and leaving a lasting impression on spectators. These achievements not only highlight the talent within Caraga but also inspire a new generation of athletes.

Dominating the Mats

Aside from bagging the Gold Medal for Wrestling-Girls (52 kg), Princess D. Allego was hailed the Best Female Wrestler of the competition. This formidable wrestler from the Division of Bislig City has shown full display of her technical mastery and strategic acumen, dominating her weight class. Her journey to the top was marked by sheer determination and strength, as she won by superiority against the opponent from Eastern Visayas during the final round. "Dako ako pasalamat nga naka gold ko sa Palaro. It's the culmination of years of hard work and the support of my coaches and family," Allego said, beaming with pride. Allego's agility and tactical thinking set her apart, earning her this coveted title.



Striking the Gold

In the traditional Filipino martial art of Arnis, Airielle Ashley C. Lape from the Division of Butuan City was honored as the Most Valuable Player. Lape's dedication to the sport was evident in every match, where she demonstrated exceptional skill and sportsmanship. She nabbed 29.2 points in her finals game against all other 19 opponents from different regions. "Nalipay ko kaayo kay wala ko nag expect nga ma MVP diri sa Palaro. Being named MVP is a dream come true. Arnis is more than a sport to me; and I'm proud to represent Caraga on this stage," Lape shared, her eyes gleaming with determination.



Aiming VolleyGoals

The standout player from the Division of Siargao, Karl Melvin "Karla" E. Escobal in jersey 2, earned the title of Best Player of the Game in Volleyball Secondary Boys category. His impressive spikes and blocks on the court were crucial in leading his team to victory. Escobal's performance captivated the audience and secured his status as a rising star in Palarong Pambansa 2024 volleyball with a total of 9 spikes, 3 service ace, and 1 block. "Winning this award is surreal. Volleyball is a team effort, and I'm grateful to my teammates and coaches for their support. This is for all of us," Escobal stated, with a humble yet confident demeanor.



The success of Allego, Lape, and Escobal has sparked widespread celebration across Caraga. The region eagerly anticipates more triumphs in the future, confident that this is just the beginning of Caraga's rise in the national sports arena. These Palarong Pambansa stars' achievements reflect not only their individual talents but also the region's commitment to nurturing and supporting athletes. They have set a new benchmark for excellence and have inspired countless others to pursue their sporting dreams.



CARAGARDEN TAKES ROOT AT THE BILLETING QUARTERS

by Pedro A. Tecson

Butuan City, July 12, 2024 - The Department of Education (DepEd) Caraga Region through the initiative of Regional Director Maria Ines C. Asuncion, CESO IV, brought the Garden to Table Project to its billeting quarters for the Palarong Pambansa 2024, the Lahug Elementary School/Night High School, Cebu City.

The Garden to Table Project is based on a Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Education, represented by DepEd Secretary Sara Z. Duterte, and Go Negosyo founder Jose Concepcion, signed on November 30, 2023. Two schools in Caraga piloted this project: San Vicente National High School in Loreto, Agusan del Sur, and Maglambing Integrated School in Surigao del Sur. It was formally launched in Bayugan City on June 26, 2024, and rebranded as Go Negosyo: Pampaaralang Taniman ng mga Agribida (Garden-to-Table School Business Model). Fifteen schools have since been implementing the business model, generating more than P500,000 in revenue as of June 26, 2024.

However, due to the lack of agricultural land in the billeting area, the project shifted its focus to growing common table vegetables and properly managing kitchen waste using a compost pit to generate fertilizers for nourishing the vegetables and medicinal plants growing naturally within the campus. This initiative is called the Caragarden.

As an eco-friendly act, empty plastic water bottles donated by local partners and friends during the Welcome Night on July 7 for the Caraga athletes were upcycled and transformed into a stunning chandelier placed at the center of the Caragarden, promoting environmental sustainability.

No fewer than eight Schools Division Superintendents of Caraga launched this mini project by planting various vegetables on July 10. They were Maria Teresa S. Real (Bayugan City), Minerva T. Albis (Butuan City), Gregoria T. Su (Tandag City), Nelia S. Lomocso (RO), Jeanie L. Mativo (Agusn del Norte), Karen L. Galanida (Siargao Islands), Lorenzo O. Macasocol (Surigao del Sur), and Gemma A. De Paz (Bislig City). Some members of the Advance Party and other school personnel assisted in the activity.

The Caragarden program exemplifies the region's commitment to environmental stewardship and creative reuse, setting a shining example for others.



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SILVER

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BRONZE

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STRIKING A BALANCE

The continuous discussion about modernizing jeepneys over phasing out traditional ones has become a divisive subject in the Philippines. While the government's effort for modernization is well-intended, it raises various worries about how it may affect the lives of jeepney drivers and operators.

Modernization stems from the desire to improve public transportation. Modern jeepneys are equipped with more efficient engines, comply with environmental requirements, and have enhanced safety features. These developments complement global efforts to cut carbon emissions and encourage sustainable behaviors. Modernization also promises a more comfortable and reliable commute for the general public.

However, the transition to new jeepneys comes with a hefty expense. Traditional jeepney drivers and operators, many of whom are low-income, face the threat of losing their livelihoods. The expense of purchasing new units is expensive, and the financial help programs available are frequently insufficient. While the change will be advantageous in the long run, it has the potential to displace thousands of people that rely on traditional jeepneys for revenue.

Amid this discussion, the Caraga Athletic Delegation's usage of 47 traditional jeepneys during the Palarong Pambansa 2024 in Cebu City is a poignant example. These vehicles are not merely modes of transportation; they are symbols of Filipino culture and resilience. The delegation's decision to utilize traditional jeepneys in transporting 497 athletes, 104 coaches, 23 chaperons, and 337 committee members during the duration of the Palaro highlights their reliability and cultural significance, even in the face of modernization pressures.

It is imperative to recognize the contribution of jeepney drivers and operators to our daily lives. They provide an affordable and accessible means of transportation, especially in rural areas where modern

alternatives are scarce. Programs aimed at modernization should not neglect the welfare of these individuals. Instead, they should include comprehensive support systems, such as fair compensation, retraining programs, and subsidies to ease the transition.

The solution lies in finding a balance between modernization and the preservation of tradition. The government must implement modernization policies with empathy and understanding, ensuring that no one is left behind. Financial aid programs should be restructured to be more inclusive and substantial, offering real, practical assistance to those affected.

Furthermore, there should be room for the coexistence of both modern and traditional jeepneys. Areas where traditional jeepneys remain viable and essential should be identified and preserved. This approach not only honors our cultural heritage but also acknowledges the practical realities faced by many Filipinos.

The modernization of jeepneys is a necessary step towards a sustainable future, but it should not come at the expense of those who have long served as the backbone of our public transportation system. By supporting traditional jeepney drivers and operators through this transition, we can ensure that progress is inclusive and respectful of our cultural roots.

The Caraga Athletic Delegation's reliance on traditional jeepneys serves as a reminder that modernization and tradition can coexist, enriching our society. It is essential to establish a balance that recognizes both the necessity for progress and the value of tradition.



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THE ELEMENTS OF TRIUMPH

DepEd Caraga at Palarong Pambansa 2024

Triumph in sports transcends fleeting moments of victory; it is forged through relentless effort, unwavering support, and indomitable spirit. DepEd Caraga's dramatic rise from 15th to 12th place in the Palarong Pambansa 2024 is a testament to this. The relentless support from local government units, partners and stakeholders, devoted parents and guardians, dedicated teachers, and passionate friends has not just provided resources, but ignited a fire of determination in our athletes.

At the heart of this triumph lies a rigorous academic demand balanced with grueling training schedules. Guided by expert trainers and inspirational coaches, they have honed their skills and steeled their resolve, proving that true victory is born from relentless toil and unbreakable willpower.

Moreover, the athletes from each sports discipline have created a unique bond. They support, uplift, and encourage each other to execute their strategies on and out of the playing field. "We always follow what our coaches told us. Wala jud mi nila pasagdi," said Arielle Ashley C. Lape of Ampayon Central Elementary School, gold medalist and Most Valuable Player for Arnis Elementary Girls division, Individual Espada y Daga category.

Even those who did not stand atop the podium are winners in more ways than one. Competing at the national level takes a lot of courage and self-control. We have seen them show magnanimity in defeat, showing respect to their opponents, all the while silently bearing the pain of losing. They embodied the true spirit of sportsmanship. Learning from their defeats, they will emerge stronger and more determined in their next sporting adventures.

Ultimately, in determining the elements of triumph, we need to look beyond the medals and material rewards to the relentless effort, unwavering support, indomitable spirit, perseverance, teamwork, sportsmanship, courage, hunger for learning, and the will to win.

The triumph of DepEd Caraga at Palarong Pambansa 2024 calls for a celebration and thanksgiving: for the athletes because they gave their all despite the odds; for the supporters, because they made everything possible; and for God, because He is the source of everything.



CARAGA

ATHLETIC DELEGATION

More than a Physical Change: The Untold Story of the Caragold Advance Party

by Raymond Maligro
Head Teacher III/ Agusan Del Sur Division

In the early hours of June 18, 2024, the magical change began at the Lahug Elementary School and Lahug Night High School in Cebu City as the first batch of the Advance Party of DepEd Caraga, the intrepid decoration committee, embarked on a mission of transformation, determined to turn these venues into welcoming and functional billeting quarters for the Caraga athletic delegation, the CARAGOLD.



On June 25, 2024, the additional members of the advance party, composed of the regional chief, supervisors, school principals, and select teachers from various divisions of DepEd Caraga, arrived. They worked tirelessly from 6 a.m. until the wee hours of the following morning.

They paid attention to every detail, from the entrance gate to the sleeping quarters, from the storage areas to the kitchen, conference rooms, mess hall, restrooms, and surrounding gardens. The clean and green committee and the repair and maintenance committee, each headed by a chairperson, ensured every area was immaculate for the entire delegation. Not even the scarcity of budget, sleep deprivation, excruciating heat and untold discomfort, and the occasional hunger due to irregular mealtimes could prevent these highly skilled heroes from pouring their hearts and souls into preparing the billeting quarters.

It was no ordinary task; it was a labor of love, a commitment to ensuring that the Caragold athletes of Caragold would feel at home and empowered to perform at their best. As the day progressed, the decoration committee, driven by a shared vision and unshakeable resolve, completed its mission.

Despite the physical and psychological strain caused by their rigorous work schedule, these remarkable people demonstrated unmatched attitudes of selflessness, sacrifice, and service. Their commitment to their tasks testifies to their unwavering dedication to the success of the Palarong Pambansa 2024. No words can repay their dedication and fortitude. The Advance Party members were truly remarkable.

The venues now stood ready, exuding a welcoming warmth and readiness to host the champions of Caraga. Much of their other individual struggles and circumstances may remain untold, yet their elegant work and the mesmerizing results speak louder than any compliments or congratulations they could ever receive. Their remarkable story is a poignant reminder of the power of silent behind-the-scenes efforts.

The transformation of Lahug Elementary School and Lahug Night High School is more than just a physical change - because it manifests the beautiful souls of those who have the passion and the unbreakable will to serve, regardless of adverse circumstances. The humble success of the Advance Party at the billeting quarters has set the stage for Caragold's forthcoming triumphs, their journey already marked by an inspiring display of teamwork and excellence.

Checkmate dreams of a rising Chess Prodigy

by Ronel C. Abella, PhD
MT-I/ Trento National High School

This adage is true to this young chess player whose ultimate dream is to become a grand master. Gabriel O. Givero, a 9-year-old schoolboy from Trento, Agusan del Sur and an incoming Grade 5 pupil of Trento West Central Elementary SPED Center. In pursuing his goal, he started playing at a young age and learning the rules while most children were still learning basic arithmetic.

Gabriel learned the rudiments of chess and exhibited an early fascination with the sport at the age of two after discovering an online game on his computer. He then explored the countless variations within each opening and basic endgame theory from his mentor, Rockey P. Pagkaliwagan, and joined his first chess tournament at five years old. Like many prodigies, he proved that he was born a natural at the sport.

Since then, Gabriel has made his mark in more chess competitions, such as the National Youth and Schools Chess Championships 2022, where he emerged as champion in the under-9 Blitz category. Additionally, he participated in the National Age Group Chess Championships, earning a spot in the grand finals and placing sixth. In Batang Pinoy 2023, he reached the finals, winning a gold medal in the rapid team category and a silver medal in the rapid individual category. He also achieved victory at the Caraga Regional Athletic Meet, which qualified him for the Palarong Pambansa 2023, where he was awarded 5th place in the standard category.

At the USSIBA Division Athletic Meet 2024, Gabriel prevailed in the final game sets, winning gold in the blitz individual category, silver in the standard individual category, gold in the blitz team category, and bronze in the team standard category. It qualified him for the Caraga Regional Athletic Games 2024, where he triumphed with gold medals in the Individual Blitz Category, Team Blitz Category, and Team Standard Category. He also won a silver medal in the Individual Standard Category, qualifying him for the Palarong Pambansa 2024, which will be held on July 9-16, 2024, in Cebu City, Philippines, with his mother, Mrs. Rachel Givero, as his coach.

Recently, Gabriel achieved remarkable feats by sweeping the Under-12 boys division (standard, rapid, and blitz) in the National Age Group Chess Eliminations in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, on June 5 and the National Age Group Chess Championships grand finals in Dapitan City, Zamboanga del Norte, from June 22 to 30.

Becoming a young chess prodigy is not without its challenges. The demanding training schedules often require sacrifices in other areas of life, including school and social activities. It can be difficult for a young chess prodigy to juggle rigorous chess training with academic commitments. Yet Gabriel demonstrates resilience and a single-minded pursuit of excellence. He has consistently been the top performer in his class from 1st grade to 4th grade and displayed an inherent curiosity and passion for astronomy, the mysteries of the cosmos, and the wonders of the universe. Tailored to his interests and aspirations, Gabriel hopes to become a well-known astronaut and play chess in outer space.

In the intricate game of chess, parents serve as invaluable guides, shaping the journey of their young players. Gabriel's parents, Mrs. Rachel Givero, a DepEd Secondary School Teacher, and Mr. Carlito Givero, an entrepreneur, actively participate in his chess journey by providing encouragement, resources, emotional support, and fostering a positive mindset. As parents, they fortify the foundation for the success of their only child both on and off the chessboard.

As this young chess prodigy continues to make waves in local and national tournaments, the chess community eagerly anticipates his next moves. His story highlights the evolving nature of the game and inspires a new generation of young chess enthusiasts to dream big, work hard, and checkmate their way to success, even on the global chessboard.

"Checkmate is not just a move, it's a statement of victory."



Caraga sweeps Defending champs with 2-1 Victory

by Charmane Mae S. Yu

July 12, 2024- In a nerve-wracking elimination game at the Palarong Pambansa 2024, held at the University of San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu City, the Caraga Region's secondary boys' volleyball team stunned the defending champions, Region 3 (Central Luzon), with a thrilling victory. Caraga secured their win in three sets (21-25, 25-17, 25-21).

Region 3, the reigning champions from the 2023 Palarong Pambansa, started strong by taking the first set 25-21. Caraga answered back with a commanding performance in the second set, dominating with a 25-17 win. The intensity peaked in the third set, where a change of court occurred with Region 3 leading 13-9. However, Caraga surged ahead, ultimately clinching the final set 25-21.

Player number 2, Karl Melvin E. Escobal, was the standout Player of the Game. Escobal's impressive stats included 9 attacks, 3 service aces, and 1 block, contributing a total of 13 points. The game commentator praised Escobal for being a "symbol of inclusivity and diversity," highlighting his remarkable contribution to Caraga's triumph.

Caraga's coach, Rodel Ramos Jr, shared his insights on the game, saying, "Our team showed incredible resilience and determination. We knew we had to stay focused and trust in our training. The boys executed our game plan perfectly, especially in the crucial moments of the third set."

This victory not only swept the champions but also marked a significant achievement for Caraga in the highly competitive Palarong Pambansa 2024.

“Nurturing Futures: DepEd Caraga’s Feeding Initiative with Lahug Community”

By: Edmund C. Mendoza, EPS-QAD



In a heartwarming display of community collaboration, the Department of Education Caraga regional office joined Barangay Lahug and Lahug Elementary School to host a Feeding Program. This event, held on July 11, 2024, was more than just a meal; it was a step towards a healthier future for the 60 learners from the National Learning Camp.

The program unfolded at the welcoming grounds of Camputhaw Elementary School, nestled in Purok 4 of Kamputhaw, Cebu City. It was a day marked by the presence of esteemed guests such as DepEd Caraga Regional Director Maria Ines C. Asuncion, alongside selected Schools Division Superintendents. Adding to the roster of educational leaders were Dr. Jumer C. Carlon, OIC-Chief of ESSD, and Dr. Lily Ann S. Go, the dedicated School Principal of Lahug Elementary School, accompanied by select barangay Lahug personnel.

The Feeding Program transcended beyond mere sustenance, offering meals crafted meticulously to align with the Pinggang Pinoy nutritional standards. This initiative filled the stomach and fueled minds, instilling the importance of balanced diets and healthy eating habits among the children.

As the day concluded, the golden partnership between DepEd Caraga, Barangay Lahug, and Lahug Elementary School shone as a beacon of hope, setting a precedent for sustainable social responsibility and community engagement. This Feeding Program is a testament that unity is vital in nurturing the well-being and education of our youth.

Vision That Transcends Sight

Defying Limits. Redefining Boundaries. Embracing Possibilities

By: JOVITH T. TAMPIL

In the heart of the Palarong Pambansa, amidst the thunderous cheers and dazzling displays of athleticism, a unique group of contenders wins the heart of the spectators. They have captured the imagination and admiration of everyone present—athletes with visual impairments who prove that true vision goes far beyond what the eyes can see.

These athletes have faced challenges that many of us can only imagine. Yet, their stories are not defined by their limitations but by their relentless pursuit of excellence. Competing in sporting events, they exhibit extraordinary determination, showcasing those physical impairments do not hinder one's ability to achieve greatness.

The inclusion of visually impaired athletes in Palarong Pambansa is more than just a nod to the advocacy of inclusivity; it is a redefinition of boundaries. These Paragames athletes challenge preconceived notions about disability and capability. Their presence on the field is a powerful reminder that boundaries are often self-imposed, and breaking them requires not just physical strength, but mental fortitude and a supportive community.

Among these inspiring competitors is Christian Dil Escarilas, a 22-year-old track and field Para athlete from the Division of Agusan del Norte. Born with a visual impairment, he has faced numerous challenges throughout his life. From navigating everyday tasks to overcoming societal prejudices, Christian's path has been fraught with obstacles. However, his passion for sports, particularly running, provided him with a sanctuary and a purpose. "Running gives me a sense of freedom," Christian explains. "On the track, I feel unstoppable, like I can conquer anything."

His athletic journey began at his local school, where his talent quickly caught the attention of his coaches. With their support and the ceaseless

encouragement of his family, he embarked on a rigorous training regimen. His preparation included not only physical conditioning but also specialized techniques to accommodate his visual impairment. "Christian's dedication is unparalleled," says Coach Maria Louisa Ejada, his mentor. "He never lets his disability define him. Instead, he uses it as fuel to push harder and reach further." Christian's journey is a testament to resilience.

His impressive achievement of a 4-peat gold streak in Palarong Pambansa is a result of relentless training and dedication. Guided by his coach and supported by his family, he has trained tirelessly to refine his skills. His participation in the 100-meter dash at Palarong Pambansa is not just a race; it is a statement of courage and an embodiment of the event's theme ---- championing inclusivity.

As the Palarong Pambansa continues, the legacy of these visually impaired athletes will endure, inspiring future generations to defy limits, redefine boundaries, and embrace every possibility. Their vision, one that transcends sight, is a powerful testament to the human spirit's ability to overcome adversity and achieve greatness.

In celebrating their achievements, we are reminded by the likes of Christian that true vision is not about what we see, but about how we perceive the world and our place within it. The Para athletes of Palarong Pambansa have shown us that with determination, support, and belief in oneself, we can all achieve extraordinary things.



CHRISTIAN DIL ESCARILAS
Track and Field Athlete
GOLD MEDALIST

Airielle Ashley C. Lape secures first gold medal for Caraga

By: HONNEY GRACE BUYAN

Cebu City, Philippines – Airielle Ashley C. Lape from Butuan City has made her mark at the Palarong Pambansa 2024 by securing the first gold medal for Caraga in the Individual Likha Anyo Espada y Daga category.

Competing in the elementary girls' division, Lape demonstrated exceptional skill and mastery in Arnis, a traditional Filipino martial art. Her performance impressed both judges and spectators, earning her the top spot on the podium. Lape's training under the guidance of coaches Eldridge Troy D. Go and Erwin D. Hora from Ampayon Central Elementary School proved instrumental in her victory.

The competition was fierce, drawing talented athletes from across the country. Lape emerged victorious, surpassing Jasmine Sophia J. Uy from Initao Central School of Region X-Northern Mindanao, who took home the silver medal, and Ezrañ Micah V. Parquez from Bagong Pag-Asa Elementary School of Region IVA-Calabarzon, who claimed the bronze.

This remarkable achievement not only highlights Lape's dedication and hard work but also brings immense pride to her school and community. The gold medal win underscores the effectiveness of her coaching team and her commitment to excellence in Arnis.

As the Palarong Pambansa 2024 progresses, the Caraga region is buoyed by Lape's groundbreaking victory, anticipating further successes from its athletes.



Photo Courtesy: STIX Arnis

BEYOND THE FINISH LINE

by Honey Grace Buyan

As the curtain falls on this year's Palarong Pambansa held in Cebu, we bask in the glow of an unforgettable celebration of athletic expertise and regional pride. The athletes of the Caraga Region competed with remarkable tenacity, bringing immense pride to their homeland and etching their names into history. Each stride, leap, and throw from our Caraga athletes testified to their unyielding commitment and tireless efforts.

From dawn's first light touching the fields and tracks to the twilight hours when cheers faded into the night, our athletes demonstrated remarkable persistence and sportsmanship. Their journey to Cebu was not merely a physical voyage but a testament to countless hours of rigorous training, sustained discipline, and an indomitable spirit. Sweat dripped from their brows, muscles ached from exertion, and hearts beat with anticipation, culminating in extraordinary performances.

Cebu, with its picturesque landscapes and warm, welcoming people, provided an inspiring and breathtaking backdrop. The bustling city streets, serene coastal vistas, and rich cultural tapestry made this Palarong Pambansa an event to remember. For our Caraga athletes, every moment spent here has been significant. The camaraderie shared with teammates, friendships forged with competitors from other regions, and lessons learned both on and off the field have woven a tapestry of memories cherished for a lifetime. The elation of victory, the lessons of defeat, and the support of a community that cheered them on with unshakable fervor contributed to a transformative experience. These memories are not merely records of achievements but testaments to the power of unity and the human spirit.

To our Caraga athletes, your performance at the Palarong Pambansa has been a source of immense pride and joy. You have carried the banner of our region high, showcasing not only your athletic skills but also the values of hard work, effort, and strength. Your achievements have brought honor to Caraga, and for that, we extend our deepest gratitude. Thank you for being the ambassadors of our region and for demonstrating that Caraga is home to some of the finest athletes in the country. Your sacrifices, hard work, and unhesitating commitment to excellence have inspired us all and set a standard that will motivate future generations to strive for greatness.

As we bid farewell to this year's Palarong Pambansa, we look forward with hope and anticipation to the future. The legacy you have created here in Cebu will continue to inspire and uplift us. Let this be just the beginning of many more triumphs to come. To the people of Cebu, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your hospitality and for creating an environment that nurtured both competition and camaraderie. You have made this event truly special for every participant.

As the echoes of the Palarong Pambansa begin to fade, the memories and achievements of our Caraga athletes will remain. Thank you for making this journey one that will be remembered for generations. Here's to the spirit of Caraga, the pride of our region, and the champions who have made us all proud.



TWINS ON A MISSION

by Honey Grace Buyan

Against all odds, two young prodigies from Ampayon Central Elementary School have made an indelible mark in the world of sports. Xyriel Jay and Xyriel Dave Badbad, both 12 years old and in Grade 6, have etched their names in the annals of sports history. Along with their teammate, Daryl A. Arnopia, these extraordinary twins clinched a bronze medal in the Team (Sync) Likha Anyo Espada y Daga event at the Palarong Pambansa 2024 in Cebu City.

A Journey of Resilience

Their journey is a testament to resilience and perseverance. At the tender age of two, their mother, Edna T. Badbad, ventured abroad as an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW), leaving them under the nurturing care of their aunt, Mary Ann T. Badbad. Among their six siblings, Xyriel Jay and Xyriel Dave stand out as the youngest and the only athletes, embarking on their Arnis journey just a few months ago. Initially unfamiliar with the sport, their talent was discovered during a recruitment and selection process led by Coach Eldridge Troy D. Go, a teacher at Ampayon Central Elementary School.

Rigorous Training Regimen

Their training routine showcases their steadfast commitment. Rising before dawn, they begin their day with a refreshing shower, followed by a rigorous jogging session at 4 AM. Their mornings are filled with drills to build endurance and stamina. Despite facing challenges such as injuries and fatigue, their spirits remain unyielding. "We also felt the fatigue," the twins share, highlighting their relentless hard work. "Our day starts at 4 and goes until 7 in the morning, resumes from 9 to noon, and continues from 2 to 5 in the afternoon."

Support from Family and Community

Their journey has been bolstered by untiring encouragement from their family and school. Despite being miles away, their mother provides a constant source of motivation and financial support. The school has also been instrumental, offering incentives and allowances, while the Local Government Unit (LGU) has generously provided uniforms and other necessities.

Emotions and Experiences as First-Timers

As first-timers in the Palarong Pambansa, the twins experienced a whirlwind of emotions. "We were very nervous during the competition because it lasted from a minimum of 1 minute to a maximum of 2," they recall. "But we were very happy to win a bronze medal as first-timers. Even though it's just a bronze, it means a lot to us."

