

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SWIMMING IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Filipinos needed motivation to appreciate swimming as a competitive sport. This is due to the fact that their ancestors were sea-faring people owing to the more than 7,100 islands which compose this country. The American military men introduced swimming as a comparative sport in the country.

Through the pioneering efforts of YMCA leaders working among the American Military forces, the rudiments of the sports were impressed upon the Filipinos who saw in 1907 the construction of the first swimming pool in the country at Fort McKinley YMCA.

The holding of the first dual swimming meet between Manila YMCA and the Fort McKinley YMCA in 1910 marked the formal inception in the Philippines of swimming as a competitive sports. This initial competition among members of the defunct Philippine Scouts of the US Army in the Philippines with the motive power of the YMCA which was later joined by the American Columbian Club in the effort, kindled Filipino interest in the sport.

In 1911, Filipinos watched avidly from the sidelines as the first swimming championship meet was held at the American Columbian Club swimming pool with competing American team from the Manila YMCA, the American Columbian Club, and the USS Saratoga.

In the following year (1912), the Filipinos participated in the second championship meet. Of the 42 individual entries, the late Condrado Benitez emerged as the most outstanding Filipino swimmer.

During the Far Eastern Games held at Manila in 1913, the Philippine Team composed of Condrado Benitez, J. del Pan, C. Aiville and L. Cristobal won the championship against China and Japan.

The following decade, educational institutions, the first of which was the University of the Philippines, followed later on by the Philippines Women's University, trained swimmers.

In 1924, Teofilo Yldefonso, a Philippine Scout soldier of the US Army won recognition as the greatest Filipino swimmer for his feats in national championship meets, the Far East and Olympic Games. Muslims, Filipinos from Sulu also made names in national championship competition. Great muslim swimmers before World War II were Jikirum Adjalludin, Arasad Alpad, Tuburan, Angkang Nakaria and Asdai Tahil.

The succeeding years up to 1951 saw the staging of the sixth Formosa - Philippines Biennial-Swimming championship meets, the 9th and 10th Far Eastern Games and the series of Manila-Hongkong Interport Swimming meets wherein Filipino men and women swimmers showed outstanding performance. They were Sotero Alcantara, Rene Amabuyok, Edilberto Bonus, Jacinto Cayco, Nulsali Maddin, Mahamad Mala, Eugenio Palileo, Artemio Salamat, Serafin Villanueva,

Artemio Villavieja, Lourdes Alba, Angela Fermin, Norma Guerrero, Andres Ofilada, Ana Labayan, Encarnacion Partilo and Erudito Vito.

Women swimmers competed in the 1931 National Women's Swimming Championship meet at the Rizal Memorial Pool where the University of the Philippines won. The PWU Women's team won the championship in 1934. Women's participation in swimming competitions were held yearly since then.

Swimming competitions were suspended during the Japanese occupation. It was only in 1948 when swimming competitions were resumed. The first Asian games held in New Delhi in 1951 gave the Filipino swimmers the opportunity to participate once again in international competition. Among the swimmers were Artemio Salamat, Jacinto Cayco and Nurhatab Rajab.

The second Asian games was held in Manila in 1954. Our swimmers who earned honors for our country were Parson Nabiula, Amado Jimenez, Robert Cullins, Haydee Coloso, Norma Yldefonso, Sandra Von Geise, Lolita Ramirez, Corazon Cullen, Bana Sailani, Agapito Lozada, Raul Badulis and Jacinto Cayco. The participants to the third Asian Games in Tokyo in 1958 brought honors to the country. They were Bana Sailani, Walter Brown, Rodolfo Agustin, Lorenzo Cortez, Haydee Coloso, Gertrudes Lozada, Sylvia Von Geise, Victoria Cagayat, and Jocelyn Von Geise.

The fourth Asian Games at Jakarta, Indonesia in 1962 marked another significant victory for the Filipino swimmers. They placed second. The standouts were Haydee Espino, Gertrudes Lozada, Sampang Hassan, Rolando Landrito and Annurhussin Hamsain.

Participation of Filipino swimmers continued. In 1962, the Federation System under Republic Act 3135 was inaugurated.

PASA launched a relatively-well-rounded and systematic program of development for the purpose of reinforcing the Philippines against the challenges from other countries. The first age group overseas program was the Philippines-Hongkong YMCA which started in 1968. From then on, Hongkong and Philippines is hosting alternately for this annual swim meet. This program continued on until 1978.

¹ In 1970, the First Asian Age Group was hosted by Singapore . This is the first age group swimming team sent by the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association. Powerhouse Japan and China were included in this yearly swim event. There were 16 age groupers who represented the country. Philippines came in second behind host Singapore which had more swimmers than any of the participating teams. The mere fact that we beat Japan and China at the time was an enormous feat for the team. The asian age group went on until 1976. In 1977 the Southeast Asian (SEA) Age Group was born, hosted by Singapore , and later on, the ASEAN.

With the leadership of Eduardo Ledesma and former national standouts like , Ral Rosario and Eric Buhain, PASA attained remarkable progress in the development of swimming. Such projects as Regular Age Group Competitions, Coach to Coach Program, Annual Summer

¹ Contributed by Grace Luna

Development Program, Olympic Development Swimming Program, Community Pools Construction Program, Milo Learn to Swim Program and National Swimming Grand Prix were launched.

Today, a fresh start in Philippine Swimming is now unfolding with the creation of Aquatics Sports Association of the Philippines (ASAP). ASAP is a non-stock, non-profit organization registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission. As stated in its Articles of Incorporation, ASAP aims *"to promote swimming and other aquatic sports throughout the country; and to recruit, train and develop world-class athletes to represent our country in various international competitions."* ASAP is headed by Atty. Luz Arzaga-Mendoza as president, with Atty. Jane Ong as vice-president; Susan Papa, secretary; Beth Mascardo of synchronized swimming, treasurer; Augusto Bonilla and Cesar Espino, trustees.

The swimming association is also strengthening its membership base and renewing its campaign for both individuals and group to unite under the ASAP banner. It is now working on the education and certification of all local swim coaches and instructors with the end in view of upgrading the quality of coaching in the Philippines. This will involve a series of level of certification for those concerned in the different aspect of coaching.

At present, the ASAP leadership is committed to a policy of good governance and will be transparent in all its affairs, hiding nothing and simply working towards the betterment of swimming in the country.