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JUN | 17 | 2022

NMSA's Jerry Tan: Let the Games begin!

By **TERI FLORES**
CORRESPONDENT

The next nine days marks another milestone for the CNMI, as it plays host to the Pacific Mini Games from June 17 to June 25, 2022.

The Pacific Mini Games 2022 by far is the most ambitious sporting event that the CNMI has hosted, with more than 1,000 off-island athletes, officials, and guests, and thousands of the island's residents expected to attend the events that will be held on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

But the task of hosting the event did not come easy. The widespread devastation brought by super typhoons Soudelor and Yutu in 2015 and 2018, the global pandemic, and funding woes were more than enough challenges for the CNMI to consider at one point

withdrawing from hosting the Games. But true to the Pacific Mini Games' theme, the CNMI has risen up to the challenge.

For Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan, hosting this event is not just about extending the warm hospitality of which the islands and its people

supported it and so we said, let's do this," said Tan.

"Everyone in the CNMI, from our government officials to our business leaders, both in the the private and public sectors and, most importantly, our community all pooled their resources together to make the Pacific Mini Games a reality. It

opening of the Mini Games, you can't help but notice how excited everyone is to welcome our visitors. Aside from the generosity of our business community who have made substantial financial contributions, it is our community and their willingness to volunteer that will make this event a truly

Everyone in the CNMI...pooled their resources together to make the Pacific Mini Games a reality. It just goes to show that teamwork and the spirit of unity and Marianas pride is alive and well on our islands.

are known for, nor is it about rolling out the red carpet with guests leaving happy and satisfied with their experience. For Tan, the road to hosting this momentous event is a story of the islands and its people's resilience.

"The CNMI faced several challenges that made us re-think about hosting this event. But, our sporting community had a plan and our government

just goes to show that teamwork and the spirit of unity and Marianas pride is alive and well on our islands," Tan added.

Local funding for infrastructure had been scarce since the CNMI decided to go on recovery mode after the back-to-back super typhoons. But thanks to government grants and despite the delays, all have come together at the very last minute. The Oleai Sports Complex' track oval has been resurfaced, the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium has been repaired and is now air-conditioned, while the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field and American Memorial Part tennis courts got their long-overdue facelifts. Even the Marianas High School has undergone improvement works for the weightlifting competition. The Oleai oval will host athletics and the opening ceremony, the Ada Gym will have the badminton competition. Other sports that will be featured in this year's Games are baseball, beach volleyball, golf, tennis, triathlon, and va'a.

"Our government has invested a lot on these projects and the return is almost immediate. The impact alone on CNMI tourism is immense since we are hosting thousands of people who will need food, lodging and transportation among others," he said.

With the slew of visitors expected on the islands for the nine-day Games, spending will definitely be at an all-time high. Island businesses have been beefing up their inventories to ensure they have ample goods available, restaurants have special discounts for guests and local residents alike while shelves of local souvenirs have been stacked full in the various retail stores and souvenir shops on the islands.

"As we move closer to the

memorable one," Tan said.

NMI Athletes

Tan is confident that CNMI athletes will perform well during the Games despite missing training during the lockdowns.

"Everyone suffered from this pandemic and the impact on athletes were definitely striking. It came to a point where they were training individually in order to remain in shape and be ready for competition when sporting events such as this will again be a part of community activities. I have full confidence that the CNMI contingent's hard work will pay off and they will reap their rewards of their hard work," Tan said.

Together We Can

With preparation for the Games entering its final moments, Tan has these words of gratitude to all who have invested and believed that the Commonwealth has what it takes to put its game face out for the world to see.

"Overall, a ton of gratitude is due to everyone involved in hosting this year's Games. We all have given more than what is expected of us. A big 'thank you' to the secretariat of the Pacific Mini Games for working with us to make sure we stayed on course. A big kudos as well to the Olympic committees of the different participating countries for their seal of approval and endorsement that the Commonwealth is ready for this moment," Tan said.

"As we move forward to regain a semblance of our old lives back again, it's now time to allow ourselves to experience and again retell stories of triumph, of celebrations, of togetherness. This is what the Pacific Mini Games is to the NMI. This is what we hope our visitors will take home with them and remember," said Tan.

...So, let the Games begin!



Victory is in having done your best.
If you've done your best, you've won.

— Billy Bowerman

Best of luck Team NMI!



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- Robert H. Jones
Chairman and CEO

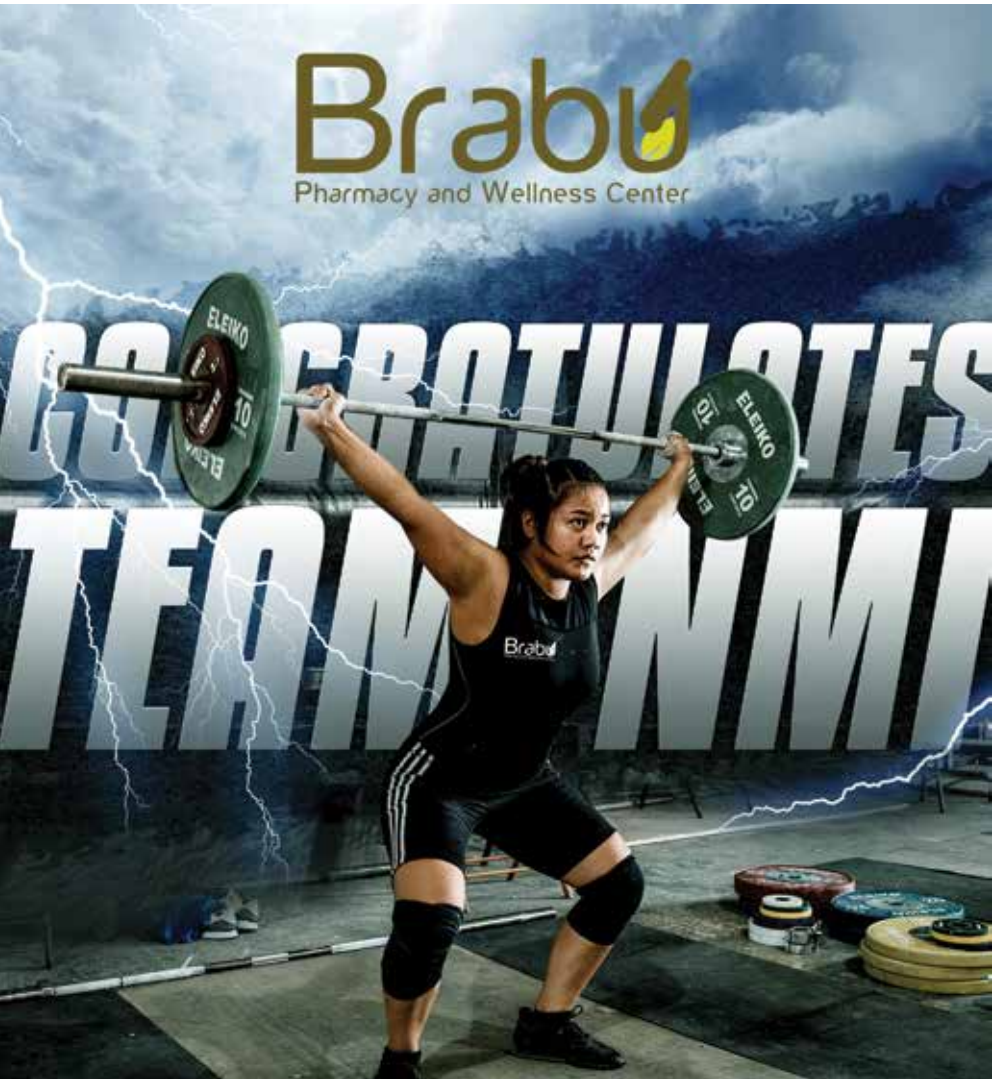


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CHEF DE MISSION BOB COLDEEN

A celebration of sports and the CNMI community

By TERI FLORES
CORRESPONDENT

A story of celebration, of the coming together not just of neighbors of Pacific Island nations but, most importantly, of the Northern Mariana Islands as its own community: This is the legacy that the Pacific Mini Games 2022 will leave to those who will take part in this historic sporting event. For the CNMI's Chef de Mission Bob Coldeen, this is what this whole nine days of celebration is all about.

With 7,000 nightly sports-casts under his belt spread over 28 years of being the CNMI's preeminent sports-caster, Coldeen brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience he shares with the islands' sporting community.

The CNMI is not new to hosting big sporting events, with the 1990 and 2006 Micronesian Games being held on Saipan and attended by delegates from 10 countries within the Western Pacific region. What makes hosting this Mini Games different were the setbacks that the CNMI had to overcome to get to this point, beginning with



the devastation of Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018, the COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2020, and cut-backs in funding. These challenges were enough to make the CNMI reconsider hosting the event.

Looking back on his previous experience helping with the Micronesian Games, Coldeen said the impact of these Mini Games reaches a wide spectrum of the CNMI community—from the positive effects it will have on the local tourism industry to boosting the depressed economy to uplifting the deflated spirit of a disheartened community.

In addition, compared to other sporting events, this Mini Games has much more extensive contributions to the local business sector, Coldeen said. "This is generating more resources by far. Back in 1990, we were highly dependent on the government to shoulder the costs but what we see now is the business sector stepping up to the plate, generously giving financial and in-kind support. Expense-wise, this event dwarfs previous games. It is through the generosity of our local businesses that has helped us shoulder the costs of this Mini Games," Coldeen explained.

He considers the level of corporate sponsorship alone for this event to be unparalleled. Another plus factor is the fast-tracked rehabilitation of infrastructure damaged by the typhoon. "Looking at it in the long term, hosting the Mini Games is helping us get back on our feet. What usually takes three years to build was rebuilt in three months. That is very impressive," said Coldeen.

He considers the timing of this event as an opportune moment for everyone. The world is coming out of a two-year pandemic while the CNMI, on the other hand, will be getting a much needed boost in spirit to overcome the setbacks of the past four years.

"This is a psychological lift for all of us. It has not been a good couple of

years for us. As a sports reporter, I saw everything just ground to a halt due to so much damage but what this Mini Games has allowed us to do is to get back up to speed and get everybody excited about playing again. What we are seeing are all our athletes, with all the trials and negativity, get ready for these games and really pushing it," Coldeen said.

The excitement brought by the Mini Games that is usually just confined to athletes and the sporting community has now spread like wildfire, bringing in the entire island community to take pride in what they will showcase at the events.

The road to making the 2022 Pacific Mini Games a successful and memorable event was fraught with difficulties but Coldeen had no doubt that the Northern Marianas had what it takes to stage the Games. "My experience with the community in 1990 and 2006 and also in other meets is that our athletes and our sporting community, we all eventually come together. I have complete confidence in our ability to do this. I know everyone will come out of this event with a very good experience," he said.

For this veteran sports-caster who has written countless stories of sweet triumphs and agonizing defeats, this Mini Games is also a story about the resilience of the Chamorro people. "The theme 'Rise to the Challenge'... is what it really is. We are literally rising up, building up from the ground. Reconstruction was in full swing, just take a look at the different venues. As far as what I have seen, it's all coming together even if it seems it's all last-minute," he added.

For Coldeen, sports is a reason to celebrate, to enjoy triumphs, and all the other things that come with athletics. As he leads the host island's contingent to the Mini Games, Coldeen hopes to see everyone spreading goodwill, camaraderie, and sportsmanship, with everyone enjoying themselves and leaving with a good feeling about their experience in the CNMI.

Coldeen leaves this message to everyone who will be at the Mini Games: "I would like to thank everybody for coming—sports fans and non-sports fans—just everyone who is using these Games as a means to lift the Commonwealth community up in so many ways—economically, emotionally. Most importantly, just go and have fun!"

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TEAM NMI

ATHLETICS



Andrew, Lyle Pedro



Bala, Zyus



Borja, Anthony



Borja, Dennis



Cabrera, Tiana



Camacho, Alexander



Chavez, Kaithlyn



Cruz, Casey Cassandra



Epity, Cheraline



Mancao, Michael



Mapeso, Mark



McDonald III, Charles Henry



Myers, Denise



Ogumoro, Richard



Pharmin, Orrin Joseph



Pixley, Rex Adam



Quitugua, Maria



Rangamar, Kina



Rangamar, Linmwar



Rodgers III, Michael



Rodgers, Theodore Cleveland



Sapong, Zarinah



Tan, Nathania



Veloria, Sildrey



Epity, Eptes (Coach)



Olopai, Ronald (Coach)



Shumburger, David Allen (Coach)



Snyder, Ronald Edward (Coach)

BADMINTON

WOMEN'S



Cardino, Jeanelyn



Fernandez, Windy



Panglinan, Janelle



Savellano, Jenine Gail



Serrano, Michaela



Serrano, Mikamaika

OFFICIALS



Digno, James (Coach)



Quidato, Paulo (Asst. Coach)

MEN'S



Galvez, Andreau



Guerrero, Nathan



Macario, Daniel



Macario, Ezekiel



Manuel, Leonard



Panglinan, Jordan



Surima, Patricia (Asst. Coach)



Tolentino, Martin (Manager)

BASEBALL



Alepuyo, Patrick John



Babauta Jr., Joaquin Jacob



Cabrera, Dennis



Cabrera, Jerald Jerome



Camacho, Diego Joaquin



Iguel, Lamarc



Iguel, Juan



Jones Jr., Benjamin



Jones, Darion David



Jones, Joshua John



Kalpal, Byron



Lizama, Aldebert Delos Santos



Lizama, Keoni



Nakamura, Franko



Omar, Tyrone



Sablan, John Peter Camacho



Saralu, Nekki



Sebaklim, Lorenzo



Tenorio, Anthony



Yamada, Shane

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

WOMEN'S



Lizama, Charnessa Josie



Winkfield, Kathleen

OFFICIAL



Mister, Tyce (Manager)

MEN'S



Johnson, Andrew Scott



Mister, Logan

GOLF

WOMEN'S



Jin, Zhimin



Oh, Jeong Hyun



Rohringer, Rosalina



Torres, Jeanet

OFFICIALS

MEN'S



Atallg, Jessie



Atallg, Joshua



Li, Zhi Yun



Santos, Franco

TENNIS

WOMEN'S



Chung, Serin



Elliot, Hye Jin Irene



Heras, Maria Isabel



Raulerson, Asia

OFFICIALS



Race, Jeff
(Coach)

MEN'S



Cruz, Bobby James



Ramsey, Collin Nyle



Schorr, Robert
Hanrey



Sinclair, Collin



Cruz, Bobby James
(Asst. Coach)

VA'A

MEN'S



Andrew, Joshua



Asaivao, Tim



Calma, Carter



Camacho, Rodney



Fleming, Mike



Grow, William



Hibus, Maverick



Kabriel, Kelson



Lee, James



Olopal, Benusto



Quan, Jose



Salas, Richard



Taitano, Jovano



Tarkong, Jason

WOMEN'S



Aldan, Victoria Rita



Borja, Teresa Celine



Calderwood, Heather



Calvo, Danica
Leya H.



Concepcion, Rica Branielle



Dasalla, Erryne



Dubrall, Jenisha Jo



Duenas, Maylah
Lorane



Libunao, Gerlyn Rose



Oronigo, Vinalynn Arisa



Rasa, Kaya Rain



Sablan, Elaine



Sablan, Sharleen Janet



Tenorio, Elizabeth Rose

OFFICIALS



Andrew, Justin
(Coach)



Andrew, Kaleo Hope
(Manager)



Cabrera, Elaine Kelly
(Manager)

TRIATHLON

WOMEN'S



Brook, Heather Ann



Ruzala, Kathy



Spaeth, Robyn
Michelle

OFFICIALS



Ferris, Michael
(Coach)



Mister, Dylan Michael
(Asst. Coach)

MEN'S



Aleksenko, Isaiah Roger



Villacruss, Geuel Christian



Wania, Leo Atalig



Dlyco, Jeffrey
(Manager)

WEIGHTLIFTING

WOMEN'S



Ball, Pipit



Ichiao, Riella Ann



Manuel, Cheyanne



Labausa, Antonette
Rosemarie

MEN'S



Apelo Jr., Leonardo



Aquino, Emmanuel



Barnhouse Jr.,
David Allen



Collisao, Joey



Cristobal, Leowell



Limes, Jason John



Meneses, Joshua



San Nicolas, Angel



Santos, Raymond



Tudela, Joseph Lance



Labausa, Antonette
Rosemarie
(Coach)



Barnhouse Jr.,
David Allen
(Coach)

OFFICIALS

OFFICIALS



Sablan, Manuel
Cepeda
(Manager)



Flores, Derron
Gerard
(Coach)



Cruz, Gary
(Coach)



Nelson, Chris
(Coach)



Morita, Ned
(Coach)



Salas, Victor
(Coach)



Togawa, Yuko
(Coach)

Team NMI girds for the Pacific Mini Games

By JOSHUA SANTOS
CORRESPONDENT

The 2022 Pacific Mini Games begins today, with over a thousand athletes from 20 participating countries vying for medals in nine events: athletics, badminton, baseball, beach volleyball, golf, tennis, triathlon, va'a, and weightlifting.

In the days leading up to the Games, Saipan Tribune learns more about the CNMI's teams and how the teams were formed, what they've been doing to train and prepare for the Games, and the teams' aspirations.

ATHLETICS

In February this year, Dr. Ron Snyder was named national head coach for the CNMI National Athletics Team for the Pacific Mini Games 2022.

Saipan Tribune previously reported that Snyder was grateful for the honor to be national head coach. After the Mini Games, Snyder will continue to serve in this role when the CNMI National Athletics Team competes in next year's Micronesian Games in the Marshall Islands.

"I am honored in the trust and confidence that Northern Marianas Athletics has placed in me and I look forward to working with all the coaches in the different events as we get ready for the Pacific Mini Games and the Micronesian Games," said Snyder.

Most recently, the CNMI National Athletics Team was in Mackay, Australia to compete in the 2022 Oceania Athletics Championships. At this event, the team took home three medals. Snyder expressed his satisfaction with the team's performance.

"They were super competitors, great travelers, and a joy to coach. Three medals were more than I was hoping for but we also earned some good points from our non-medaling athletes. In fact, each of them brought success to themselves and the team," said Snyder.

In a separate interview, Snyder looks back on the challenges faced by the team, and how they overcame them. Most notably, one hurdle was not having the track at the Oleai Sports Complex available during a critical part of the team's training.

"Sprinters had to risk injury on uneven surfaces and throwers had to constrain themselves to practice exercises. This hampered the development of race strategy for our middle distance runners," said Snyder. "This was especially difficult for

our steeplechase team who still haven't been able to practice the water jump with water and for our jumpers who didn't get to practice in the pit until recently."

But looking at the Oleai Sports Complex and the track now, Snyder lauded the Games Committee for transforming Saipan into a world-class venue. "The Games Committee has outdone itself in transforming our island into a world-class venue. As the athletics coach, I am incredibly happy with the status of the [Oleai Sports Complex]. I know there is work still to be done, but it looks great!" said Snyder.

Another challenge was the lack of competitions due to the pandemic. "Competition helps hone our abilities and motivates us to our personal best. That has been lacking for too long," he said.

When asked about the team's aspirations going into the Games, Snyder said he has "great hopes in certain areas for some medals" and hoped to see many personal bests from the athletes. "Really, the development of our athletes to achieve their personal bests is more than any coach could ask for," said Snyder.

BADMINTON

In a telephone interview with CNMI National Badminton Team manager and Northern Marianas Badminton Association president Merlie Tolentino, she said a majority of the players on the CNMI National Badminton Team has had previous regional competition experience, representing the CNMI at the 2019 Pacific Games in Apia, Samoa. The 2019 team was the first time the CNMI was represented in badminton at a Pacific Game event.

Members of this 2019 team, along with others, participated in badminton team tryouts in October last year. The pandemic halted any training efforts from 2020 to the first part of 2021, but when restrictions began to lighten in the latter half of 2021, serious training began. Over this period, the team participated in local competitions and trained individually.

In February this year, the team headed to Guam to compete in the 2022 Guam Badminton Invitational Tournament, where they collected six gold medals. In a previous interview with Saipan Tribune, Nate Guerrero—who is now team captain of the CNMI National Badminton Team for the Pacific Mini Games 2022—said that the

Guam tournament was a good experience.

"The badminton tournament [in] Guam was a great success. Everyone from both associations (Guam National Badminton Federation and Northern Marianas Badminton Association) had a blast and it was a great opportunity for our new players to get that playing experience and for the rest of us to see what we need to work more on," he said.

When asked about the team's aspirations going into the Pacific Mini Games, Tolentino said the team expects to do better than they did in 2019, where Team NMI placed fifth in Mixed Teams. Importantly, Tolentino wants to see the team do their best, represent the CNMI well, and garner experiences in competing against higher-level players. With the Pacific Mini Games 2022 taking place here in the CNMI, Tolentino also encouraged the team to make the most out of home court advantage.

Other aspirations for badminton in the CNMI go beyond the Games—one hope is that, with the many eyes that will be on the Games, more people in the CNMI will be encouraged to try the sport. To further support growing the sport, Tolentino said that additional equipment was procured through the Games. The equipment will be used to deliver community programs, especially at the interscholastic and grassroots level, said Tolentino.

Making up the CNMI National Badminton Team are team captain Nathan Guerrero, Andreau Galvez, Jordan Pangilinan, siblings Ezekiel and Daniel Macario, Leonard Isaiah Manuel, Janelle Pangelinan, Jenine Savellano, Jeanelyn Cardinio, Windy Ann Fernandez, and sisters Michaela and Mikamaika Serrano. The team is coached by James Digno and assistant coaches Paulo Quidato and Patricia Surima.

BASEBALL

In May this year, the Saipan Baseball League released its 20-man roster for the CNMI National Baseball Team that will compete in the Pacific Mini Games 2022. The formation of this team came about after months of tryouts and cuts.

Leading the team is former University of West Alabama Tigers pitcher Josh Jones. Other pitchers include J.P. Sablan, Franko Nakamura, Lorenzo Sebaklim, and Jacob Babauta. Outfielders include Ben Jones Jr., Tyrone Omar, Anthony Tenorio, and Juan Iguel. Infielders

include Byron Kaipat, Darion Jones, Shane Yamada, Diego Camacho, A.J. Lizama, Lamarc Iguel, Nokki Saralu, Dennis Cabrera, Patrick Alepuyo, Jerald Cabrera, and Keoni Lizama.

In a previous interview with Saipan Tribune, SBL president Jay Santos lauded team manager Manny Sablan and his staff for assembling the team who will defend the CNMI's gold medal—baseball was last played in the Pacific Games in 2011, where the Games were held in New Caledonia. The CNMI took gold in baseball in 2011.

"Coach Manny and his staff have selected a very talented final roster, albeit there were some very difficult decisions to be made with the final cut. This squad is strong defensively and is capable of producing runs as their hitting will be great," said Santos.

"We will be very competitive with our pitching and I expect our defense will be superior when the Mini Games begin. The entire team has worked very hard to get into great baseball shape and I am very thankful to our final roster of players and all of those who tried out for the team for the time, effort, and sacrifice they've put in."

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

National beach volleyball coach Tyce Mister told Saipan Tribune that the team has been "a long time in the making."

Mister said that men's team members Andrew Johnson competed in the 2015 Pacific Games in Papua New Guinea, and Logan Mister competed in the 2019 Pacific Games in Apia, Samoa, respectively. "Upon the announcement of the Games to be hosted by the Northern Mariana Islands, this seemed like a great team," he said.

As for vetting more possible team members, Mister said the Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association held several events in November and December 2021, and top players from these events were invited to attend national volleyball team training. Off-island teams submitted videos from practice sessions and tournaments, along with training updates. It was through these video submissions that the women's team of Charnessa Lizama and Kathy Winkfield emerged. "Performance and dedication were taken into account," said Mister.

He said the beach volleyball team has been training thrice a week since Febru-

ary, and that he is "really pleased" with how things have come together. "As coach, I'm really pleased with the dedication and improvement of our players throughout our training sessions," he said.

As for the team's aspirations, Mister believes that both the men's and women's teams "have an excellent chance at medaling." However, Mister and the team know that competition will be fierce—"The [Pacific Mini Games] will be extremely competitive. We can't take any teams lightly," he said.

He called on the community's support and hopes to see everyone come out and cheer for Team NMI. For beach volleyball, Mister said that the schedule is to be released on Saturday, June 18.

GOLF

In October last year, the CNMI's National Golf Team was formed after 14 golfers were selected after a final qualifier held at the Coral Ocean Resort in Agingan. Making up Team NMI for Golf for the Pacific Mini Games 2022 are J.J. Atalig, and Franco Santos for the men, Nirimai Koebel, Rose Rohringer, and Janet Torres for the women, Li Zhi Yun, Joshua Atalig for the junior men, and Zhimin Jin and Sorian Oh for the junior women.

Saipan Tribune previously reported that, after the 14 were selected, Commonwealth Federation of Golf Association president Edward Manibusan congratulated everyone who made the team and said he is sure that "they will try their best to win the gold."

In a previous interview with Saipan Tribune, J.J. Atalig said the team looks forward to competing and going for medals. "I feel good. I worked hard to be part of the team. We look forward to just trying to get medals because that's the goal," he said. Atalig previously represented the CNMI in golf at the 2019 Pacific Games held in Apia, Samoa.

TENNIS

National tennis coach Jeff Race shared that the CNMI team consists of four on-island players and four off-island players. The on-island players are Colin Ramsey, Bobby Cruz, Hye Jin Elliot, and Serin Chung. Coming from off-island are Colin Sinclair, Robbie Schorr, Isabel Herras, and Asia Raulerson.

Giving background on some of the players, Race said that Sinclair plays in the ITF Men's World Ten-

nis Tour; Schorr is a varsity player for Pacific William Woods University in Missouri; Herras plays tennis at the Metropolitan State University of Denver; and Raulerson plays at Albany State University in Georgia.

"Now we're all together, we've been practicing together for the last couple days. I think things are coming together well," said Race.

As far as training for the Games, Race said the players have been "training all their lives."

He said that Chung and Elliot train thrice a week under him as part of a junior program, and train by themselves on the other days of the week.

For Cruz and Ramsay, Race said the two started training seriously for the Games since September 2021. "They've really picked up their games since that time, and it's the best I've seen Colin Ramsay ever play for sure," said Race.

For the four off-island players, Race noted that Schorr, Herras, and Raulerson's university tennis seasons recently ended, and that Sinclair is constantly playing tennis as a result of being on tour.

"I think that we're well prepared as far as training goes," said Race.

For both the men's and women's teams, Race would like to see the teams go for gold and/or medal in the teams, singles, and doubles events. But first, the focus will be on doing well in pool play, and to get into the medal rounds.

As a final message for team NMI, Race said he would like to see the players have what they would consider an optimal performance. "We just want everyone to play as good as they can and...leave it all out on the court for our fans from the CNMI that will be here to cheer us on," he said.

TRIATHLON

Earlier this year, the Triathlon Association of the CNMI named its five men and women who will make up the CNMI Triathlon Team for the Pacific Mini Games 2022.

On the men's team are Isaiah Aleksenko, Christian Villacrusis, and Leo Wania. On the women's team is Kathy Ruszala, Heather Brook, and Robin Spaeth. Mick Ferris is team coach while Jay Diyco serves as team manager.

Diyco told Saipan Tribune that training for the Games began in February this year, with Mick Ferris from Australia being hired to give the athletes individual training

See TEAM on Page 25



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TEAM*From Page 22*

programs. Diyco also said that the team does weekly training at the Last Command Post in Marpi, where they bike and run a portion of the length of a triathlon.

For Diyco, he said the team's expectations are to do their best and, like everyone taking part in the Games, go for gold. Additionally, he thanked the Triathlon Association of the CNMI and the Pacific Mini Games for their support of the CNMI National Triathlon Team, Ferris for sharing his expertise, the athletes for their sacrifices and hard work, and the athletes' families for their continued support of the team.

VAA

Va'a national coach and Northern Marianas National Paddle Sports Federation president Justin Andrew told Saipan Tribune that the national va'a team program began in late July 2021 with open weekly trials and practices running over the course of four months. From July to November 2021, training on land entailed strength and conditioning training, while time on the water was focused on working on technique.

Andrew said that "more than 20 men and 20 women

answered the call for the national va'a team" and dedicated themselves to the program to make the cut. By late November to December 2021, the final cut was set—14 men and 14 women.

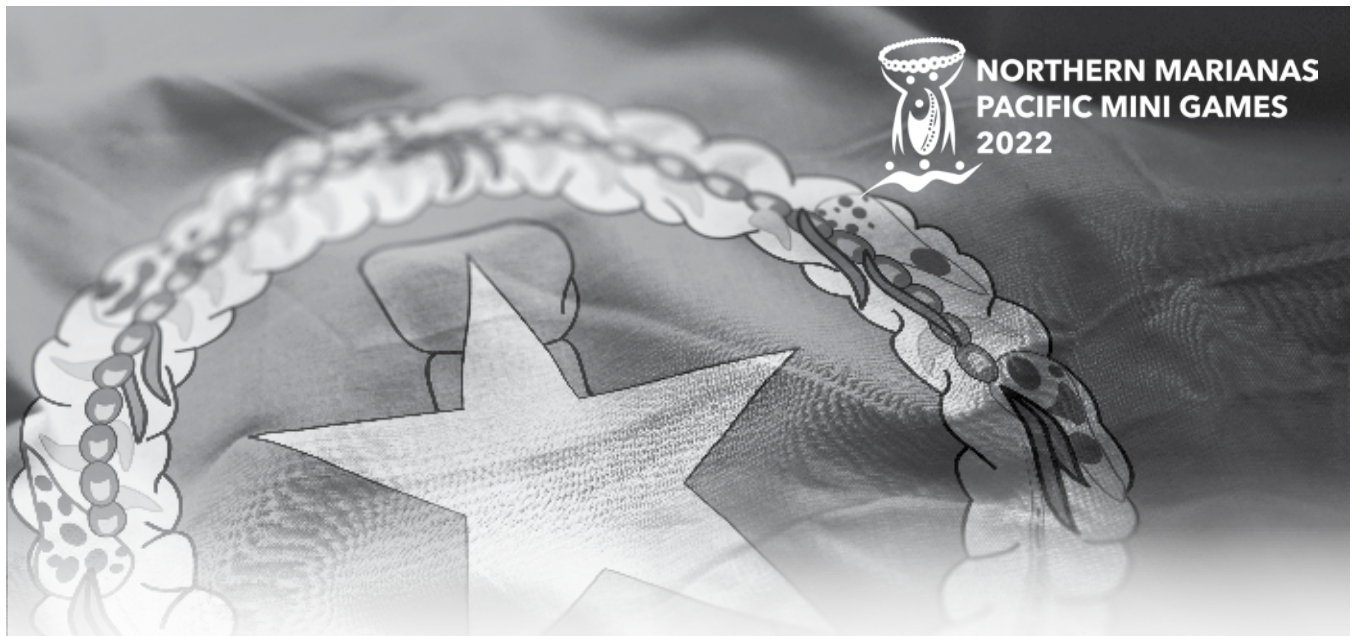
Actual training for the Games began in January this year, Andrew said, with a total of 22 weeks dedicated to training and preparation for the Games. For most of these weeks, intense land-based training focused on improving cardio and capacity through sprinting, running hills, and weight workouts. As the Games drew closer, the land-based training lightened and the focus shifted toward strength, conditioning, and fine-tuning techniques in the water.

As for his expectations for the team, Andrew hopes to see the team podium, learn from the experience, and build connections with their fellow paddlers.

"We have been practicing and training for 10 months, and we will do our best and hope to podium. The team looks forward to testing and showcasing their hard work, and to learn [many] lessons [from] our visiting national teams, and of course, make new friends," said Andrew.

WEIGHTLIFTING

CNMI weightlifting national
See TEAM on Page 26



A champion is someone who gets up when he can't.



Congratulations Team NMI!

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TEAM

From Page 25

coach Antonette Labausa said the team was formed a little over a year ago, composed of both experienced and fairly new weightlifting athletes who expressed an interest in competing. Soon after, training standards were set based on commitment and attendance in training. "We had solidified the final team about three months out. However, everyone has been training this year leading up to it," said Labausa.

Training for the Games took place over a year. Labausa said that nine months were spent training twice a day, meeting four to five times a week. During this time, the focus was on strength and conditioning work and practicing variations of lifts. During the last three months, the team has trained five times a week.

"It has been tiring, but we have been able to stay healthy and we are looking forward to the competition," said Labausa.

When asked about her expectations for the team, Labausa said the focus is to "put ourselves in the best position to make this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity memorable." For Team NMI's more seasoned weightlift-

ers, Labausa hopes to see them medal. For the fairly new lifters, Labausa is proud enough seeing them step up to the stage and compete.

Regardless of experience, medals or no medals, Labausa said the team will be proud and supportive of each other. Labausa added that she is happy to see so many athletes represent the CNMI in weightlifting, and hopes to see interest in weightlifting grow in the years to come.

"This is a great growth experience, and I am excited to see the outcome of all of our athletes' hard work. Weightlifting is a tough sport, and we are happy to have this many athletes represent NMI," said Labausa. "We are looking forward to sharing the platform with other countries and [hope to] see more youth and young adults interested in weightlifting in the future so that we can continue to grow."

The CNMI men's weightlifting team is composed of Raymond Santos, Leowell Cristobal, Emmanuel Aquino, Joseph Tudela, Leonardo Apelo, Joey Colisao, Angel San Nicolas, Jason Limes, and David Barnhouse.

The CNMI women's weightlifting team is composed of Pipit Ball, Cheyanne Manuel, Riella Ichio, and Antonette Labausa.

Have fun, play hard, and don't forget that no matter what happens, We're proud of you.

Good Luck,
Team NMI!



From the Office of Senate President
Jude Untalan Hofschneider
and the Members of the 22nd Senate
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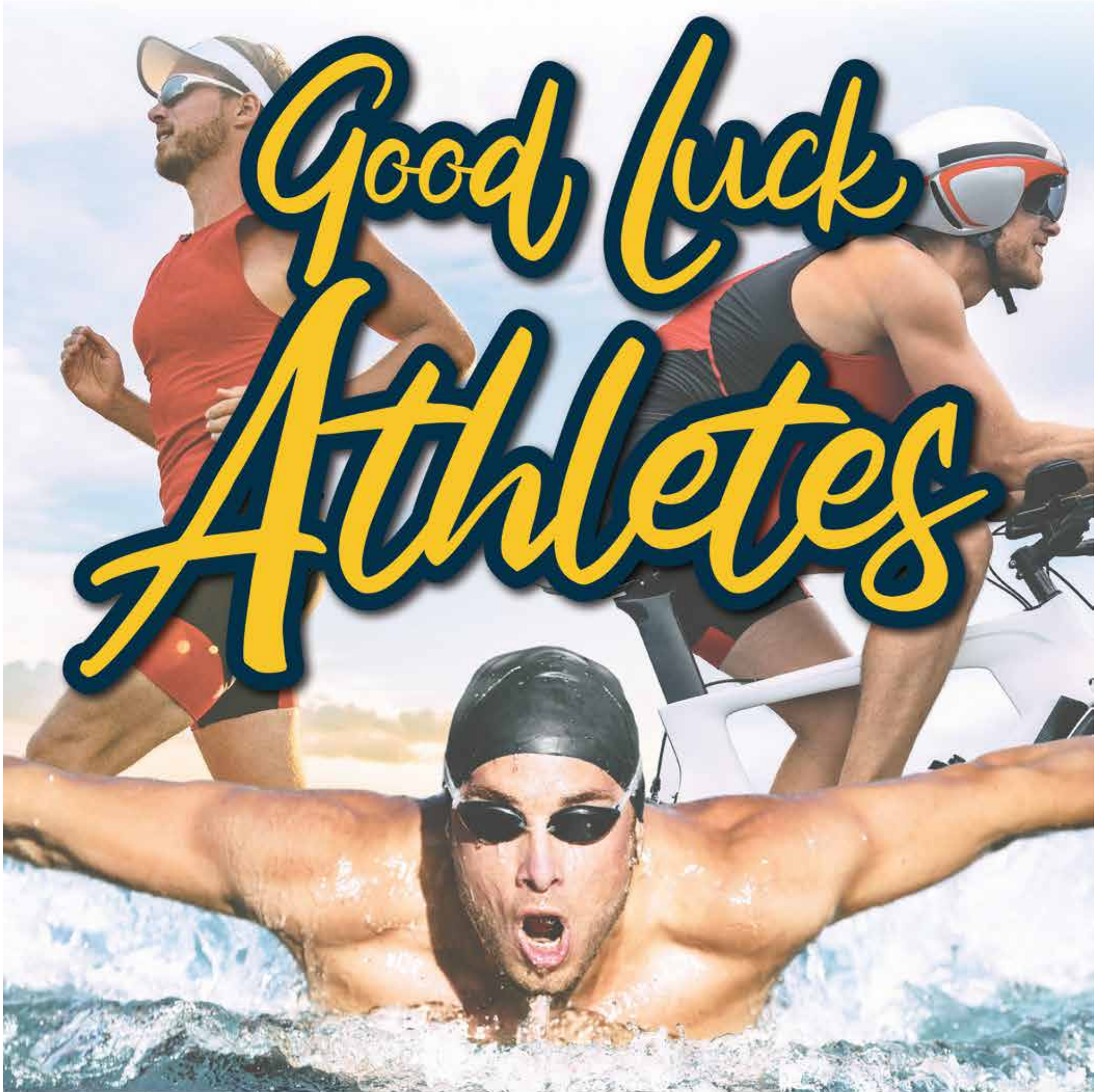
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