

## A PROUD TRADITION



Decathlon champ Arthur Pons: one of the young new stars.

Some say that the amount of time people spend for sports and recreation indicates, to some degree, the extent of their nation's development. Others say people spend a great deal of time in sports activities for no other reason than to master Nature, and mountain climbing may well be proof. Still others say they master sports to test the limits of their capacities; in short, to master themselves.

Whatever the reason and whatever the season, there is today a resurgence of sports in the Philippines. And, as in other fields of activity in the country these days, there are the common qualities — enthusiasm and a striving for excellence.

At the Rodriguez Sports Center in Marikina, softball's Blu Girls have been training a rigorous three hours a day, leaving Sundays out, for each department of the game — batting, fielding, base-running, pitching and catching. In past seasons, they performed well enough to be invited early this year to New Zealand and Australia for a 25-game series. When they returned, they had won 21 of their 25 games. Their current training is for the world women's softball championship in Stratford, Connecticut, U.S.A. in 1974. The Philippine Football Association, under Governor Isidro S. Rodriguez, has only grand praise: "The team we have now is much better than the 1970 squad which finished third in the second world meet in Osaka, behind Japan and the United States."

Sports enthusiasm and excellence have caught on.

Volleyball buffs have been seen all over private courts, campuses, town plazas, barrio ricefields and AFP grounds. First, practically the whole of Luzon answered the Rizal Memorial's call to the national inter-secondary boys and girls championship series. Second, Japan, Australia, Thailand, Burma, Taiwan and Indonesia accepted the country's invitation to the Asian invitational tournament in Manila in August. Third, the Philippine team has an invitation to the international women's volleyball tournament in Djakarta, Indonesia. And fourth, the team is girding for the 7th Asian Games in Teheran, Iran and the Asian volleyball championships come 1974.

Judo has beefed up its roster of judokas. The first months of 1973 saw twenty-eight judokas elevated to First Dan, Third Class Brown and Second

## Resurgence of sports in RP

Class Green. For the beginners, throwing and grappling techniques have been demonstrated in seminars on this "gentle art."

Car races — go-kart plus, junior and senior divisions, professional and amateur category — have screeched past screaming fans and nervous wives in Ortigas Avenue, Commonwealth Avenue and Rizal Park. The country's racing luminaries have scared not a few Macao racers and brought home trophies plus.

Philippine sluggers held the 1973 ABAP Metropolitan amateur boxing series early 1973 in Tarlac. Knock-outs were the Philippine Army boxers in Class-A and the Philippine Navy in Class-C. Meanwhile, the Games and Amusements Board (GAB) moved to discipline the boxing ranks with a crack-down on inactive fighters even as it encouraged out-of-the-country bouts.

Wrestling has reached the drug

was Anthony Villanueva in the featherweight boxing division with a 1964 2nd place in the Tokyo-based World Olympics.

The Philippine record in the Asian Games is even more impressive. The 1st Asian Games held in New Delhi, India in 1951 saw 31 Filipino athletes bringing home 5 gold, 6 silver and 8 bronze medals out of 4 sports events. The 2nd Asian Games, 174 Filipinos with 14 gold, 14 silver and 16 bronze medals out of 8 sports, the 3rd Asian Games, 148 athletes sporting 48 medals bagged from 12 sports. The 4th and 5th Asian Games, a total 310 athletes bannered 80 medals out of 25 sports. And the 6th Asian Games in Bangkok, Thailand in 1970 saw 76 Filipino athletes bringing home 1 gold, 9 silver and 12 bronze medals out of 8 sports.

The sporting tradition has been respected in the main because organized expertise has been duly concern-



RP-Australia game during Asian baseball championship. Host team won, 8-3

dependents of the NBI Rehabilitation Center. The country's wrestlers back from the free-style and Greco-Roman events of the wrestling Olympics in Ulan Bator, Mongolia brought home more than tempered skills; they brought home the good will of the people they met, including those they wrestled with.

The resurgence of sports should be no surprise. Philippine sports history have, after all, been a proud one.

There were the Far Eastern Games of 1913 to 1934 with a total of 10 tournaments. Of these 10, the Philippines won — in track and field, 6 championships, 5 of them in steady succession; in swimming, 4 championships; in tennis, 3 championships; in volleyball, 5 championships; in football, 1 championship; in baseball, 6 championships; and in basketball, 9 championships or a record 1-miss.

The country has been in the thick of international sports since the 1924 World Olympics in Paris to the 1972 Munich games and has no plans of thinning its participation out. The first Philippine champions, Simeon Toribio, won the high jump event with a 1928 4th place and a 1932 3rd place, and, Tefilo Ydefonso, won 200-m breakstroke with 3rd places for both 1928 and 1932. The latest Philippine product of Olympic caliber

ed. The Philippine Amateur Athletic Association was authorized by R.A. 3262, later revised to become R.A. 3135, to develop the country's sports.

The PAAF has 19 member associations, which have launched various sports development programs.

There was, first, the recognition of the need for young recruits. They advised closer association with the Department of Education and Culture in whose helm was gathered thousands of athletic potentials. Thus, a Joint Declaration between the PAAF and the Department came to be. With this hopefully, "physical education and fitness (and the) establishment of sports centers, public playgrounds and recreational facilities" may be encouraged.

In the provincial level, a major project of the PAAF men was the multi-event Cebu sportsfest, stretching over five-weekends. At the Cebu Abellana Oval — track and field, judo, softball, volleyball, cycling, football, archery and weightlifting; at the Cebu fire department, table tennis; at the Physicians Club, chess; at the Cebu Coliseum, boxing; at the Aznar Coliseum, basketball; and still other gyms and other sports.

In the national scene, the biggest projects of this group of sports buffs

were the 1st and 2nd Palarong Filipino. The Palaro is the country's local Olympics running for nine days.

The 1972 Palaro drew eight Philippine records. The 1973 Palaro, while setting only six records and equalling one, proved the games' success with the strong entry of young and "new" athletes, and a commercial breakthrough in ticket sales and operational expenses.

The series was a sports fiesta, with AFP spikers ramming through the coliseum's net while 14-year-old Nancy Deano broke her own Philippine record in the 100 meter breast-stroke. Gabriel Navarro's total lift of 240 kilograms bested the old Palaro mark by 26.5 kilograms while 20 to 40 boxers, four of them Munich Olympians, traded muscled punches. The greenhorn Arthur Pons ended the 12-year monopoly of Noriel Roa in decathlon.

Outside the PAAF group, there is the Sports Development Foundation (SPODEPHIL) which is also actively promoting sports.

SPODEPHIL boasts of a near-P1 million fund accumulation, the formation of a Philippine Youth football team, the revival of singa and the attention to research with a Princeton Poll survey of the Filipino's attitude to sports as a first project.

The country's sports program has not been without problems.

The PAAF, for one, has its traumas. Its present charter (R.A. 3135) decentralized its powers, giving powers of supervision and control to the PAAF president but then again giving autonomy to the 19 National Sports Associations. PAAF President Ambrosio Padilla says, "There are times when my authority is questioned by some national sports associations which claim their autonomy is impaired."

Apart from structure, the PAAF's handicaps extend to monetary limitations. The group receives P1 million, more or less.

In the main, however, Philippine sports has not allowed organizational and financial problems to deter its movement.

Philippine baseball saw action in the 10th Baseball Federation of Asia held April, 1973. While the group landed in 4th position behind Japan, South Korea and Taiwan in that order, Japan's, Isao Odachi, said, "Years ago, the Filipinos were teaching the Asians, including the Japanese, good, solid baseball. They were the kings in the Far Eastern Games and many years thereafter. . . There's nothing the matter with (today's) Philippine baseball that a return to the fundamentals won't cure." This "return to the fundamentals" may yet give the Philippine league sounder placement in the 11th Asian Baseball Tournament in Tokyo in August, 1975.

Cycling, after a three-summer respite, has come back strong. Next year's Tour of Luzon, the 15th, promises to be even more ambitious, circuiting Lucena, Pangasinan, Baguio and on to Leyte.

Track and field stars, come November of this year, will compete for 120 medals alongside 15 Asian countries' finest track stars in the 1st Asian track and field championship in Manila.

After some faltering steps, Philippine sports has come back, by all indications, for good.