



PILI, March 16—The public schools interscholastic athletic meet which opened here today brought so many things to the parched province of Camarines Sur, including a little shower that wasn't good enough to wet the sports grounds. At opening ceremonies, the 7-hectare village was covered with dust from the dry earth and the sun was as bright as last summer's.

But the scorching heat notwithstanding, eight regional athletic associations from all over the public schools in the country came trumpeting their colors and their chosen athletes. President Marcos and his charming First Lady, Imelda, had come to lend prestige and importance to the sportsfest. Both have just been from the opening of a historical museum in Bulacan province the previous day and the prospect of another hectic day was nowhere near their faces. They were, in fact, smiling with satisfaction at the huge, huge crowd that milled in and out of the grounds and then stood to listen to a tired but inspired President.

In Camarines Sur, where the men are hardy and the women pretty, even the unfinished sports village was something to boast about. The governor, Armando Cledera, once a politically unknown quantity before pulling a surprise victory over an old pro in local politics two years back, had said that the fact that the sports village was there was accomplishment enough. After eight months of work, his engineers and diggers had built with P900,000.00 a fair sized dome, tracks, a swimming pool, several ballparks, and a complex of grandstands that could seat near half-a-million spectators.

On the whole, the hastily-built sports village seemed sufficiently bulldozed on opening day for the week-long competition. That the grass was not green at all was no longer of moment. The makeshift gates made of chicken wire, were not enough to keep out non-ticket holders. The lack of proper accommodations for the athletes and visiting school officials was overlooked in the contagious enthusiasm at opening day.

But, as we said, the interscholastic meet had brought many things to Pili. The President had come bearing checks to help build the barrios of the province. The barrio captains and council men gave him a warm Bicol applause. He had also come with a bagful of checks to pay the salary differentials of public school teachers in the province, and the teachers applauded him for this, hard and long. In the evening, at a gridiron program by the local press and radio, the President spoke of a Bicol community booming with industries and industrial estates and linked with concrete highways to southern Tagalog and Manila, and the gridiron audience applauded sincerely; everybody forgot the skit that was to lampoon him. But not before the chief executive, in biting humor, had wondered aloud what the country would be like were the newsmakers to run the government and the politicians to perform the role of newspapermen. No one dared an answer.

And, of course, the interscholastic meet had brought Pili something else. It put this town on the map. Not that the town is totally unknown. Obviously named after a popular Bicol fruit tree that bears the nut that is made into a delicacy, Pili had invariably been referred to as an airstrip to Naga City. Thus, a national map prepared by one of the leading oil companies in Manila, missed this town completely, although a barrio called Palestina, a few kilometers away, is indicated on the map.

But now Pili was more than just a town. Today, and for one whole week, it would be the melting pot of the entire nation. An unassuming town, Pili would have to play the role of a catalyst in the building of the new generation of Filipinos — healthy, friendly, competitive, achieving and, for the moment, law-abiding. "Now", said Secretary of Education O. D. Corpuz who was among the dignitaries at the meet's opening, "perhaps Pili will never be missed in a Philippine map again."

S. P. BIGAY

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