

Philippine Women's University
and its Affiliate Schools for Men and Women

1743 Taft Avenue, Malate 1004, Manila, Philippines

PWU Research Journal

Volume 12, Issue 1, May 2025

SPECIAL ISSUE ON SPORTS

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PUBLISHING INC. PHILIPPINES, 2018, 159 PP.



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SPECIAL ISSUE ON SPORTS

Chief Editor
Dr. Leonardo O. Munalim

Honored Consultant
Dr. Felina C. Young

Philippine Women's University

ABOUT THE TITLE

PWU Research Journal

This Journal is the flagship publication of PWU. It welcomes and publishes articles written by the faculty and undergraduate and graduate studies students of different Schools of the University. It also welcomes research produced by non-PWU local and international researchers. It is published in May and December of the same year.

Special Issues are also published in this Journal.

All papers are checked against plagiarism and are subject to full peer-review. The Editorial Board is composed of internal and external reviewers.

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the Volume 12, Issue 1, May 2025 Special Issue on Sports of the *PWU Research Journal*!

The inspiration for this Special Issue on Sports arose during the plenary session of the **2024 PWU Research Festival**, held on September 28, 2024, at the PWU Conrado Benitez Hall. That year, the Festival carried the theme, "Research as a Catalyst for a Sustainable Tomorrow," highlighting the transformative potential of scholarly inquiry in shaping a better and more sustainable future.

Prof. Satwinder S. Rehal delivered a plenary talk titled "Why the Fuss? A Socio-onomastic and Feminist Perspective on Changing the Nickname of the Philippine Women's National Football Team from *The Malditas* to *The Filipinas*" and successfully offered a thought-provoking examination of sports, identity, and gender. I am deeply grateful to Prof. Rehal for graciously taking on the role of Guest Editor for this Special Issue.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

PWU Research Journal
Volume 12, Issue 1, Year 2025
Special Issue on Sports

Assoc. Prof. Satwinder S. Rehal
Guest Chief Editor

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Sports have always held a unique position in human society, serving not only as a form of physical activity but also as a powerful cultural, social and even political force. In the Philippines, this influence is particularly evident in the stories of athletes, administrators, and journalists who have shaped the nation's sporting landscape. This collection of essays

and interviews offers readers a rich exploration of how sports intersect with culture, identity, and society, thereby highlighting both personal narratives and broader societal reflections. Through these works, we gain insight into the ways sport informs community life, inspires individual growth and reflects societal values.

This collection not only documents achievements and reflections but also challenges readers to appreciate the multidimensional significance of sport. It reminds us that beyond competition and entertainment, sports serve as a lens through which we can better understand society, culture, and human endeavor. Whether approached through personal interviews, historical analysis or critical inquiry, the works presented here encourage a deeper engagement with sports as a vital and enriching part of Filipino life.

Publish and flourish, Patriots!

DR. LEONARDO O. MUNALIM, LPT

Chief Editor, PWU Research Journal

Director, PWU Research and Development Office

PREFACE

This Special Issue on Sports of the *PWU Research Journal* was conceptualized by the Director, Research and Development (RDO), Dr. Leonardo O. Munalim, during the 2024 PWU Research Festival following my presentation during a panel session where I presented on the socio-onomastic perspective of nicknames of the Philippine Women's National Football Team grounded in a feminism discourse around nicknames and their gendered constructions in society. A Call for Paper (CfP) was made with me serving as Guest Editor of this maiden issue which I call the 'Sports Jam' edition coming right after the recently held 2025 PWU Sports Jam, an annual event held in the month of February to commemorate the founding anniversary of the the Philippine Women's University.

I am thankful to the few who heeded the CfP and submitted their works for review and consideration, with a number whom I reached out to personally, within the PWU community and externally, promising to submit in the next edition. I look forward to these when the next CfP is released.

This Volume consists of five articles from diverse perspectives. The first article, and aptly so, is an excerpt of an interview with the PWU Campus Life Director, Marielle Benitez-Javellana, on ingraining sports culture at PWU. The article articulates the aspect that colleges are not just about academics; they are also vibrant communities where sports culture plays a pivotal role in shaping student life and forging lifelong memories. The outcome of the interview acknowledges the fact that ingraining a sports culture in colleges, as exemplified with the case of PWU, allows students, and non-students alike, to deeply appreciate and understand the spirit of sport and its social and cultural essence. The onus remains on PWU in sustaining its long-established sports culture.

The second article is a critical essay by Bruce Robert Lim, a master's student in foreign studies at the HZB School of International Relations and Diplomacy, who tackles a new concept that has recently entered the academic discourse specifically in debates about sports diplomacy and the hosting of mega sports events (MSEs). As a co-author to Lim's paper, we unpack the concept grounding its origin with the western media and international human rights organization's criticism of awarding the hosting of mega sport events, notably the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, the two largest global sports events, to China, Russia, and Qatar despite their poor human rights records. The paper links sportswashing to public diplomacy, specifically soft power, where a country's hosting of mega sports events (MSEs), or sponsoring sports teams, seeks to present a favourable international image and distract attention from negative local issues like the suppression of human rights. Conversely, sportswashing may also prompt a country to improve its human rights, making sportswashing a double-edged sword. The argument is made on the relevance to further the academic discourse on sportswashing in both developed and developing nations, including in regional events like the Southeast Asian Games (SEAG), which biannually celebrate south Asian sporting and cultural heritage under the shadows of host country specific human rights concerns. A case reference is made of Myanmar's hosting of the SEAG in 2013, and even on the Philippines, which faced criticism for

unnecessary expenditures on the cauldron that holds the flame, and accusations of extra judicial killings of suspected narcotics peddlers, when it hosted the event in 2019.

The third article of the Journal is a tribute to Mary Catherine 'Cathy' Nazareno, a former football administrator having been appointed a match commissioner for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in 2007, and recipient of the AFC Women's Match Commissioner Award in 2009, to date the only Filipino to have received this award. Cathy was able to tap into her passion for football to grow personally and professionally, as well as sharing her talents to growing the sport in the country. The article, based on an interview takes one through the life journey of Cathy, from a soccer mom to a technical member and coach of the Philippines women's and under 14 girl's national football teams respectively, to a match commissioner of the AFC, one of football's global governing body, FIFA, member association for the Asian region, and to an organizer of grassroots football tournaments around Metro Manila to promote the sport among young Filipinos. Cathy sadly passed away in March 2019 after battling colon cancer. She was the eldest daughter of Vicky Amalangan Sales, the Chairperson of the PWU Board of Trustees. Her story represents the quintessential trait of a Filipina, motherly, passionate, ambitious, and resilient. Cathy is one among many Filipino women who have etched, and are continuously etching their names in the annals of Philippine sports history. The article hopes to inspire young women to look for role models in the sports sphere.

The next three articles take an academic turn, unpacking critical insights from books reviews, and on the concept of sportswashing which has recently made its entry in discourses on media and international relations. Mark Joseph Santos reviews the book by Fr. Alaurin on *Sports in the Philippines: History, Values, Spirituality* on a Filipino Christian, or more specifically, Filipino Thomasian view of sports. Through this work, Santos grounds Fr. Alaurin's work in bringing depth to the study of sports, giving it a deeper existential meaning for the human life beyond its essentialist physical essence, by which could do with the inclusion of epistemes from the margins, in this case indigenous and precolonial games which the book seemed to gloss over. As Santos very well argues, the historiography of the book's world history of sports is argued from a Eurocentric bias, both in the dimension of time (periodization) and space (geographical coverage), an aspect reflected as well in Philippine historiography of sports. Recommendations to draw from many ethnographical accounts can be used for this endeavor, which blends well with the discourse on decolonizing physical cultures in the Global South.

The last article, written by Sital Baa, is another book review by sports journalist, Ronnie Nathanielz, on his reflections on 50 years in the Philippines. A Sri Lankan migrant to the Philippines, Ronnie was a beloved character who built his name in the field of sports journalism in the country spanning diverse roles at DZHP Radio Mindanao network, the *Philippines Herald* Newspaper and IBC 13. He was an equally loved and despised character who covered Philippine politics, sports and showbiz entertainment. Ronnie's book captures key moments in Philippine history notable mentions include a personal tribute to Gabriel "Flash" Elorde of the quintessential Filipino champion who "feared no man but was humble before all men", and the 'Thrilla in Manila' world heavyweight boxing championship fight between Muhammed 'The Greatest' Ali and Joe 'Smoking' Frazier

on October 1st, 1975. Ronnie gives these two stories from a personal perspective having been directly involved with both personalities, that is Elorde and Ali. Ronnie justifiably covers the journey of Manny Pacquiao in Chapter 7 churning out the boxing legend's rags to riches story. While the book provides a historical perspective, certain sections focus too heavily on certain sports such as boxing. He didn't cover or mention female sports personalities of his time, like Lydia de Vega, among others. Despite the book's shortcomings, the narratives bring to the public a world of sports reporting nurtured by a world class and talented journalist. It provides an immersive look into the world of Filipino sports journalism that brings out the highs and lows of the industry and athletes alike. It blends historical context with firsthand accounts, making the book a must-read for anybody who wants to truly understand the essence of the sport from a journalist's positionality.

The issue ends with a hopeful tone in nurturing the culture of sport in terms of its academic essence evidenced by the articles in this volume. The field is wide and there is ample room for diverse perspectives on the subject. I look forward to seeing this Special Issue on Sports growing into a stand-alone journal dedicated to the subject matter, following in the footsteps of acclaimed journals like the *International Journal of Sport and Society*, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *Sport in Society*, *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, among others.

I remain hopeful about this endeavour!

ASSOC. PROF. SATWINDER S. REHAL

Guest Editor

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CRITICAL ESSAY

Ingrained Sport Culture at PWU: An Interview with Marielle Benitez- Javellana

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ABSTRACT

Sport is a central cultural element in society exhibited by the manner people share, value and take part as participants, spectators and consumers through shared understandings and passion for sports. Colleges are not just about academics; they are also vibrant communities where sports culture plays a pivotal role in shaping student life and forging lifelong memories. Sports culture is created by human beings in sports life and practice. There is no better example who reflects this sentiment than Marielle Benitez Javellana, a former player and captain of the Philippine women's national football team, and the current Director of Campus Life at the Philippine Women's University (PWU), Manila. The paper is a reflection based on an interview with Ms. Marielle on sports culture at PWU. The outcome of the interview acknowledges the fact that ingraining a sports culture allows students, and non-students alike, to deeply appreciate and understand the spirit of sport and its social and cultural essence.

Keywords: *sports culture; Sports Jam; PWU.*

INTRODUCTION

Sport is a central cultural element in society exhibited by the manner people share, value and take part as participants, spectators and consumers through shared understandings and passion for sports. Sport can also be used as a means of expressing cultural, organizational and national identities. Colleges are not just about academics; they are also vibrant communities where sports culture plays a pivotal role in shaping student life and forging lifelong memories. Sport culture refers to the values, attitudes and behaviors associated with practice of sport. These values include competition, performance, perseverance, leadership and discipline and camaraderie. This assertion has been captured in detail by Wang (2015) stating that:

A good campus sports culture can not only cultivate student sentiment, strong physique, moral education, but also can divert students' psychology and make students integrate into society smoothly. In addition, the construction level of campus sports culture affects the quality of education indirectly. So, it is significant for students to create a healthy and harmonious cultural atmosphere on campus through rich content and various forms of sports, which can provide a good learning environment and psychological development space, and promote students' comprehensive development physically and mentally (p. 663).

In the argument of Du and Zhang (2019), sports culture is created by human beings in sports life and practice. There is no better example who reflects this sentiment than Marielle Benitez Javellana, a former player and captain of the Philippine women's national football team (PWNT) from 2002 to 2013, with 54 caps and 5 goals to her credit. At club level, she played for the De La Salle Green Archers FC in the inaugural season of the Philippine Football Federation (PFF) Women's League in 2016. She had a stint as national team coach for the Philippine girls under 14-year-old and involved with the senior women's team (del Carmen, 2016). Away from the turf, Marielle performed as a football commentator and sports analyst for local football tournaments and co-presented along with former captain of the men's national football team, Ally Boromeo, in a series called 'Road to Rio' about the preparation for the 2014 FIFA World Cup for a local Philippine media house, the ABS-CBN. Marielle is currently the Director of Campus Life at the Philippine Women's University (PWU), Manila, and Executive Director of the Bayanihan Folk Arts Foundation Inc. She was the founder of the futsal and sports program at PWU in 2004 (Olivares, 2021).

In an article by Rick Olivares for the Philippine Star in 2021, the veteran journalist notes that one would be mistaken to think there are no sports activities happening in the century plus old building on Taft Avenue, Manila. The school has done remarkably well in the realm of sports, notably in table tennis, swimming, basketball, and lately, futsal. That "if there is any sports program where the college has made its mark, it is futsal, and its architect is a former women's football star for De La Salle in Marielle Benitez-Javellana who is the Athletic Director of PWU", argues the veteran sports journalist.

Through the singular effort of Marielle, PWU incorporates sports as part of their physical education (PE) curriculum, organizes intramural competitions, and offers athletic scholarships to underprivileged players in the Futsal and Gawad Kalinga community-based futsal programs (Olivares, 2021). The school futsal team for both men's and women's categories are multiple award winners in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) organized competition. For instance, the PWU Lady Patriots are a 4 peat champion of the Women National Collegiate Athletic Association (WNCAA) division. The men's team has contributed its share of accolades, and where both the women's and men's teams have provided players to the Philippine national futsal team, with notables like Jay-R Inventor, Alyana Mocco, Christine Zacarias and Ronald Adalin. Where did all this begin? Olivares (2021) captures this history in an interview with Marielle and highlighted it in the following excerpt:

“When I graduated in 2004 [from the De La Salle University], *wala pang sports program ang PWU*. My aunt [Suzie Moya Benitez] said, ‘why not start a sports program?’. In my first year on the job, I learned that the PWU was a founding member of the WNCAA and was one of the first schools to have its own private swimming pool and had judo mats. When they began focusing on the arts, *nawala yung sports program* that was previously run by the PE teachers. We started out with the three-a-side futsal then a few years into the program, the school was convinced they needed a court. We converted the old Bayanihan Paseo into a basketball court that serves as a multi-purpose area for graduation ceremonies and other programs.”

On the 12th of February 2025, I sat down with Marielle in the sideline of the 2025 edition of Sports Jam, an annual intramural sports event, to inquire further about the sports culture at PWU for the purpose of this maiden special issue on sports. The excerpts are thematically presented in the sections that ensue.

Background of Sports Jam at PWU

SR: When did Sports Jam start?

MBJ: Sports Jam has been ongoing for a long time, almost 10 years. It started with events in swimming, badminton, bowling, basketball, volleyball, and table tennis. There were editions where we would even have darts, yes. So, it was a mix of some other sports. Yeah, I can't recall how many years it has been, but definitely, maybe sometime, 2005, or was it 2006. Yes, that's when it started. It was open to everyone. We also still had employees take part in Sports Jam. Yeah, so it was just recently where we really pushed for mixed sports. It's also because PWU had always required swimming as a subject, and then 10 years ago or so, we introduced futsal as the team sport, yeah. So [at present], all PE classes that are team sports play futsal. We also introduced table tennis. Before we had badminton, but now it's purely table tennis as part of PE classes, and futsal for team sport. We have not completely done away with swimming and badminton.

MBJ: When we introduced futsal, we saw an interest in the PE class of Sir Leo [Lawrence], and the students suggested wanting to have a futsal festival. Yes, they had requested for it, and that is why we've introduced it in Sports Jam. I would say we brought it in 2012 or sometime, 2012 or 2013 maybe, yeah. Because when we started it, we had the Younghusbands¹ come here for some training sessions. We still have swimming because that's a specific PE subject. So, we do have swimming, and we have swimming classes but not sports jam.

SR: Why Sports Jam?

¹The Younghusbands is made in reference to James and Phil Younghusband, siblings who played for the Philippine men's national football team from 2006 and 2019, and credited as the 'poster boys of Philippine football' for having played a significant role in reviving the game of soccer in the Philippines. Phil Younghusband captained the national team in its maiden appearance at the 2019 Asian Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

MBJ: In 2004 when I graduated from college, the goal was really to revive sports in the community. Okay, so PWU was a founding member of the WNCAA, way back 50 plus years ago. Then the school started focusing on humanities and the arts and sports sort of took a back seat. At the time, the [PWU] President was Dr. Amelou Reyes², my late dad, and Noel [Baltazar] Benitez, who was in operations, asked, why not revive the sports? And the timing of it was that I was graduating from De La Salle [University], and they said, 'maybe you can come in and help'. And so, I said, 'do you have a sports fest? What's your PE program, things like that, or varsity programs?' That was what the goal was. So, I said, before you can actually have a varsity program, you have to see what sports the people are interested in. You know how they can play the community. And so, we said, let's do like an inter department competition. Okay? Through this intramural activity one, I think you'll see what kind of sport they'll be interested in; two, it will force the schools to, you know, come together, whether you're a freshman all the way to a senior; and three, those who you don't see in your building, you'll be able to see, at least in the court, and you know, it's having the SAS with Nursing or Allied Health. And so, it really is just trying to bring together, like a jam, yeah, trying to bring together, you know, everyone, the PWU community.

SR: Why February?

MBJ: Sports Jam is held in February because it is our university anniversary. Oh, yeah, every February since it is our foundation month. So, throughout the month of Feb, we have arts activities, and we have sports activities. We've even done Pinoy games like Filipino games during the university month.

Choice of the Name, 'Sports Jam'

MBJ: Okay, initially, when we thought of the name 'sports jam', if I can remember correctly, it was because it was like a jam. It was having all these departments come together and play. You know, I don't think there was much deeper meaning to it, but the main goal was really to instill sports, the values of sports, having camaraderie, teamwork within the community. Because I, for one who grew up in an environment that really advocated and encouraged sports. You know, see how it is in helping me, at least the values, helping me in decision making, and you know, just in relating it with how my life is right now.

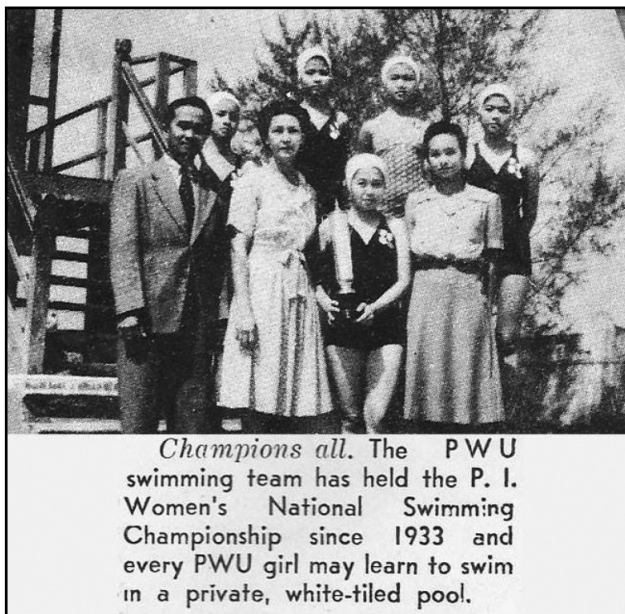
Sport Culture at PWU: The History

SR: So, you had mentioned that sports took a back seat before you revived it. So, if we start with the history, what were the sports then, before it went down?

MBJ: Okay, back in the day, from what I know it was JASMS High School. I know we had a basketball team; we had swimming, we had volleyball. I know that PWU had the first, or had, or owned, one of the first judo mats in the country. We had it here. We

² Dr. Amelou Reyes was the 8th President of PWU, and the 4th alumna to assume the position.

were known for being the university, a private university, to have a swimming pool, one of the first, if not the first. And we were the home of the *Aqua Bells*, which was the synchronized swimming team. You know Ming Ramos, the former first lady³, was a champion swimmer for PWU JASM (Figure 1). Her daughter, Cristy Ramos⁴, who held a huge position in FIFA, and was an AFC match Commissioner, was also in JASM. She was part of the [school's] basketball team. Daughter, daughter, and then the mom also, I'm not sure if it was volleyball, but we do have it in the archives. I've met a number of former varsity players in the course of my years here [at PWU], who said they are part of the women's basketball team, things like that way before we jumped sports again in 2004.



Undated image from the book, *The Education for Useful Womanhood*, published by the PWU Alumni Association. The photo shows Amelita “Ming” Martinez Ramos (second from right), holding the championship trophy. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=971187886238389&set=a.448420578515125>

³ Amelita ‘Ming’ Jara Martinez-Ramos was the wife of former Philippine President, Fidel V. Ramos. Her mother, Josefa Jara Martinez, was the founding Dean of the PWU School of Social Work.

⁴ Cristina Ramos-Jalasco is the fourth child among five daughters of former President Fidel V. Ramos and Amelita ‘Ming’ Ramos. Cristina, or Cristy, was the founding president of the Philippine Ladies’ Football Association (PhilFA) in the 1980s, and later became a member of the world soccer governing body, FIFA’s Women’s Committee from 2003-2011, and a member of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in 1986, and from 2002-2010). Cristy played for the Philippine national women’s football team from 1980 to 1986, captaining the team at the 1981 AFC Women’s Championship, and was a member of the bronze winning squad at the 1985 Southeast Asian Games (SEAG) which was held in Bangkok, Thailand.

Sports Culture at PWU: The Present

MBJ: Our PWU President, Mr. Marco Benitez⁵ believes in sports and is pro sports for the community. And he has been pushing for an intramural, a sport, intramural. So, apart from the sports jam, he wants to have, like a league or a tournament style of basketball, volleyball, throughout the school year? Yeah, yes. So that's something we've been trying to work on. But also, we don't want to step in the schedule of all the students and faculty. So hopefully, moving forward, we'll be able to get that going like a volleyball tournament, even if it's mixed or for the girls, like an after-school tournament, and then eventually open that to members of the community and the alumni, to just have, like a tournament, yeah.

Sports culture at PWU: The Future

MBJ: Next year there's a request for [including] badminton [in Sports Jam]. Yeah, because before we used to have it. But yeah, so that's something I'm working on for next year, badminton and then swimming. Sir Freddie wants to, and Sir Blue as well, wants to introduce pickleball. Yeah, it's a new thing. New craze. Yeah, so that's something maybe we can do for wellness, yes, for the community, yeah. So that's for the sports jam next year. Sports at PWU is definitely moving up. We shall continuously join our main tournaments, the WNCAA, and the MNCAA, which is the men's version, then we also have the ISAA (Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association), which is a men and a women's tournament, also against different universities⁶. We recently joined University and Colleges Athletic League (UCAL)⁷, which is a much higher division. They've introduced E sports and we've played there. We are also looking at other leagues wherein we can really pull our level up and get up against bigger schools. We have the men's and women's teams join the High 5 tournament, which is an open tournament, yeah. We've also renovated and developed our Sports Center. Yes, we now have a gym and treadmill. We have a strength and conditioning coach. So, I would tell them, that is your developmental opportunity.

⁵ Marco Alfredo M. Benitez is the 10th President of PWU having been installed in February 2020. Away from his formal role, President Marco is an ardent basketball enthusiast, having captained the Ateneo Blue Eagles when it won the UAAP championship in 2002, coached for the Alaska Summar Powercamp, and the Jr. NBA Philippines program from 2011 to 2016. He was Team Manager of the UAAP Juniors champion, the Ateneo High School basketball team from 2008 to 2015. Marco is equally an experienced sportscaster and basketball analyst having engaged with media broadcasting company, ABS-CBN Sports for 11 years from 2009 to 2020, covering both local and international matches. Notable events include coverage of the FIBA Basketball World Cup among many others. President Marco "believes in sports and its ability to develop values such as a passion, hard work and perseverance, resilience, a collaborative spirit, a growth mindset, and the character-building opportunities it offers." Source: <https://www.pacu.org.ph/about-the-president/#:~:text=Mr.,Benitez&text=Con-current%20with%20his%20duties%20at,Committee%20Chair%20from%202020%2D2022>

⁶ The Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association (ISAA) is an athletic sport organization in the Philippines formed in 2009 by Lyceum of the Philippines University. The Lyceum of the Philippines University started the process of formation of the league when the institution announced its intention to form a collegiate athletic association in 2004. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inter-Scholastic_Athletic_Association

⁷ The UCLA was formerly known as the Universities and Colleges Basketball League (UCBL), as a collegiate athletic association in the Philippines, encompassing ten universities and colleges in Metro Manila and Calabarzon. UCLA started with basketball in 2016 and expanded to include volleyball and esports in 2023.

Documentation for Posterity

SSR: Do we document sports in PWU?

MBJ: Regarding documentation [of our sports history], that's something that we need to take forward. Yes, yes, definitely, yeah. I think that would come from the academic point of view. And archiving [too]. Yes, yeah, good, good, excellent. I don't think we've really done that. I mean, for the Bayanihan, for instance, that is my issue and problem now, because they have not written much in the past. They have some documents, but nothing really like organized, yeah. So, it's very timely that we're having the paper on sports in the PWU. Maybe that can be a step forward to encourage students to do research on sports history. Yes, excellent. Yeah.

CONCLUSION

Schools provide an environment for the promotion and development of sports culture through the realization of the maximum value of physical activity (Du & Zhang, 2019). Ingraining a sports culture allows students, and non-students alike, to deeply appreciate and understand the spirit of sport and its social and cultural essence. In conclusion, the nexus between sport and individual growth and development is well captured in the following citation by Marielle Benitez Javellana:

The success in sports has added to the holistic development of our students," summed up Benitez-Javellana. For the student-athletes, they are able to take it as quality education with the life lessons and values that sports teach. It completes their learning that prepares them for life outside our university (Olivares, 2021).

The onus remains on PWU in sustaining its long-established sports culture.

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CRITICAL ESSAY

Sportswashing: A Double-Edged Sword

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ABSTRACT

The term “sportswashing” has recently entered the academic discourse specifically in debates about sports diplomacy and the hosting of mega sports events (MSEs). Sportswashing can be linked to a country’s soft power by hosting mega sports events (MSEs) to hone its international image and distract attention from negative local issues like the suppression of human rights. In recent years, the political and economic use of sports by governments has reached controversial points principally because of the features of the governments and political leaders that use sport for their political aims while brushing aside accusations of abuse of human rights, and on the other, pressure on the country to improve its human rights. Sportswashing is thus a double-edged sword. The discourse on sportswashing is therefore relevant in bringing to light hidden concerns over human rights abuse amid efforts by governments at suppressing them by highlighting the distinctive wrongs of sportswashing. The concept, however, requires further empirical grounding beyond its simplistic and liberal application by mostly western countries and the western media against non-western nations hosting sports mega events.

Keywords: *FIFA; human rights; mega sports events; Olympics; Southeast Asian Games; sportswashing.*

INTRODUCTION

The term “sportswashing” has recently entered the academic lexicon specifically in debates about sports diplomacy and the hosting of mega sports events (MSEs) (Postlethwaite, Jenkin & Sherry, 2023). The term was primarily defined by non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International as an attempt by a government to distract from its human rights record with prestigious sponsorship and hosting of events. Grix, Dinsmore, and Brannagan (2023) define the term as “a short-hand way of criticizing (usually) non-democratic regimes or large corporations for using investment in world-renowned athletes, sports clubs, and sports events to detract from illiberal, non-democratic, and/or exploitative practices in their home countries or businesses” (p. 2). Bergkvist and Skeiseid (2024) define sportswashing as “the deliberate attempt by an entity to exploit a sports property to counteract negative information” (p. 1095).

Despite the term being variedly defined, the consensus remains that 'sportswashing' is made in reference to a deliberate use of sport in seeking to alter a country's tarnished image and reputation as a soft power strategy (Lenskyj, 2020; Ness, 2024; Skey, 2022). Soft power is a concept made in reference to the ability of a country to achieve its national role through attraction rather than coercion (Nye, 1990). Sportswashing can thus be linked to a country's soft power by hosting mega sports events (MSEs) to hone its international image and distract attention from negative local issues like the suppression of human rights (Ness, 2024). Sportswashing may also prompt a country to improve its human rights, making sportswashing a double-edged sword.

Mega Sports Events (MSEs) and Sportswashing

The early linkage of specific human rights violations with MSEs goes back to the controversial 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, which were a show of Nazi propaganda relayed as part of international diplomacy of sports in reference to the means by which governments use sports to advance policy and national interests (Murray & Pigman, 2014). The Nazi dictatorship systematically used the Games to further its Aryan ideology, presenting a formidable and racially superior Germanic race while utilizing the event to convey a positive perspective of fascism to the international audience. Nazi Germany managed to use the 1936 Berlin Olympics to promote their fascist propaganda and tried to show international stakeholders a friendly peace-seeking country, a strategy which other authoritarian regimes used to legitimize their governance. Benito Mussolini did that when Italy hosted the FIFA World Cup in 1934, as well as the military Junta regime in Argentina when the country hosted the FIFA World Cup in 1978 (Murray, 2018).

In the contemporary context, Müller (2015) explores how Russia employed sportswashing through the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and at the 2018 FIFA World Cup to counter negative perceptions related to its domestic policies, including media censorship and discrimination against LGBTQ+ communities. These events provided the Russian government with an opportunity to present itself as a progressive and competent global actor, despite mounting criticism from human rights organizations. China used the 2008 Summer Olympics as a launchpad for its announcement as an emerging global superpower that combined socialist governance with liberal economic reforms as an appeal to a diverse international audience, argue Bettine and Ozdemir (2024). Media narratives during this period emphasized China's modernization and its ability to host world-class events, deflecting attention away from ongoing international criticism regarding human rights abuses specifically the suppression of dissent in Tibet and the widespread crackdowns in Xinjiang province against the majority Muslim Uyghurs (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Saudi Arabia's sponsorship and hosting of the LIV Golf, a professional golf tour backed by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), met with initial criticism by the Professional Golf Association (PGA) with the latter accusing the former of "eroding the legacy and traditions of golf, destroying the game, and negating the meritocratic structures of golf" (Nite, et al., 2023, p. 133). Scholars like Davis, Plumley, and Wilson (2023) argue that Saudi Arabia's investment in the golf event seeks to divert attention from controversial local political or human rights issues by leveraging LIV Golf in order to establish legitimacy on the international stage.

Leading up to the 2034 World Cup, there will likely be several points of social and political critique levied towards Saudi and FIFA given that Saudi, at present, falls below most global human rights standards with the right to freedom of expression and worker unionization being strictly forbidden. Criticism of such policies risks a long-term prison sentence or death (Brannagan & Danyel, 2025). Amnesty International (2024) have accused Saudi Arabia of weaponizing the death penalty to silence political dissent. The Kafala sponsorship system in place in most of Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, continues to “essentially strip expatriate workers of all social, legal, and political rights, leading to widespread exploitation, and the effective facilitation of “modern slavery” (Brannagan & Danyel, 2025, p. 8). The Human Freedom Index ranking for 2023 places the state 157th out of 165 countries thus, leading up to the 2024 World Cup, Brannagan and Danyel (2025) argue, there will be pressure on the country to improve its human rights as similarly happened to Qatar when it staged the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

One area of improvement is the state’s investment in women’s sport that will “translate into meaningful reforms regarding women’s broader social and political rights” (Brannagan & Danyel, 2025, p. 8). Additionally, while it is acknowledged that Saudi has made significant progress to develop women’s sport in the highly conservative country attributed to its Islamic law as informed by the Wahhabi form of Islam. Wahhabism is often critiqued for its perceived negative impact on women’s rights, with some interpretations leading to restrictions on women’s freedom and participation in public life, an ideology that is steadily being replaced by the Saudi Vision 2030 enacted in 2016 and fronted by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman which “aims to lessen the country’s dependence on oil, [and] diversify its economy by concentrating on tourism and entertainment sectors” (Eum, 2019, p. 115). The Vision envisages a progressive and moderate Islam and a new sense of Saudi nationalism to replace the ultra-conservative Wahhabism-based religious nationalism (Eum, 2019).

Saudi’s investment in sports, alongside its Vision 2030, has witnessed its investment in partnership with Western institutions like the PGA, Formula One racing and World Wrestling Federation. It has lured top soccer players like Cristiano Ronaldo to its national professional soccer league and has signaled interest in hosting women’s tennis tournaments. The State, through its sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), in 2021 purchased an 80% stake in the English Premier League club, Newcastle United Football Club, for an estimated fee of £300 million (US \$388 million) (BBC, 2021), and launched, in the same year, the LIV Golf series, “an invitational professional men’s golf tour that challenged the dominance of the historic PGA Tour” (Nite et al. 2024, p. 127). Reports by Amnesty International (2020) therefore argue that authoritarian states tend to launder, or whitewash, their reputation and cover up their abysmal human rights record through the glamour of hosting or promoting sports. In this regard, critiques note that while Saudi has sought to develop women sports and increasing women’s participation within society, given the shift in domestic policy, the rights of women still fall well behind their male counterparts putting to question the investment in women’s sport as another form of sportswashing, argue Brannagan and Danyel (2025). Indeed, the Human Rights Watch has labeled this investment as Saudi’s newest sportswashing strategy, one that disregards the fact that the government continues to ban Saudi women’s rights activists from travelling abroad (Human Rights Watch, 2023), and the failure to abolish the male guardianship system in its entirety

in that the practice continues to “entrench ‘a system of gender-based discrimination in most aspects of family life, including in marriage, divorce and child custody” (Brannagan & Danyel, 2025, p. 8). Furthermore, the rebranding of the Kingdom led by Crown Prince Salman comes after the 2018 murder of Saudi dissident journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, for which the Crown Prince was accused of direct involvement. As Rich and Adel (2023) opine, inasmuch as memories are remarkably short-lived on the murder of Khashoggi, Prince Salman’s rebranding agenda is charging ahead with increased fervor to engage in cultural outreach with the global community, influence global opinion, and portray itself as modern and dynamic.

The use of sportswashing as a diplomatic tool is not unique to Saudi Arabia but has been widely documented across different nations. LeJeune and Workneh (2024) discuss the role of Qatar’s successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup as a strategic move to enhance its global reputation while downplaying concerns over human rights violations, particularly related to the treatment of migrant workers. Their analysis illustrates how the massive investments in stadiums, infrastructure, and sponsorship deals serve not only as a means of sports development but also as a mechanism to shift international focus away from certain human rights issues, including migrant labor rights, women’s rights and those of the LGBTQ+ community, and individual freedoms of expression and of the press (Holmes, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2022). In the argument of Bergkvist and Skeiseid (2024), “given that autocratic regimes host a significant and growing number of international sports events, general and academic interest in sportswashing is on an upward trajectory” (p. 1091). There is a need, therefore, to extend the discussion on the implications of employing the sportswashing strategy by states in Southeast Asia with questionable human rights records.

Implications for the Southeast Asian Games (SEAG)

Southeast Asia celebrates its sports culture with the biennial Southeast Asian Games (SEAG), an event deemed “a third-tier mega event positioned beneath both the Olympics and the Asian Games” (Creak, 2020, p. 522). The forerunner to the SEAG was the South East Asia Peninsular (SEAP) Games established in 1959 by Thailand, Burma (now Myanmar), Singapore, Laos, Malaya (now Malaysia), and the then Republic of South Vietnam (which unified with North Vietnam in 1975 to form the present-day Socialist Republic of Vietnam). According to Creak (2020), the impetus of the SEAP came from the vice president of the Olympic Council of Thailand, Luang Sukhum Naiyapradith, who proposed a region sub-Asian Games separate from much larger Asian Games (Asiad) during meetings with southeast Asian counterparts at the sidelines of the 3rd Asian Games in Tokyo in 1958. The SEAP became the SEAG in 1977 with Brunei, Indonesia, and the Philippines being admitted. Since its inception in 1959, the SEAP, and later the SEAG was limited to non-communist nations until the 1980s (Huebner, 2016). The core objectives of the Games are to enhance international relations among regional member countries, and to improve the sporting standards in lieu of the Asian Games and the Olympics. Like any other mega sport event, the SEAG is large, expensive and complex in that the games are embedded in regional cultures of sport which come to “represent a unique mode of cooperation in sport as well as in Southeast Asian regional affairs” (Creak, 2020, p. 524).

Hosting the SEAG is done on a rotational basis and according to alphabetical order with the hosts given the leeway to select the sport program, which has come to characterize the uniqueness of the SEAG with the inclusion of traditional sports alongside modern ones. This trend, Creak (2020) notes, began in 1965 with the inclusion of an indigenous ball game, *sepak takraw*, that is commonly played in the region and deemed “a genuine regional heritage and ... a quintessential regional sport” (p. 524). The inclusion of traditional games in the SEAG has become a norm, reaching 43 in the 2007 edition held in Thailand, to 56 during the 2019 event held in the Philippines. Efforts to cap the number of non-Asian Games and/or Olympic sports have been ineffective in reorienting the focus towards the latter major events for which the SEAG was in part established. Critiques note that the practice has undermined the goal of building performance in Asian Games and Olympics events at the expense of enhancing the medal tallies which “allows host countries to dominate the medal tally (in the case of larger nations), or to dramatically increase the number of medals won (for smaller nations)” (Creak, 2020, p. 524). Supporters of the practice point to a nationalistic perspective arguing that the inclusion of traditional games “sees the SEA Games as a means of promoting their sport, first in Southeast Asian countries and ultimately beyond” (Creak, 2020, p. 524) exemplified by the examples of *pencak silat* (Indonesia), *muay thai* (Thailand), *arnis* (Philippines), and *vovinam* (Vietnam), among others. The argument is further made that allowing traditional games will also ensure that the host government that funds the SEAG can “gain a patriotic dividend on their investment” (Creak, 2020, p. 524). Rivalries are notably exhibited in traditional games which scholars argue exist within a system of regional competition based on a historical and geographical construct that emerged from the post-war period, and are markers that reinforce a collective sense of mutual national construction and interdependence (Creak, 2020; 2017).

Amid the vibrancy of the SEAG are fears of using the event to mask underlying issues, especially those that may infringe on the host country’s international image. For instance, Myanmar’s hosting of the SEAG in 2013 came at the expense of perceptions of its poor human rights record, and where the event “offered Myanmar an opportunity to burnish its new image as a quickly-changing country and the ceremony has been well-planned” (Min, 2015, p. 62). Amid the economic growth within the region, repression and a backslide in democracy are reported. Notable examples include the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and others by the military junta after ousting the civilian-led government in February 2021. Current Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, has been implicated in massacres in East Timor in 1983, and the 1997-1998 kidnappings of activists in Java which led to his dismissal from the army, while Vietnam and Laos remain communist states that do not hold independent elections (Pearson, 2024). A critique of the expenditure on the cauldron that holds the flame for the SEAG was made against the Philippines, and accusations of extra judicial killings of suspected narcotics peddlers, when it hosted the event in 2019. Claims were made against the cauldron costing US\$1 million which would have been better spent on welfare (Agence France-Press, 2019). The employment of sportswashing strategies by host nations of the SEAG to mask certain issues of concern within their domestic sphere remains an area for future research.

CONCLUSION

Sportswashing has become a concept applied in reference to the role of a state in projecting a favorable image of itself in the international spheres through sports whilst complementing that of soft power through strategies of public diplomacy. The ability of governments to employ sportswashing strategies serves as 'distraction' which Chadwick (2022) contends relies on a diversion namely from human rights issues that may be occurring in a said country. According to Schad (2022), sportswashing is a way to improve a nation's reputation by hosting a prestigious sports event, or even financing a popular team that in effect boosts their image globally while downplaying internal issues of concern (Lenskyj, 2020). Sportswashing occurs in a context that Herbert Simon (1998) terms 'a paradox of the plenty' where the overexposure of information enables those with the ability to "split valuable information from background noise in order to gain [soft] power" (Søyland, 2020, p. 6). The discourse on sportswashing is therefore relevant in bringing to light hidden concerns over human rights abuse amid efforts by governments at suppressing these by highlighting the distinctive wrongs of sportswashing (Fruh et al., 2022). However, as Chadwick (2018) argues, there is a dearth of academic research on the concept to empirically ground its utility beyond its simplistic and liberal application by mostly Western countries and the western media against non-western nations hosting sports mega events illustrated by case studies on China's hosting of the 2008 Olympics, Russia's hosting of the 2014 Winter Olympics and the FIFA World Cup in 2018, Qatar hosting of the FIFA 2022 World Cup, and Saudi Arabia's sponsoring of the LIV Golf event, Formula 1 Grand Prix racing, and upcoming 2034 FIFA World Cup. The discourse is relevant to events hosted in both developed and developing nations including regional events like the SEAG that biannually celebrate Southeast Asian sporting and cultural heritage under the shadows of host country specific human rights concerns.

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CRITICAL ESSAY

'Abante Babae': A Tribute to Cathy Nazareno

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines has accorded women a supportive environment in nurturing their talents, an aspect that can be attested by its consistent high ranking in gender equality in the Asia Pacific region and globally. One such supporting role is that accorded to Mary Catherine 'Cathy' Nazareno, a former football administrator having been appointed Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Match Commissioner in 2007, and recipient of the AFC Women's Match Commissioner Award in 2009, to date the only Filipino to have received this award. Cathy was able to tap into her passion for football to grow personally and professionally, as well as sharing her talents for growing the sport in the country. She is one among many Filipino women who have etched their names in the annals of Philippine sports history. This short academic essay is a tribute to Cathy based on excerpts from an interview.

Keywords: AFC Cathy; FIFA; Football; *Malditas*; Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Mary Catherine 'Cathy' Nazareno is a former football administrator having been appointed Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Match Commissioner in 2007, and recipient of the AFC Women's Match Commissioner Award in 2009, to date the only Filipino to have received this award. Cathy managed the Philippine women's national football team, then referred to as The *Malditas* (later renamed The *Filipinas*) in the early 2000s. Cathy sadly passed away in March 2019 after battling colon cancer (Go, 2019; Jambora, 2018). She was the eldest daughter of Vicky Amalingan Sales, the Chairperson of the PWU Board of Trustees. The author had an opportunity to interview Cathy at the BGC Performing Arts Theatre, Taguig City, Metro Manila on June 16, 2018, where she expressed her belief in the principle of Abante Babae, in reference to the pursuit of excellence by Filipino women. I ground Cathy's steadfast belief in this principle by using her as an example based on her committed work in putting Philippine women's soccer on the local and international map.

Cathy the Soccer-Mom

SR: Cathy, thank you for the interview. Let's start with your background; Cathy and football.

CN: I started off as a soccer mom. I don't remember what year that was, but my kids, Franky, she is now 25, she was in first grade at that time, and being a typical soccer mom, I was always there for the kids, bringing packed lunch for the team, doing stuff with Woodrose, and then she transferred to De La Salle Zobel. I think it was 2002, she transferred. And then I started to become a very active parent in La Salle Zobel. I was at the parents' association. And at the parents' association, we there was a movement working towards a sports development foundation, wherein we were supposed, the parents' association, to also assist in identifying athletes to get scholarships, because at that time it was just purely academic. So, I was one of the directors. I was one of the co-founders of the De La Salle Zobel Sports Development Foundation.¹ There were a couple of us [in the Foundation]. Lisa Elorde of the Elorde boxing family, and myself. And then we also identified the key sports in the school. So, there was taekwondo, and there was football. So, we put that Foundation, and the Foundation needed an activity, so we did a taekwondo festival and a football festival there.

Juggling DLSU-Zobel with PFF and MPLFA

SR: So how did you get involved with the PFF?

CN: And with my cousin at that time as the General Secretary of the Philippine Football Federation (PFF), Domeka Garamendi, who is now with the FIFA development office in Kuala Lumpur [Malaysia]. He asked me if I am interested in managing the women's [football] national team at that time, because he saw the success of the different activities that I handled in La Salle Zobel. And when he asked me, I was with another co parent of La Salle Zobel who was interested, Ernie [Ernest] Nierras, and I co-manage the women's national team. That was in 2006, I think². But prior to that, somebody close to then PFF president, Johnny Romualdez [Juan Miguel "Johnny" del Gallego Romualdez], asked if I could work on a group of football clubs in the south, south of Manila, to put up a group there. Because at that time, there's even until this day, there are issues with NCRFA³. They [NCRFA] were very exclusive to, you know, select teams, and to select some groups. So, they wanted me to put together something that is very inclusive. So, I decided to put up MPLFA [Muntinlupa-Paranaque-Las Piñas Football Association]. I think that's where we met. Yeah, we met in at the Muntinlupa-Paranaque-Las Piñas Football Association. At the same time, they asked me to manage the Women's National Team. Two things that I was doing at the same time!

¹ In 2002, the DLSZ Parents Association incorporated the DLSZ Parents Association Sports Development Foundation (SDF) as an autonomous agency under its wings in recognition of the need for communal commitment to and support for sports and athlete development. The SDF is now working closely with the PE Department and the Sports Development Office as a recommendatory body. Source: <https://www.dlszobel.edu.ph/index.php/our-network/sports-development-foundation/>

² Ernest Nierras, along with Cathy Rivilla, were named team managers of the Philippine women's national football team then under head coach Marlon Maro in 2005. They were first task to manage the national

³ NCRFA refers to the National Capital Region Football Association, one of the 28 Associations of the Philippine Football Federation. See: <https://pff.org.ph/about-the-pff/member-associations/>

Learning the Ropes and Prevailing: Epitomizing the Resilient Filipina

CN: So, at the time I got to manage the women's national team, it was a big, big effort. And it was difficult on my part, because obviously, I know how to organize. Organization, I think, is one of my best tricks. However, financial, is very difficult. But we were able to get sponsors here, and were able there to fly. At that time, the *Azkals*⁴ were not big yet. In fact, at that time, we had a bigger chance in getting to the world stage than the *Azkals* with the girls, because we were stronger⁵. However, because of financial limitations, it was very difficult to enter teams, to get to get ourselves into tournaments, international tournaments. Because, when we would join tournaments, we would have to personally shoulder the costs for the trips. There was no FIFA and AFC assistance yet at that time. It was a difficult time for all of us, but it was an eye opener that today, we are able to qualify to the Asian Cup (2019)⁶. So, it was a long, long journey.

Having a Stake at the International Level: Cathy the FIFA Match Commissioner

CN: Through the time managing the women's national team, in 2007, FIFA had an Asian women's football seminar hosted here in the Philippines. The PFF played host to that event. A lot of Asian countries came, and me being the manager of the women's national team, had to present something, plans or whatever. I'm not so sure if it was the plans I presented that attracted FIFA and AFC to what I did, or was it my spoken English, that they asked me, immediately after I spoke, if I can be of assistance with FIFA and AFC, and then I became a match commissioner. And then I had to go through a seminar in Kuala Lumpur. I myself had to learn the game. I had to learn the game. I, when I get into something, I don't want it to be half big. I want to know, even if I don't know. So, what I did was I would stay late nights watching matches with Manchester United. I remember vividly I would watch day and night, and I would research. And I was assigned so many men's matches in the Asian region, that by 2008, I was given the match commissioner of the Year Award [AFC Women's Match Commissioner]. So, it was just really learning and having that leadership quality essential for the roles I played as match commissioner.

⁴ *Azkals* refers to the nickname of the national men's football team (PMNFT). The nickname came into the public's consciousness in 2005 when the team was preparing for the 23rd edition of Southeast Asian Games (SEAG) football qualifiers. *The Azkals* reflects two meanings: first, that of a less pejorative reference to the biracial players scouted from the Filipino Diaspora, and second, that of an underdog known for its resilience amid adversities. The nickname was officially dropped as a reference by the Philippine Football Federation in 2024 (Carandang, 2024; Leyba, 2023; PFF 2023).

⁵ The women's national team's strong demeanor was reflected in its nickname, *The Malditas*. According to Marielle Benitez Javellena, a former team captain, the nickname was attributed on the perception of the team's combative and feisty demeanor (*palaban* in Tagalog) (Nacino, 2012). This attitude is symbolically reflected in the team's unofficial logo in the form of a silhouette performing a tactical and skillful football kick, the scissor kick. The nickname, *The Malditas*, was given by team's coach, Ernie Nierras, as the squad prepared for the 23rd edition of SEAG in 2005 (Verora, 2022).

⁶ This interview took place following the qualification of the Philippine women's football team for the 2018 Asian Cup held in Jordan which incidentally was the first time the team qualified for the main championship ever since its first participated in 1981 in the qualifying rounds while not making any significant progress. Qualification for the continental tournament came a year ahead of the men's team which qualified for its maiden appearance in the Asian Cup (men) in 2019. The women's team surpassed the men's team when it qualified for its second appearance at the Asian Cup in 2022 held in India which also proved historic when the team qualified for the 2023 FIFA World Cup co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand virtue of finishing among the top 4 at the Asian Cup tournament.

On Breaking the Glass Ceiling and Confronting Toxic Masculinity

CN: The fun part of my time as an AFC match commissioner, is, that when I got there, I didn't treat myself as if I'm a woman. I treated myself as an official. There shouldn't be any distinction. As an official there shouldn't be. I mentioned it because people say, Oh, you're a woman. I've heard that being told to me. And there was a reason why AFC started to have ID cards. Right before there wasn't any. I started it because when I went to, I think it was a Qatar, in 2009. I went to the stadium with the proper people, and I had my AFC jacket on. A really good stadium, a beautiful stadium. But the stadium manager told me to get out, because I was a woman. I asked why and he said you are a woman, and I said, no, am with the AFC. I had to report to AFC that I was asked to leave because I was a woman, and the only way to do it is to have an ID, because I only showed my AFC emblazoned jacket. I think it was a men's match, a Champions League match, a club game. Oh, that wasn't the first one but that was the first time I was asked to leave (an event), but obviously I didn't leave, right? So, I had to put my foot on the ground that I'm not leaving even if you don't want me to here. So, I'm just, yeah, so whether you treat me as a woman or not, I'm still here as an official. Yeah. Um, they, I believe the club owner let the guy apologize to me. Now, slowly this year (2018), there's a select number of women match commissioners who were asked to oversee men's matches again, first time this year, three of them; one is Singapore, one is Hong Kong, and the other Philippines.

CN: I don't want to boast, but I think I, myself, would probably be one of the local tournament organizers when there are tournaments or festivals. And that is where a lot of the males would say, Oh, she's just a woman. Other teams, they would always challenge me and my decisions. But at the end of the day, the outcome is great. For example, all the way to the championship, I would calculate points, and they, the men, would challenge me why the points are like that. I would ask them why do you think you are correct, and not me? So, that ways, I would confront their prejudice and put them in the right place through the transparent process of calculating points, and in that way, I would just make sure that they're wrong, mostly towards the local men.

Abante Babae: The Filipinas Striking Ahead of Men's Football

SR: How is it going with Philippine women in football from all levels?

CN: Obviously qualifying for the [2019] Asian Women's Cup is a big deal. Well, we knew beforehand, back in 2007 that we will be ahead of the men [national team], which we did. So, it's just a matter of time. So, it is a matter of time that we surpass them!

CN: I think, um, I think we'll eventually succeed in the Asian Cup [and World Cup⁷] if we just prepare properly. Um, and also, I think that we will have very, very good women administrators in the football in the future. Oh, yeah. We can see with the team that we managed way back, with Marielle [Benitez Javellana]. Marielle is doing very well in her career. So is the other girl, um, Natasha Alquiros [Deyto], who also is now one of the managers. They both do sports commentators on TV, Tasha and Mariel⁸. But administrative wise, they are also very good. There is also Sam, the daughter to Ernie Nierras. She managed the [Loyola Meralco] Sparks. The more we expose them, administratively, I think the women will get strong. Yeah.

Spurring Interest in the Sports among Filipinos at the Grassroots

CN: I've gotten myself more into organizing during events for corporations. Okay. We have the Gatorade Cup coming up. And I want to focus on that as a person. Because I think that companies can actually market their brands. Through sports in general, but I always focus on football. I can get 100 to 200 teams in one week out. Yeah. uh, 200 teams multiplied by, I'm going to do my math. Okay 200 teams multiplied by 15. Okay 15 in a team. Three thousand players. The three thousand players plus 12,000 eyeballs in one week watching them, from parents, to yayas to drivers, and all in one arena in one day or in two days. So that's my selling point to brands. And little do they know that the youth clubs develop more football players than any other sports. There are mixed teams in the six- to twelve-year-old range. Then you get fourteen- and sixteen-year-olds. Yeah. You already have a women's division for that. So, there's a fourteen girl's division and a sixteen-year-old's division.

⁷ This interview took place 4 years before the Filipinas qualified for the FIFA World Cup in 2023 where expectation has been set for the Philippines to feature in all future FIFA World Cup events.

⁸ Both Natasha Alquiros and Marielle B. Javellana played for the Philippine women's national team, with the latter captaining the team. Marielle has had a stint as national team coach for the Philippine girls under 14-year-old, and involved with the senior women's team (del Carmen, 2016). Away from the turf, Marielle has performed as a football commentator and sports analyst for local football tournaments along with Natasha Alquiros, and co-presented with former captain of the men's national football team, Ally Boromeo, in a series called 'Road to Rio' about the preparation for the 2014 FIFA World Cup for a local Philippine media house, the ABS-CBN. Marielle is currently the Director of Campus Life at the Philippine Women's University (PWU), Manila, and Executive Director of the Bayanihan Folk Arts Foundation Inc. (Olivares, 2021). Natasha holds the post of president of the Philippines Women's Football Association (PWFA), a non-profit organization that "aims to increase women in football" across the country by providing education, support, opportunity, information and mentoring in the various aspects of women's football (Morales, 2021). Natasha, married to the men's national team goalkeeper, Patrick Deyto, is an advocate of the women's game in the Philippines (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=593196858524891>)

Sports Role Models

SR: Did you have any role models that you looked up to football or something?

CN: Cristiano Ronaldo. Yeah. I like the way he played. Yeah, at that time, obviously, Alex Ferguson was somebody that I looked up to and Jose Mourinho⁹. The only female football player that I was really admiring at that time was [Homare] Sawa. She's from Japan. I would see her playing during tournaments. She was just, you know, someone who's very different from the rest. She won the FIFA Award. Yeah, she won the FIFA award at one time¹⁰.

CONCLUSION

According to Ma. Josefina Vibar Bauzon (1997), the country has accorded women in the Philippines the necessary supportive role, an aspect that can be attested by its consistent high ranking in gender equality in the Asia Pacific region and globally. Ma. Josefina Vibar Bauzon (1997) notes the following, in this regard:

It fitting and proper that we look at the role our present society has played in helping us [women] in our struggle to achieve equality of the sexes not only in human rights, but also in physical education and sport. Without fear of contradiction, I state that though we have been regarded as laggards of the (southeast Asian) region in terms of industrialization, the Filipino woman, through their own efforts, fired by their innate drive for world-class achievements in all fields of human endeavor, have surpassed their counterparts in many countries. Lea Salonga, Cecile Licad, Nieves Confesor and Mona Sulaima n are only a few of the notable Filipino women whose names are known internationally (p. 10).

Ma. Josefina Bauzon was humble enough not to include herself in this list as she was the first woman to sit as Commissioner of the Philippine Sports Commission following extensive experience of over three decades in the field of physical education and sport which provided her with the enthusiasm and determination to confront the complex challenges besetting the country's sporting system. It would further give solace to Ma'am Buazon that Filipino women have since her time taken great strides in sports at the international level noting the indelible marks left by Lydia de Vega, once dubbed 'Asia's track queen' for her remarkable winning performances in the 100m athletics sprints at the Asian Games in 1982 and 1986 (Dancel, 2022), and Hidilyn Diaz's victory in the women's 55kg weightlifting event at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics which ended the Philippines' 97 year wait for its first ever Olympic gold medal. Other references include the qualification to the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup by the Philippine women's national football team, *The Filipinas*, and recently,

⁹ Cristiano Ronaldo is Portuguese soccer player and multiple award winner of the best footballer in the world (2008 FIFA World Player of the Year; The Best FIFA Men's Player Award in 2016 and 2017, and 5 Ballon d'Ors); Alex Ferguson is a former manager of Manchester United in England who won the treble in 1999 (FA Cup, English Premier League, and the UEFA Champions League trophies). Jose Mourinho is a famous Portuguese team manager, and the first winner of the men's FIFA World Coach of the Year award in 2010.

¹⁰ Homare Sawa, former captain of the Japanese women's football team, won the 2011 FIFA Women's World Player of the Year award, after leading Japan to victory in the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup (Source: <https://www.plus.fifa.com/en/content/homare-sawa-golden-ball-award-fifa-womens-world-cup-germany-2011/616a1ddb-cebc-46b2-b5ad-ffb886cc2fdc?gl=ph>)

the performance of the tennis prodigy, Alexandra 'Alex' Eala, who became the first Filipina to play in the finals of the Miami Open Tournament, making her the highest ranked Filipina in Women's tennis Association (WTA) Tour history after achieving a career high singles ranking of number 73 globally on 7th April, 2025. The list is growing, and certainly, Cathy Nazareno has earned her spot in the annals of Philippine sport and the role of women in this endeavor. In their eulogy, the Philippine Football Federation (PFF) summed Cathy's role thus:

Her passion for football was extraordinary as exemplified by her dedication in promoting youth football and efficiently acting as coordinator in numerous national team matches in the country (PFF, 2019).

Forever thankful; *Maraming Salamat po, Cathy!*



Source: www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10158512811399992&set=t.546828094&type=3

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BOOK REVIEW

**Alaurin, E.D. (2021). *Sports in the Philippines: History, values, spirituality*.
University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.**

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ABSTRACT

When we hear the word “sports,” many of us tend to think of it as a purely physical activity that only involves bodily movements, necessitating very little effort from the cognitive aspect. Many people also see it as merely a hobby and a form of entertainment. But Fr. Edgardo D. Alaurin has a different take on this matter. “There is more to the game than meets the eye” (p.196), wrote Fr. Alaurin in his *Sports in the Philippines: History, Values, Spirituality*. There are many published works already on the history of sports both in the Philippine and global context, as well as on the philosophy of sports. But one unique contribution of Fr. Alaurin through this book is his presentation of a Filipino Christian, or more specifically, Filipino Thomasian view of sports. Through this work, Fr. Alaurin brings depth to sports, giving it a deeper existential meaning for human life.

Keywords: *Fr. Edgardo D. Alaurin; Physical culture; Spirituality; Sports Thomasian.*

INTRODUCTION

When we hear the word “sports,” many of us tend to think of it as a purely physical activity that only involves bodily movements, necessitating very little effort from the cognitive aspect. Many people also see it as merely a hobby or a form of entertainment. But Fr. Edgardo D. Alaurin has a very different take on the matter. “There is more to game than meets the eye” (p.196), wrote Fr. Alaurin in his *Sports in the Philippines: History, Values, Spirituality*. Through this work, Fr. Alaurin brings depth to sports, giving it a deeper existential meaning for human life. Before we proceed to the main part of the review, let us first have a short look at the background of the book’s author.

Who is Fr. Edgardo D. Alaurin?

Fr. Alaurin is a religious priest who belongs to the Order of Preachers (O.P), also known as the Dominican Order. After obtaining his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy degree from the Dominican House of Studies (Quezon City) in 1979, he proceeded to study in the University of Santo Tomas (UST). A full-blooded Thomasian, all of his succeeding degrees came from the UST Faculty of Sacred Theology, including his Bachelor in Sacred Theology (1982), Licentiate and Master of Arts in Sacred Theology (2006), and Doctorate in Sacred

Theology (2011). Aside from teaching as an Assistant Professor of UST Faculty of Sacred Theology, he also served in different capacities for the university, including being a member of the UST Council of Regents, Course Coordinator of the M.A. Cultural Heritage Studies under UST Graduate School, Director of UST Museum of Arts and Sciences, and Regent of UST Faculty of Civil Law, and Regent of College of Fine Arts and Design (UST n.d.).

Two decades before the publications of his *Sports in the Philippines*, Fr. Alaurin (2006) wrote an article on the same topic, entitled “Renewal in Filipino cultural values through athletics and sports.” But his interest is not limited to the field of sports. His other specialization is Marian devotion. He published two books along these lines: *The Theology and Mariology behind the Image of Nuestra Señora de Salvacion of Joroan* (Alaurin, 2011) and *Nuestra Señora de Salvacion: History, Theology, Piety* (Alaurin, 2019). He also wrote the article “Mary, mother of the light and salvation,” which was published in *Philippiniana Sacra* (Alaurin, 2020).

Alaurin the theologian is also Alaurin the literary writer, as his publications also include a fantasy graphic novel entitled *Cargasus: The Flying Carabao* (Alaurin, 2020). It follows the adventures of Pikoy and his father Maguilas, who is helped by their pet, a flying *carabao* named *Cargasus* (combination of the words *carabao* and *pegasus*). Aside from incorporating elements from Filipino culture (such as *kapre* and *aswang*), it also teaches Christian values and faith (Varsitarian, 2024). The novel won Gold in the People’s Choice - Excellence in Customer Empowerment category of the 2021 PANATA Awards (Songco, n.d.).

An Overview of the Book’s Content

The present book under review is not only an academic exercise for Fr. Alaurin. It stems from his personal experiences as a sports practitioner. According to Fr. Filemon dela Cruz Jr. (2021), the Prior Provincial of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, Fr. Alaurin regularly played basketball during his seminary days. He also served as the athletic moderator of Colegio de San Juan de Letran, where he guided university students in becoming excellent Christian athletes. He was the one who wrote the Athlete’s Creed of Letran, which merges sports and the Christian faith. In fact, it can be argued that this is the main thrust of Fr. Alaurin’s book: a Christian (particularly Thomasian) meditation on sports in the context of Filipino society and culture.

Consisting of 244 pages, the book is divided into 10 chapters, which have been grouped into three main parts. The three main parts correspond to the topics which are directly indicated by the book’s subtitle: History, Values, and Spirituality. Chapters 1-3 deal with the historical development of sports, Chapters 4-6 are all about values and virtues in sports, and Chapters 7-10 delve into the religious background as well as spiritual relevance of sports.

In Chapter 1, Fr. Alaurin explores the place of sports in ancient civilizations such as the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Chinese, Indian and Japanese societies. He follows the development of sports in different major epochs of world history: antiquity, early Christian

period, Medieval period, the time of the Renaissance, up to the birth of modern Olympics in the contemporary period.

In Chapter 2, he narrates the development of sports in the Philippines during the colonial period. After a short mention of some indigenous games during the period of *sinaunang pamayanan* (before the coming of the colonizers) such as *holen*, *sungka*, *taguan*, among others, Fr. Alaurin continues to discuss the games brought by the Spaniards. Then he goes on to narrate the sports brought by the Americans such as horse racing and polo, as well as the role of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in the popularization of sports among the Filipino youth.

The contemporary development of sports in the Philippines is the main concern of Chapter 3. Fr. Alaurin mentions here the establishment of modern sports venues in the country such as the Rizal Memorial Coliseum, Araneta Coliseum, PhilSports Arena, Mall of Asia Arena, and others. He features in this chapter some famous Filipino sports heroes such as Gabriel Elorde, Efren "Bata" Reyes, Robert Jaworski, Manny Pacquiao, Paeng Nepomoceno, among others. He also discusses the further institutionalization of sports in the Philippines through the educational system, as well as the Philippine involvement in the Olympics.

Chapter 4 lays down the principles that the author will eventually use in the subsequent chapters of the book. He explains here the seven main virtues according to Thomas Aquinas: prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, faith, hope and love. He also explains the holistic approach to wellness that includes both the physical and spiritual aspects.

In Chapter 5, Fr. Alaurin provides an overview of the Filipino value system. He also presents the ambivalence of Filipino values, which can have either positive or negative implications. He adds here the discussion of the value of sports for the Filipino culture.

Filipino values are also the focus of Chapter 6, but this time, Fr. Alaurin actually applies these values as well as virtues to sports. Several Filipino values are tackled in this part, such as hospitality, *pakikisama* (getting along), *bayanihan/makabayan* (heroism/love of country), *maka-Diyos* (God-fearing), *utang na loob* (gratitude), *lakas ng loob* (courage), *hiya* (shame), *paggalang* (respect), *masayahin* (happiness), *amor propio* (self-love), *delicadeza* (dignity), and *palabra de honor* (integrity). Even Filipino vices are included such as *Juan Tamad* (being lazy) and *ober-da-bakod* (cheating). Almost all the parts of this chapter follow a similar pattern: (1) a particular Filipino value is discussed, (2) the value is applied to sports, and (3) the biblical basis or counterpart of such value is explained.

Chapter 7 deals with the religious nature and function of sports. Here, Fr. Alaurin presents the religious background of sports in ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Japanese civilizations. He also surveys the theme of sports in the Old and New Testaments.

The next chapter is tightly connected with the previous one. In Chapter 8, Fr. Alaurin explores the spiritual functions of sports such as its pedagogical value in teaching morality, athletes as moral models, sports as a metaphor for spiritual living, sports as an instrument for the promotion of world peace, and sports as means of evangelization.

To concretize his discussion, he demonstrates in Chapter 9 the embodiment of these values/virtues and spiritual relevance of sports in the person's actual real-life models. Here, special attention is given to famous individuals who showed the fusion between faith and sports in their lives such as John Don Bosco, Pope John Paul II, Eric Liddell, Gino Bartali, Stephen Curry, Carlo Acutis, Hidilyn Diaz, among others.

Chapter 10 serves as the conclusion of the book. It culminates Fr. Alaurin's Christian meditation on sports, which gives emphasis on sports as the metaphor of life itself: like a race, we must run until we reach the finish line, the line which divides time and eternity.

A Filipino Thomasian View of Sports: Some Commendatory Notes for Fr. Alaurin's Work

There are many published works already on the history of sports both in the Philippine and global contexts, as well as on the philosophy of sports. But one unique contribution of Fr. Alaurin through this book is his presentation of a Filipino Christian, or more specifically, Filipino Thomasian view of sports. On one hand, the book is a welcome contribution to the indigenization or Filipinization of sports as an academic study. Not only does it present the history of sports in the Philippines and its contemporary developments, Fr. Alaurin's work also provides a view of sports from the perspective of Filipino values. On the other hand, the book also lays down a Thomasian meditation on sports, wherein he utilizes the seven virtues of Thomas Aquinas (i.e., faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance). It is necessary in the opinion of Fr. Alaurin, since as he argues, Filipino values are ambivalent, they can be used either for good or for evil. By using the virtues of Aquinas as a guide, Filipino values can be applied to sports to promote the moral formation of athletes and the Filipino public in general as spectators.

In this sense, Fr. Alaurin's goal is similar to the vision of another Filipino theologian, the Jesuit Fr. Vitaliano Gorospe, who tried in his works to transform Filipino values through the help of the Christian gospel (Tano 1981). The only difference is that Fr. Alaurin concretely applies this vision in sports. For him, sports is an effective vehicle for the moral reformation of the society, since Filipinos are fond of sports, whether professional sports (like basketball, volleyball, swimming, marathon, gymnastics) or popular games (like *tumbang preso*, *habulan*, *agawang-base*, *piko*, etc.). He sees it as a tool of new evangelization, of penetrating and transforming Filipino society in a way that is in line with the Gospel values. Fr. Alaurin shows that this use of sports for the new evangelization is rooted in the Bible itself, citing biblical use of sports as a metaphor of the Christian life (like Paul's admonition to Christians in 1 Corinthians 9:24 to run the race of life). He also frequently cites various statements of Catholic leaders like Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis, and others, who perceive sports in a similar light. Together with these figures, Fr. Alaurin believes the pedagogical potential of sports in teaching values and spirituality, since famous athletes instantly become role models, whose virtues could be emulated by the younger generation. Athletes themselves are morally shaped by their coaches and by sports itself, since their training molds their sense of discipline, courage, endurance, hope, cooperation, among other virtues.

Some Critical Notes

In the previous part, we have noted that one laudable aspect of the book is its presentation of a Filipino Thomasian meditation on sport, wherein he applies Filipino values to sports, as guided by Thomasian virtues. Yet one shortcoming of the work is the lack of full integration in Fr. Alaurin's discussion between Filipino values and Thomasian virtues in the context of sports. Although Thomasian virtues are discussed in Chapter 4, Filipino values in Chapter 5, and the synthesis of the two in Chapters 6 and 8, there is really no in-depth "conversation" between the two in the book of Fr. Alaurin. It is as if Fr. Alaurin is laying down two approaches in the study of sports, through Filipino values and Thomasian virtues, instead of a fully integrated Filipino Thomasian approach to sports. I believe that what is lacking is not on the side of the discussion of Filipino values (which was treated in detail), but on the exposition of Aquinas' virtues and their application as a guide or corrective to Filipino values.

This "conversation" between Filipino values and Thomasian virtues would have been more in-depth if the author utilized an already existing framework on the merging of the two, namely, the project of Filipino Thomasian virtue-ethics of Jeremiah Reyes. In his works, Reyes (2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2016) issued a call among Filipino ethicists to transition from values education to virtue ethics as a framework in the teaching of morality in the Philippines. Reyes argues that a Filipino Thomasian virtue-ethics can be built on the foundation of two main Filipino concepts, *loob* and *kapwa*. Using these two as pillars, he then proceeds to offer the dynamic equivalents of Thomasian virtues in Filipino virtue, namely: love as *kagandahang-loob*, justice as *utang na loob*, fortitude as *lakas ng loob/bahala na*, prudence as *pakikiramdam*, and temperance as *hiya*. Some younger theologians/philosophers of the University of Santo Tomas followed suit to Reyes' efforts, and presented other contextualizations of Thomasian virtues, such as faith as *maka-Diyos* (Morada, 2024), virtuous anger as *galit* and *pagpapakabayani* (Ifigo, 2024), friendship as *pakikisama* (Boñon, 2024), and mercy as *pang-unawa* (Aboy, 2024). I wonder how much more interesting it might have been if these contextualized virtues were applied to sports in Fr. Alaurin's book.

Another issue I have on Fr. Alaurin's work is his historiography. About his discussion of sports in the global context, it still follows the traditional Eurocentric periodization of world history which is usually divided into Classical Period (Antiquity), Early Christianity, Medieval Period, Renaissance, and Modern Period. This periodization explains European history well since it reflects their own historical experiences, but it does not sufficiently represent the history of what we now call as the "Majority World" (Africa, Asia, South America, Oceania).

This problem is coupled with another one, namely, Fr. Alaurin's focus is on civilizations which are usually considered as the "great traditions" such as Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Chinese, and Indian civilizations. The great tradition is a concept formulated by the sociologist Robert Redfield, and it usually refers to civilizations considered as more advanced and urbanized, having huge architectural works, written tradition (existing philosophical and literary works), codified laws, among others. Meanwhile, there are other societies which are oral and more rural, which are considered as "little traditions." When great and little traditions come into

contact with each other, it is thought that little traditions tend to passively receive foreign influence from great traditions. But this distinction between great and little traditions is clearly Euro-centric, since the prerequisites imposed for a civilization to be considered a “great tradition” clearly reflects the characteristics of European societies (literate, presence of codified laws, and huge architectural works). It is as if traditional European historians are saying “you can just be considered civilized if your culture is similar to ours.” And since they saw these European characteristics in Egyptian, Chinese, and Indian societies, they declare them as “great traditions.” Meanwhile, ancient societies which are lacking in some of these prerequisites are considered as “little traditions” and “primitives.” That is why traditional world history textbooks usually focus on Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Chinese, and Indian history, while leaving behind the history of African, Southeast Asian, South American, and Oceanic societies (Santos, 2020). But how can this kind of world history be truly global if it does not represent the historical experiences of the Majority World?

Fr. Alaurin falls into this trap by focusing only on the historical development of sports in Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Chinese and Indian civilizations. No attempt was made to give voice to the African (other than Egyptian), South American, Oceanic, and Southeast Asian (aside from the Philippine) traditional sports or games. The limit in space cannot be used as justification for the absence of these civilizations, since 10 pages are reserved for Greek history alone. Other individual countries are given the spotlight such as China, India, and Japan (which are usually considered as great traditions). We are not saying that there must be country-by-country representations, since the work is not an encyclopedia of world history of sports. Yet if space were given to some individual countries, surely a 2 to 5 pages discussion of some continents of the Majority World is possible.

Thus, the historiography of the book’s world history of sports can be argued to be Eurocentric both in the dimension of time (periodization) and space (geographical coverage).

Some of these problematic aspects of the book in terms of global historiography of sports can also be observed in its Philippine historiography of sports. It only provides a 2-page discussion of precolonial Philippine games, 6 pages for the Spanish period, and 13 pages for the American period. As if this 2-page treatment of precolonial Philippines is not enough to highlight that the majority of Philippine games are borrowed from our colonial masters, Fr. Alaurin even insists that these precolonial Philippine games “may have been influenced by the early Malays, Indians and Chinese ancestors” (p.38). After reading this part of the book, one is led to think whether we really have games that can be considered as indigenous, or everything that we have is foreign influences. Ramon Guillermo (2003) summarizes well Zeus Salazar’s critique against this Filipino tendency to overemphasize foreign influences, which is dubbed as “discourses of influence”:

“Discourses of influence” which attributes the origins of both the distinguishing elements and the motive forces of Philippine history and culture to “external” influences. These are also manifested as symptoms of unease or discontent with “one’s own” culture and of a constant striving to legitimize it by attributing its origin to some “more elevated” sources. The point of reference of discourses of influence is usually the originating culture while the receiving culture is merely analyzed in relation to its adequacy to or divergence from the original (ex., “Maria is beautiful because her father was half-Spanish”; “The Filipino is a jumble of traits from India, China, Europe, and America”). Discourses which focus on the purported “lack of identity” of Filipinos is an auxiliary discourse which accomplishes the preliminary act of emptying Filipino identity the better to fill it to the brim with influences.

We are not denying the fact that many popular sports in the Philippines, enjoyed by Filipinos, derived from foreign countries. We are only insisting that if the majority of space is reserved for the sports which came from other countries, surely it is not too much to ask for a few pages on the treatment of native Filipino games from different ethnic groups in the archipelago. Surely, there are many ethnographical accounts that can be used for this endeavor. Fr. Alaurin cites another work which narrates Antonio Pigafetta’s account of some indigenous games, but it consists of only 9 direct quotation lines (within the 2-page discussion of Philippine precolonial games) (p.37). Then after this, he proceeds to mention the foreign provenance of some Philippine precolonial games, before jumping immediately to the Spanish colonial period.

Yet, despite all these issues, the book deserves the benefit of the doubt with regard to its historiography, since Fr. Alaurin is mainly a philosopher-theologian and not a professional historian.

Closing Remarks

In general, notwithstanding the historiographical issues, Fr. Alaurin’s theological analysis mixes well with his philosophical and sociological discussions in the book, which leads another reviewer to describe the book as follows (Turingan, 2023):

The reader will become well-versed not just in the field of history, but also in the field of sociology, culture, and most especially, spirituality. How Fr. Alaurin was able to integrate these concepts in one output is one of the many reasons why readers have to spend time reading this source material.

This interdisciplinary approach to sports is what makes the book not just academically significant but practically relevant as well. Athletes who would read the book will serve themselves well, as this could lead to a deeper appreciation of their profession. After reading the book, they would realize that sports is not just a money-making enterprise, or a way towards fame and success, instead, they will see sports as a vocation (literally, “calling”), a

mission and means to serve God, country, and fellow human beings. In the same line, the book is also a must read for coaches, as it will guide them on how to train their players in such a way that they will be shaped not just physically but also morally and spiritually. In the academic side of things, it is also recommended to teachers and professors who teach the history of sports, as this book is a valuable resource that presents various developments in the field of sports in the country, including the rise of sports organizations, venues, famous athletes, laws supporting the flourishing of sports, among others.

The book can be enjoyed even by laypersons in the field of sports, non-experts, or people who are just sports enthusiasts but are not teachers of sports or athletes and coaches themselves. Aside from Fr. Alaurin's way of writing which is clear and reader-friendly (not full of jargon), the book is also decorated with many picture illustrations, dispersed in various parts of the book. In fact, there are 56 illustrations in the whole book, some are photographs of actual players, but the majority are artworks. The book is commendable for featuring artworks made by local artists. Many of these depict Filipino kids who are full of smiles and are playing various kinds of indigenous games. These artworks and photographs make the book entertaining, especially for non-experts in the field of sports. This important place of arts in Fr. Alaurin's book is not surprising, considering that he is not just a theologian and sports expert, but a creative writer as well. We have mentioned in part of the author's background that prior to the publication of *Sports in the Philippines*, Fr. Alaurin wrote the graphic novel, *Cargasus*, a story of a child's travel accompanied by his pet, a flying carabao.

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BOOK REVIEW

“My Reflections on 50 years in the Philippines” by Nathanielsz Ronnie, Philippines. VRJ Books Publishing Inc. Philippines, 2018, 159 pp.

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Keywords: *boxing; Philippines; Ronnie Nathanielsz; sports journalism; Thrilla in Manila.*

This review explores the life and works of sports journalist Ronnie Nathanielsz (late), where the author reflects on his extensive career in sports journalism in the Philippines spanning diverse roles at DZHP Radio Mindanao Network, the Philippine Herald Newspaper and IBC 13. Originally from Sri Lanka, Ronnie was granted Philippine citizenship by President Ferdinand Marcos Sr., through the Presidential Decree 192 signed in May 1973. Ronnie is a beloved character who built his name in the field of sports journalism. He was equally loved and despised in Philippine politics, sports and in the world of showbiz entertainment. On his Facebook page, Ronnie described himself as “A remarkable sports analyst, exceptional journalist, reliable friend, and a loving father”.

The book begins with a Foreword penned by his eldest son, Cliff Nathanielsz, followed by an introduction and a colorful 15 chapters which offer the reader a gateway into the glitz and glamor of Filipino sports celebrities and memorable events reflective of the oft mentioned ‘golden age’ in Philippine history. The book weaves a beautiful tapestry through in-depth investigative pieces, real-time game analysis and intimate athlete profiles.

Chapter 1 begins with Ronnie going down the memory lane reminiscing on his humble beginnings, his numerous love affairs accompanied by wine, dining and pains. Chapter 2 covers the momentous tours by several pop icons and bands in Manila including the British pop group, The Beatles, Duke Ellington, Bob Crosby and the Bobcats who played Dixieland jazz at the Araneta. He even wrote on the Miss Asia Beauty Pageant, then known as Miss Asia Quest, that was held in Manila in 1968 and won by the Taiwanese Shih Mei-ling.

The next Chapter, entitled The Vigilantes, takes a political angle on the Presidential era of the 70s. The Chapter provides an account of the natural disasters and man-made disasters that bedeviled the nation. The Chapter situates Ronnie in the everyday life of Filipinos, one that is juxtaposed in politics and resiliency against unpredictable calamities. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the boxing maestro, Gabriel Elorde popularly known as ‘Flash’. The Chapter is quite an intimate writing about the legendary boxer detailing the champion’s moments of highs and lows in and outside the boxing arena. Ronnie covers Flash’s all-important title fights and world titles including those fights at New York’s Madison Square Garden, Tokyo, and in Hawaii. He has seen the pressure being built up around the Flash to the moment

he hangs up his gloves. The Chapter weaves a beautiful narrative of the boxer's life to the legend's final moments in the hospital. Ronnie was there in thick and thin, so to speak, and ends this chapter with a beautiful tribute to Gabriel "Flash" Elorde in an epic immortalizing final act of the quintessential Filipino champion who "feared no man but was humble before all men".

Chapter 5 takes a needful shift away from the emotive narrative on the Flash, to a brighter story about the 'Thrilla in Manila', the third installment of the world heavyweight boxing championship fight between Muhammed 'The Greatest' Ali and Joe 'Smoking' Frazier on October 1st, 1975. The fight is regarded as one of the best boxing fights in history with the theme of the contest derived from Ali's boastful rhyme that the fight would be "a killa and a thrilla and a chilla, when I get that gorilla in Manila" (Chalasan, 2015). In attendance at the fight was President Ferdinand Marcos Sr., and First Lady, Imelda Marcos. In the run up to the 'Thriall', Ronnie writes about his appointment as Ali's liaison officer where he had the rare fortune of having a 30-minute interview with 'The Great' himself. Ronnie's account of this momentous time provides readers with a front-row seat to one of the most significant moments in boxing history in Manila. His time spent with Ali and in covering the boxing event provides a flow to Chapter 6 which Ronnie turns back to his journalist role providing details on the World Boxing Council's (WBC) safety measures, meetings, conventions and other technicalities of the game, vital for any reader who needs some ABCs on boxing following the coverage of the Ali-Frazier bout, and in transition to the next chapter on the International Boxing Hall of Famer, none other than the Philippines' own, eight-weight world champion, Emmanuel 'Manny' Pacquiao.

Ronnie justifiably covers the journey of Manny Pacquiao in Chapter 7 churning out the boxing legend's rags to riches story. The Chapter is a testimony about Manny's transformation from fun nights to his preaching about Christ's love and serving the community through active political participation. Ronnie's writing is characterized by genuine enthusiasm and deep respect for Manny Pacquiao, both from the boxing arena and the political playground as a Senator. This dedicated coverage brings out Ronnie's nationalist outlook of being 'pinoy' by linking his coverage of Manny just as any Filipino does by affiliating with the boxer, either through his sporting underdog exploits, or through his resilient life story and deep spirituality. The Filipino in the Sri Lankan thus comes out in Chapter 8 where Ronnie provides his account of becoming a citizen of the country following a presidential decree. Ronnie proudly displays evidence of his citizenship showing documents from his oath taking ceremony, to the Presidential letter that granted citizenship, like a seal of approval for being pinoy. The next chapters detail Ronnie's anecdotes from his time as a journalist covering not only boxing but also football, basketball, Olympians and various other sports events. His writing is characterized by genuine love for sports and the athletes themselves. Ronnie empties his notebooks of a lifetime's worth of great stories, observations, and anecdotes for the book. The book includes memorable on-camera moments with sports stars like Muhammad Ali, current legend Manny Pacquiao, Gabriel Elorde and other reigning superstars from other sports and the entertainment world. His sharing with the greats showcases an interesting friendship which adds a unique personal touch in the book. It was, however, unfortunate that his last chapter was finished by his son due to his passing away on November 11, 2016.

While the book provides a historical perspective, certain sections focus too heavily on certain sports such as boxing. Football, billiards, and basketball have been underexplored, and so is athletics given the contributions of remarkable female athletes like Lydia de Vega, once dubbed the fastest woman in Asia. The writer absolutely nails the boxing narratives but sidelines the other sports. Terminologies such as southpaw, jab, hook, footwork, body shot have been extensively used, whereas tales of Olympians and football were quite plain reporting. A more balanced approach to these discussions could have made the book more concise. This book is not just a testament to the evolving nature of sports journalism but also a masterclass in reporting, analysis, and storytelling of key boxing stalwarts such as Flash Elorde, Muhammed Ali and Manny Pacquiao. The world of boxing and the world of glamour is an interesting mix of drama.

Despite its shortcomings, however, the narratives in the book bring to the public a world of sports reporting that has been nurtured by a world class and talented journalist. Lessons for any sports journalist are, first, to love the game in order to become a go-to analyst for fans and experts alike. It provides an immersive look into the world of Filipino sports journalism that brings out the highs and lows of sports and athletes in the country in an objective manner. Divided into several sections, the book goes from legendary matchups to behind-the-scenes insights, from the personal struggles of athletes to the ever-evolving tactics of the game. It blends historical context with first-hand accounts, making the book a must-read for anybody who wants to truly understand the essence of the sport from a journalist's perspective.

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ABOUT RDO LOGO



Semiotic Signs	Descriptions
R	“R” and “D” stand for “Research” and “Development” the official lexical items of the Office. They have conspicuous spaces; they represent the important spaces in literature, studies and bodies of knowledge that the academic community of the Philippine Women’s University needs to consider and re-consider when producing research and other professional, academic and scholarly materials.
D	
O Gear	The third semiotic sign is the icon of a gear. It represents letter “O.” The has 14 teeth, which represents 14 major Schools of the University. This mimetic representation is based on the nature of the gear which moves and propels the other constituent parts of an object. The gear does not work individually, but works in tandem with its immediate parts, that is, the 14 different academic programs of the University which meld together for collective research undertakings. The Logo then was carefully designed that one of the toothed wheels is attached to the letter “D.” There are no touching points, however, between “R” and “D” because it is the ideal challenge of the researchers and scholars to build and establish the connections of these gaps, thereby filling in the white space at the center for a well-oiled gear.
Color Maroon	The dominant color of Maroon is based upon the color of PWU: CYAN - 27 MAGENTA - 100 YELLOW - 90 BLACK 31.
Gradient	It is indicative of the multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity of all research activities in the University.
<i>2020 RDO Logo Design by PWU Multimedia Team</i>	

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