

SPORTING CHANCE By Joaquin Henson Article from PhilStar: <http://m.philstar.com/sports/show/1891f641c98d8440dc7eaca81795f14a>

The first Philippine Secondary Schools Basketball Championships (PSSBC) got underway with a four-game bill at the Filoil Arena in San Juan last Saturday and from early indications, the tournament is destined to be a big success.

Four crack UAAP junior teams (FEU, NU, UST and Ateneo) are joined by three NCAA squads (San Beda, San Sebastian, Letran) and three Tiong Lian schools (Chiang Kai Shek, Xavier and Hope Christian) to complete a cast that will play a split-group, single round classification series for five days. Knockout playoffs begin on Nov. 25 with the semifinals on Nov. 30 and the finals on Dec. 2.

Comprising Group A are FEU, San Sebastian, Ateneo, Xavier and Chiang Kai Shek. Group B consists of San Beda, NU, UST, Letran and Hope Christian. The third and next playing day is set on Nov. 11 at the Chiang Kai Shek gym with FEU taking on Ateneo at 9 a.m., San Beda facing Letran at 10:30 a.m., Chiang Kai Shek battling San Sebastian at 12 noon and Hope Christian meeting NU at 1:30 p.m.

At the inaugurals last Saturday, FEU downed Chiang Kai Shek, 81-77, in overtime, San Beda came from behind to eke out a 95-91 decision over Hope Christian, UST defeated NU, 72-63 and San Sebastian outlasted Xavier, 108-98, in overtime. On the second playing day, San Beda trounced NU, 71-66, San Sebastian upset FEU, 66-58, Xavier surprised Ateneo, 87-80 and UST nipped Letran, 69-68.

It would've been a 12-way tournament but St. Jude of Tiong Lian and La Salle Greenhills of the NCAA begged off. PSSBC commissioner Ato Badolato said La Salle Greenhills president Br. Felipe Belleza sent a letter explaining that the players had some catching up to do with their studies after the conclusion of the NCAA season and wouldn't be able to focus on competing at a high level.

PSSBC chairman Dr. Cecilio Pedro of Hapee Toothpaste and vice chairman Dioceldo Sy of Blackwater Sports were all smiles as the teams paraded – with muses – at the opening program. It was a dream come true. Edward Tio of Freego and Wrangler conceived the idea of a high school tournament similar in format to the PCCL and before long, Pedro and Sy connected to make it happen.

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Tio used to play for Chiang Kai Shek and he's now the varsity's team manager. When the Dragons raced to a 9-0 lead over FEU with three triples in a row in the inaugural PSSBC game last Saturday, Tio couldn't be more proud of his boys. Chiang Kai Shek could've won in regulation but bungled two chances that allowed FEU to escape. In extension, star guard Koko Pingoy delivered four crucial points on jumpers to seal the deal. Pingoy was held to only four points on 2-of-12 field goals in the first half but recovered to finish with 22.

The Dragons coaching staff is top-quality with head coach Goldwin Monteverde and assistants John Sia, Fredino Atienza, former PBA cager Chris Luanzon, former La Salle sharpshooter and Jun Papa's son Addy, Tom Chua and Jun Tiongco. Tio is also Adamson University's team manager.

SBP executive director Sonny Barrios and I were guest speakers at the opening ceremony. When it came to my part, I spoke about Michael Jordan's high school odyssey. I related how in 1978, Jordan was a 15-year-old, 5-10 guard in Team B of Laney High School in North Carolina and 6-5 Leroy Smith was chosen ahead of him to join Team A. Jordan was disappointed that he wasn't picked by coach Fred Lynch but instead of sulking, decided to rededicate himself to get better. He woke up at 5 every morning to be in the gym at 6 for shooting, ballhandling and jumping drills before attending class. In the afternoon, he practiced with Team B from 5:30 to 7 then with Team A from 7 to 9.

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A year later, Jordan's hard work paid off – he was elevated to Team A. And when his basketball career came to an end in 2003, he had played on an NCAA championship team and six NBA title squads plus collected two Olympic gold medals. Jordan was inducted twice into the Basketball Hall of Fame as a player in 2009 and as a member of the 1992 Olympic Dream Team in 2010. I asked the high school boys in front of me whom they thought was the greatest basketball player ever and the resounding reply was Michael Jordan.

So with my story about Jordan not making it to Team A as a prep sophomore, I congratulated the PSSBC players for being picked to represent their schools. They're all winners, I said, even before the start of the tournament because they're the chosen ones. I also used an acronym SPORTS to deliver a message to the players – S is for sportsmanship in playing fair and building camaraderie, P is for pride in wearing the school colors, O is for obedience in following the instructions of the coaching staff and advice of guidance counselors, R is for responsibility in playing to the best of their ability, T is for teamwork in trusting teammates when it comes to execution on the court and S is for studies which must be given priority as education is the preparation for a life ahead.

The PSSBC features a full complement of table officials from the highly competent statistics crew headed by Pong Ducanes to stadium barker Rolly Manlapaz. The management committee is made up of Sunny Co, Bernard Yang, Junel Baculi, Fr. Vic Calvo and Edster Sy while the technical committee is composed of Badolato, deputy commissioner Jun Cordero and supervisor of officials Levy Valenzuela. The PSSBC Board of Governors lists Pedro, Sy, Tio, Jimmy de la Cruz, Jimmy Lim, Leoncio Chua, Rudy Yu and Terry Que.