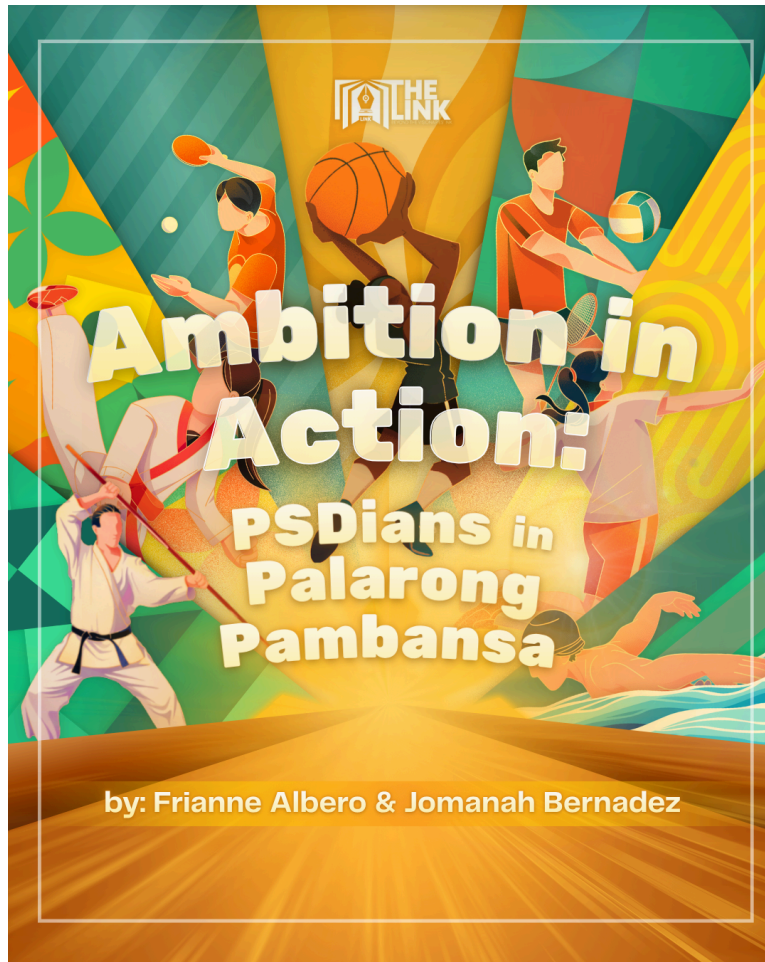




Ambition in Action: PSDians in Palarong Pambansa
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PSDians carried the school's name with pride as they represented the Philippine Schools Overseas (PSO) in the 2026 Palarong Pambansa in Agusan Del Sur, held from May 24 to 31, 2026. Showcasing their talents and skills throughout the competition, they exemplify what PSD is capable of. However, behind the rallies, points, and scores lies a story that led each PSDian delegate onto the national stage.

Among the PSDian athletes who competed in the national games was **Enzo C. De Chavez**, a PSDian who pursued taekwondo since he was 11 years old, inspired by the amount of Kung Fu movies he watched back then. Later on, he started taking his training to the next level at the age of 15, in preparation to compete in Qatar. He currently holds a 3rd Dan black belt and competed in the Kyorugi category for the national games on May 28, where he went up against a contender from Western Visayas. Under the tutelage of Sir Ace Tero, in the Korea Taekwondo Center, his skills were honed in preparation for the Palarong Pambansa.

Though De Chavez participated in one of the highest-level tournaments that a student athlete could take part in, he had his fair share of struggles. One of those challenges was particularly his physical attributes, wherein he is flat-footed, asthmatic, and has poor eyesight. Despite these challenges, he went on to compete in the national games. When asked what word best described his experience at Palarong Pambansa, it was “exciting” for him.

De Chavez dedicates the experience to his family and friends who helped him chase his dreams. After competing on the national stage, alongside other distinguished athletes, when asked whether passion or talent makes an athlete successful, De Chavez stated that,

“An athlete becomes successful because of their passion for the sport just like that one quote where it says ‘heart over height.’

Another PSDian athlete who competed under the Secondary Girls' Swimming division was **Maria Eighvry H. Tobongbanua**, who participated in 3 events: the 50-meter Breaststroke, 50-meter Freestyle, and 100-meter Breaststroke, where she raced from May 26 to 29. It was at that time that Tobongbanua competed alongside some of the country's best secondary student athletes, including Riannah Coleman, a record holder for secondary girls' 50-meter and 100-meter breaststroke. After going against one of the nation's finest, when asked what word could describe her experience in Palarong Pambansa, she said it was “special”. In preparation for the tournament, she trained under Vortex Swim Academy and worked closely with Coach Mae, a former Palarong Pambansa player.

Tobongbanua began swimming at 13 years old, her reason being that she was inspired by family members who are also Palarong Pambansa players. However, when the national games were already approaching, she struggled to prepare for the tournament as pools were closed due to the conflict in the Middle East. She was unable to train in the water for almost two weeks. Nonetheless, Tobongbanua shared that these situations taught her how to be disciplined and adaptable, especially when things do not go her way, indicating that even outside the pool, she was already training her mindset.

Palarong Pambansa is an experience that is considered an achievement itself, and Tobongbanua dedicated this experience to the people who never gave up on her, particularly her family, friends, coaches, and last but not least, God. Reflecting on the journey she went through, Tobongbanua shared that,

“Passion is what pushes you to wake up early for those 6 am training sessions. Never lose hope even after a disappointing game and continue to work and train even during a bad day, or even when no one is watching.”

Competing in the category Secondary Poomsae is **Mikaila Joelle A. De Ocampo**. Her taekwondo journey began at the age of 12, when she sought new challenges and opportunities to grow. She was exposed to many different competitions and trained with Pinoy Taekwondo

Center, later choosing to train under Sir Ace Tero in preparation for the Palarong Pambansa. However, De Ocampo's journey was far from smooth. Her training included both mental and physical training to help her perform at her best. In her words:

“Palarong Pambansa is one of the toughest competitions I’ve competed in, but it has been one of the best experiences.”

De Ocampo explained she required a great deal of courage in order to represent the Philippine School Overseas. She emphasized that discipline is essential in achieving one's goals and dreams. Despite these demands, she believes that it is completely normal to experience ups and downs during the process. The quote by Deeana Kastor:

“As athletes, we have ups and downs. Unfortunately, you can’t pick the days they come on.”

allowed the athlete to move on from days of underperformance, choosing instead to focus on days where progress can be seen. This mindset allowed her to hone her skills and keep a positive mindset on the days leading up to the Palarong Pambansa.

The competition itself was an entirely different experience for the athlete; the environmental difference of having to compete in the Philippines was a major factor in this. With many skilled competitors and a large audience present, it created a nerve-racking experience that motivated Mikaila to do her best and compete with the pride of PSO. With this experience in hand, De Ocampo expresses what she believes makes an athlete, an athlete:

Being an athlete needs consistency and discipline. Having talent wouldn’t be enough. So it’s definitely a passion for me because having the talent but not being passionate about it may not be enough to succeed.”

Overall, she describes the experience in one word: ‘Extraordinary.’ Mikaila De Ocampo shared her lessons and experiences that helped her improve as a student athlete, such as how she chose not to view other competitors as intimidation but instead as inspiration. One advice she can give to young aspiring athletes, such as herself, is that though it may take time, it is best to hold on to what you love to do. Though she was not able to secure a spot on the podium, the victory was in her being present in the Philippines’ largest annual multi-sport event. She dedicates this win to her family, teammates, best friends, and her coaches, who supported her throughout her journey.

Competing in the sparring category is **Jimlord Heaven V. Aguba**. At the age of 13, he chose to pursue taekwondo as a means to challenge himself after years of training in other martial arts. In preparation for the Palarong Pambansa, Jimlord trained with Pinoy Taekwondo Center and Sir Ace Tero. Similar to every athlete's journey, Aguba also experienced setbacks. One major setback he experienced was burnout. After training three times a day due to feeling unprepared, he came to regret it and took measures to prevent burnout. Now, Jimlord follows a proper

schedule to balance rest and training and encourages fellow athletes to do the same. To stay motivated, the athlete lives by the quote:

"I've come so far, so I can't stop now."

While competing in the Palarong Pambansa, the athlete witnessed how diverse and unique competitors could be within one sport. When asked what makes an athlete, an athlete, Jimlord replied:

"Discipline, heart, and great teammates."

The athlete described Palarong Pambansa as an overwhelming experience. Though overwhelmed, he pushed through and believes that young aspiring athletes can always rely on friends and fellow students. Though Aguba did not place, he dedicated the experience to his family, friends, coaches, and God for blessing him with the opportunity. Early in his journey, he never thought he would be able to reach such heights, and he hopes that future athletes in the same category receive the same support as he did. Overall, Jimlord believes he will one day reach the world stage. His perseverance and determination serve as an example for young athletes pursuing similar dreams.

Through the inspiring stories of these student athletes, let resilience and dedication drive your every move. Whether in sports or academics, what matters is the courage that you possess to fulfill the goal of becoming a better version of yourself. Despite the odds that reality may make you wonder if you are in the right place, just remember that other PSDians have found their own way after being lost. So, be the athlete who plays the sport of pursuing your dream by overcoming barriers.