



OVERALL CHAMPIONS *in WRESTLING and ARNIS*



PALARO AIRWAVES

The Official Palarong Pambansa 2026 Publication of DepEd Caraga

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EDITORIAL **TWICE CROWNED:** *Caraga Raises the Bar Even Higher*



inning one over-all championship defines a moment. Winning two in the same national stage defines a region. At the 2026 Palarong Pambansa, the Caragold did both: dominating wrestling and arnis to secure overall titles and rewrite its place in Philippine sports.

In wrestling, Caraga topped the medal tally with 9 golds, 6 silvers, and 2 bronzes, reclaiming the overall title and reaffirming its sustained dominance across multiple editions. The result reflected depth across divisions, from cadet to junior levels, built on a system that develops consistent performers rather than relying on individual standouts.

In arnis, Caraga delivered 6 golds, 1 silver, and 7 bronzes, extending its rise as a combat sports contender. The performance built on its earlier breakthrough in Laoag in 2025, where it posted 6 golds and 1 silver.

Both disciplines demand sacrifice, endurance, and tactical precision. Caraga's results point to sustained preparation across grassroots programs, school competitions, provincial meets, and regional training pools, and the overwhelming support from the local

government units and the private sectors. For years, stronger programs from larger regions set the benchmark in these events. Caraga has now narrowed and, in key disciplines, closed that gap through preparation and execution.

The impact extends beyond medals. It resets expectations for young athletes in the region and expands what is considered achievable from Caraga.

At Palarong Pambansa 2026, Caraga did not just compete. It defined outcomes.

This year, Caraga was not merely part of the story of the Palarong Pambansa. It became one of its defining chapters. The region leaves the national stage wearing two crowns, and owning two sports, forged in grit, earned through sacrifice, and shining with unmistakable gold.

Para Games coaches laud Agusan del Sur for Historic Inclusivity

■ JAMES RHEN MELENDREZ, Teacher III | SDO Bayugan City



While social media buzzed with praise for Agusan del Sur's grand opening and hosting of the 2026 national games, the host province and its leadership also received heartfelt gratitude from Para Games coaches for raising the bar on inclusivity.

For coach Fairudz Mae P. Bernan, the opening ceremony was a deeply moving moment. It marked the first time that para-athletes were included in the parade, let alone positioned to lead the delegation ahead of their peers from the regular games.

"Dito sa Agusan del Sur pinakanafeel namin na palangga kami, na palangga ang paragames. Sa solidarity [meeting] palang, naramdaman na namin yung pagmamahal ni Gov. [Cane] sa ating para-athletes," Coach Bernan shared.

In a press conference at the Provincial Learning Center Government Center, Gov. Santiago Cane called for the equal treatment of all competitors. He urged the Department of Education and the Palarong Pambansa National Board to include paragames medals in the official overall tally, arguing that excluding the achievements of para-athletes is inherently unfair.



So kung hindi natin isasama sa bilang ang mga medalya na makukuha ng mga para-athletes, sa tingin ko parang hindi yata pantay-pantay ang pagtingin natin sa ating mga atleta, regular man o [para-athlete] man.

Speaking with visible emotion, fellow coach Nesh-Ryn A. Sandialan shared that same sentimental appreciation. She recalled feeling an immense sense of pride, expressing gratitude for the long-overdue limelight granted to her athletes during the opening festivities.

Aside from the momentous parade for the para-athletes, the 2026 Palarong Pambansa also marked another historic milestone as the sporting platform expanded by introducing sitting volleyball and table tennis as exhibition games complementing established disciplines.

The Para Games traces its roots back to the 1997 Palarong Pambansa through Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) Order No. 61, s. 1996, a special directive mandating annual games for individuals with disabilities. Though it was not until 2013, through Republic Act 10588 or the Palarong Pambansa Act, that the event was firmly woven into the permanent fabric of the national games, leading to its contemporary rebranding as the Para Games.

Agusan del Sur – Palarong Pambansa 2026



Kindling the Past:

Palaro Tu Agsur Brings Indigenous Games to the National Stage

By: James Terrence B. Bongayo

Before courts and scoreboards, indigenous tribes of Agusan del Sur expressed competition through traditional games. Passed down through generations, these games built strength, skill, and pride long before modern sports arrived.

At the 2026 Palarong Pambansa opening ceremony, these games were presented on the stadium stage. Their movements showed clear links to events played in the national meet today, placing history alongside the present.

Artistic director Jhunray B. Chavez led the production with 500 dancers from La Paz, Loreto, Veruela, Santa Josefa, Trento, and Rosario, with performers from Surigao del Sur and Butuan City. The group portrayed daily life and competitive practices of their ancestors through music, movement, and dramatization.

“The five plays presented at the beginning of the performance showcased the traditional games once played by our indigenous tribes, particularly the Manobo community. Some of these reflect the foundations of modern sports played today in the Palarong Pambansa,” Chavez said.

“The five plays presented at the beginning of the performance showcased the traditional games once played by our indigenous tribes, particularly the Manobo community. Some of these ancestral games reflect the foundations of modern sports played today in the Palarong Pambansa, such as archery and other competitive events, allowing us to connect our cultural heritage with present-day athletics,” Chavez said in his mother tongue.



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The heartbeat of this production rested in the dedication of its performers. Gynneth Laika Precioso, a cultural dance performer from La Paz, stood as a testament to this endurance.

Despite grueling rehearsals that tested the limits of physical exhaustion under a punishing sun, she viewed the arena not as a burden, but as a sanctuary of heritage.

For Precioso, stepping onto the grand stage meant carrying the sacred embers of her community's traditions before the gaze of an entire nation—evolving simultaneously as an artist and a guardian of her people's identity.

“Even though the rehearsals were challenging because we had to practice under the heat in open grounds and spend long hours preparing for the performance, I still chose to join because I wanted the experience and the opportunity to perform. More than dancing, I wanted people to see our culture and traditions and understand that these are still being preserved by our community today,” she said.

Behind every synchronized heartbeat, every thunderous step, and every reenacted game lay a mosaic of oral histories preserved through sheer communal will. The showcase transformed the stadium into a living classroom, serving as a powerful reminder that many of today's modern sports are merely echoes of the ancestral games first played in the emerald heart of Agusan del Sur.

As the final note of the music faded into the evening air and the stadium lights dimmed, the presentation left behind an inheritance far richer than mere applause. It planted a seed of

hope that the ancestral games of the Agusanon tribes will burn brightly in the hearts of future generations, proving to the nation that culture, much like athletics, achieves its greatest strength when it is fiercely preserved and passed on.



FORGED IN AGUSAN

Bangsamoro delegation shares sweetest memories of Palarong Pambansa

■ JAMES RHEN MELENDREZ, Teacher III | SDO Bayugan City

The roaring thunder of the grandstand has already faded. The cauldron that burned for the week-long sporting event has been extinguished, mirroring the bright lights of the playing venues that once burst to the brim, but now flicker their final sparks before dimming into empty silence.



For the athletic delegation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), this quietude signals the conclusion of the Palarong Pambansa 2026 and the time to bid a bittersweet farewell. It is a poignant moment where the excitement of returning home blends with the sadness of leaving behind a land and a community that served as their sanctuary while they chased their sporting dreams in Agusan del Sur.

The 794-member delegation called Bayugan West Central and Maygatasan Elementary School their home away from home. For almost two weeks, these campuses became a refuge that bore witness to their early morning routines, intense strategy discussions, and fervent prayers.

For Thong Amino, the Regional Sports Officer, being housed in Bayugan City is a fond memory that will forever hold a special place in their hearts. From the moment of their arrival until their departure, the unique brand of Agusanon hospitality provided them with a warm welcome, top-notch comfort, heart-melting generosity, and round-the-clock security.



With hearts filled with gratitude, the Bangsamoro delegation bids farewell to Agusan del Sur as they journey back home, bringing their stories of triumph and hope for the future of the BARMM youth athletes.

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"We are very happy that we were housed here in Bayugan. We are deeply grateful to Mayor Asis and to our Governor for the accommodation we received. It is the first time that our quarters were air-conditioned, which provided our delegation with immense comfort during our stay."

During the week-long battle in the country's largest sports arena for youth athletes, Agusan del Sur also served as the backdrop for historic tales of victory for the Bangsamoro contenders. Assured of at least 90,000 pesos in cash incentives after clinching a gold, silver, and bronze in swimming during his Palaro debut, star para-athlete Abdul Rahman Mutalib shared that "Palaro tu AgSur" genuinely changed his life. For the multi-medaled "Tres," as he is fondly called, his winnings will secure sacks of rice to ensure his family has plenty of food.

Meanwhile, fellow para-athlete Jahier M. Abdulla, who bagged a double bronze in athletics, celebrated a similarly momentous milestone. Recalling the hardships of his grueling training days, he was beyond elated with his double podium finish.

Yet, for their coaches, Fairudz Mae P. Bernan and Nesh-Ryn A. Sandialan, the most memorable highlight of the games extended beyond the medals and local hospitality. For them, the true triumph was the historic inclusion of the Para Games athletes in the opening parade. They noted that while they have observed gradual measures of inclusivity in recent years, it was in Agusan del Sur that true belonging was finally felt.

As the final athlete-passengers took their seats, the buses ready to transport the regional squad back home started their engines in unison. For one last time, the Bangsamoro delegation turned to the windows to wave a final goodbye to their host schools and the gentle people of Bayugan.

As the flickering city lights dimmed behind them, Tres, Jahier, Fairudz, and Nesh-Ryn recited their prayers for a safe journey. They carry with them stories forged in Agusan—tales of kindness, inclusion, and triumph—now intricately woven into their hearts, much like the traditional suyam patterns engraved on the medals they proudly bring home.



He was tested. Palaro Marikina challenged his spirit. Palaro Cebu hardened his resolve. Palaro Ilocos humbled him with bronze. He could feel it in his bones: just one more push, one more strike, one final surge.

And then, it was time, Palarong Pambansa 2026 in Agusan del Sur awaited.

Lorenz Kit G.Pallares, representing Caraga Region from Las Nieves National High School, Agusan del Norte, entered the ring as the living embodiment of years of sweat, prayers, and relentless sacrifice. Across him stood a formidable opponent from Region IVA, fierce, disciplined, and willful. The crowd roared, but inside Lorenz's chest, only one sound mattered: the echo of his mother's whispered prayers, the steady heartbeat of his father's hope, and the silent guidance of every coach and trainer who had molded him into this moment.

Behind him stood his pillars of strength: Regional Coaches Samuel Lendio and Rey Pielago, Assistant Coach Melanie Abolag, Trainers Eldo Cortes and Joseph Cortes, and the men who first molded him: Division Coaches Raffy Vergildo and Riel Reuben Sogillo, Assistant Coach Abelardo Micabalo, and Trainers Jerson Mancio and Michael Tesoro.

Every instruction they gave, every correction, every push beyond pain had built the fighter who now faced destiny.

Only the ring could feel his heart thunder. His gloves held every murmured wish. His sweat carried every bruise, every swallowed tear, every lonely sacrifice. Time raced, the clock spinning too fast, because he had promised himself he would not, could not, leave this place without gold.

Time stopped when the final bell rang. The fight was over. Every judge agreed. Unanimous. **GOLD.**

He had captured Caraga's first boxing gold in the secondary division at the national games. Moreover, as if destiny was not done honoring him, Lorenz was also named Best Boxer during the awarding ceremony.

He dropped to his knees. Time rolled back, district fights, division meets, regional bouts, every Palaro, every challenge, every heartbreak, and it all led to this. His parents wept. Their son was now their pride, their joy, their miracle. Lorenz carried the dreams of Caraga, the sacrifices of his family, the wisdom of his mentors, and the courage of every fighter who refuses to quit.

Four Palaro Games. Countless prayers. Countless tears. Countless bruises. And, today, every one of them was answered in gold.

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Roots

BEFORE THE RACE

by: Ronald Allan A. Arcayera, PhD
Principal II, Anomar National High School

The opening ceremonies of Palaro TuAgsur last May 25 left a lasting impression, with a breathtaking 25-minute cultural presentation that captured the hearts of many spectators. Netizens widely praised the production for its vivid storytelling, which seamlessly wove together the unique history of Agusan del Sur, its vibrant traditions, and the profound resilience that drives Agusanons to excel in sports and beyond.

Much of this acclaim went directly to the Agusan del Sur Choreographers Association (ADSCA), who brought the province's major Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities to life through a powerful, unified symphony of music, dance, chants, and traditional games presentation.

Behind the spectacular showcase lay a rigorous, six-month planning and research process led by Ralph Mariel Gavino, the production's manager and dance researcher.

In an online interview, Gavino emphasized that the intricate scenography was meticulously designed to unfold across five significant thematic scenes, beginning with a powerful depiction of four IP communities standing united in times of conflict, symbolizing the enduring spirit of the mystical Agusan marsh. The narrative then shifted to show these community groups dividing the land, using the province's vast rivers as natural borders. Dramatic tension escalated when a member from one group crossed the river to hunt, resulting in the forced capture of a beautiful woman from a neighboring tribe and a swift declaration of war.

However, blood feud quickly gave way to diplomacy as the conflict was resolved through the sacred tampuda, a traditional peace pact. To celebrate this reconciliation, the datu declared a grand feast and ushered in the usiba, a series of indigenous games that served as ancestral blueprints for modern athletic events. This dynamic segment bridged past and present by showcasing kadang-kadang as pole vault, tabae as javelin throw, sipa as sepak takraw and football, pinana as archery, and eskrima as arnis and other combative sports. Following the games, the production moved into a celebration of love, featuring the courtship and intermarriage among the four distinct IP communities, which culminated in a grand, and joyful festival.

The grand finale stood as a triumphant testament to a fully united Agusan del Sur. It beautifully illustrated how forgiveness, harmony, and collective unity yield a bountiful harvest, closing with the proud display of the province's iconic golden Tara.

Ultimately, ADSCA's masterpiece was much more than just a pre-game performance. It was a vivid, moving reminder of Agusan del Sur's colorful roots and a profound celebration of a people deeply in touch with their living heritage before all competition started.



DR. JUMER C. CARLON:

The Quiet Architect Behind Caragold's Historic Rise

By Pedro A. Tecson

Great victories are often remembered through medals, records, and championship finishes. Yet behind every successful sports delegation are individuals whose work is rarely seen by the public, but whose influence is felt in every triumph. For the past two years, Dr. Jumer Carlon has been one of those indispensable figures behind the remarkable ascent of Team Caraga, or CaraGOLD, in the Palarong Pambansa.

A medical doctor by profession and Regional Sports Officer by assignment, Dr. Carlon carried a responsibility that extended far beyond administrative duties. Entrusted by Regional Director Maria Ines C. Asuncion to oversee and coordinate the region's sports program, he became the driving force behind the meticulous preparation that propelled Caraga to unprecedented heights.

Under his stewardship, CaraGOLD shattered historical barriers by breaking into the Top 8 overall in 2025 for the first time in the region's history, before surpassing that feat in 2026 with an extraordinary 6th-place national finish. The delegation also recorded its highest medal haul ever: 30 gold medals, 19 silver medals, and 48 bronze medals.

Happily married to Dr. Daryl Key Sencil-Carlon and father to Summer Elise and Autumn Louis, what made the accomplishment even more remarkable was the complexity of Dr. Carlon's responsibilities. While managing the region's sports preparations, he simultaneously divided his time between two offices assigned to him, one in Patin-ay and another at the Regional Office.

The demands were relentless, requiring constant coordination, problem-solving, and decision-making. Yet those who worked closely with him consistently describe a leader who responded with remarkable speed whenever information was needed and who executed plans with surgical precision. Every training schedule, logistical requirement, coordination meeting, athlete concern, and competition detail received the same level of attention and urgency.





His leadership style was not built on grandstanding but on disciplined execution. He understood that success in sports is often determined long before athletes step onto the playing field. It is forged through preparation, organization, and the seamless coordination of countless moving parts. Under his guidance, plans were not merely discussed; they were implemented with efficiency, clarity, and purpose.

Yet despite the historic achievements associated with his tenure, Dr. Carlon never positioned himself as the centerpiece of the story. While many leaders might be tempted to claim ownership of such accomplishments, he consistently redirected recognition toward the athletes, coaches, training directors, sports officers, technical working groups, and stakeholders who collectively contributed to Caraga's success. His humility became as evident as his competence.

Following the historic 2026 campaign, his message reflected the character that many have come to admire:

"Daghang salamat to all our athletes, coaches, training directors, sports officers, TWG, and stakeholders for making Palarong Pambansa 2026 a historic success. Together, we achieved Caraga's highest-ever finish—Overall 6th Place nationwide and Top 3 in the Secondary Level. This milestone is a result of your hard work, dedication, teamwork, and sacrifices. Congratulations, Team Caraga! This victory belongs to all of us. Go Caragold!

Those words reveal a leader who understands that genuine success is shared success. While the medals will forever be recorded in history, equally enduring is the example set by Dr. Jumer Carlon: a dedicated public servant whose tireless work, unwavering commitment, and quiet humility helped transform Caragold from an emerging contender into one of the nation's most formidable delegations.

In the story of Caraga's historic rise, he stands not as the loudest voice, but as one of its most vital architects.



FAACES

BEHIND THE LIVESTREAMS

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