

Power to the Players

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Created 02/09/2009 - 5:15pm

"The condition was very poor. For example duct tape was laid on the court in place of the lines that were not visible. In other words (the Tamuning Basketball Gym) was a 'ghetto gym' and was treated as such ... previously fans had no direction where to sit and would find any open space to set themselves up which was not functional."

Elsa Ulloa, Youth Basketball Coordinator of the Tamuning-Tumon-Harmon Mayor's Office This was the scene at the



Tamuning Basketball Gym, as described by Elsa Ulloa, Youth Basketball Coordinator for the Tamuning-Tumon-Harmon Mayor's office. A few months ago, the community facility was in need of renovations; however the price tag for completion of the project amounted to \$22,000. The mayor's office simply did not have any money for the project, so onto the court, so to speak, stepped TakeCare and SuperKrete Painting Dynamics. Each company donated fifty percent of the total costs. The project, which began on October 31st, was finished by November 26th, 2008. The athletes now practice and play on a court that meets the standards set by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the International Basketball Association (FIBA). Also, the interior of the gym has been redesigned to allow a seating area for fans, complimented with a fresh coat of paint and an uplifting atmosphere from the gym's patrons.

More and more, aspiring athletes on Guam and even in the mainland, count on not only support from coaches, teammates, family and friends, but on the generosity of companies. In order for an athlete to improve in his or her sport, he or she must have the means necessary. Those means can consist of adequate sports equipment, a functional, suitable training area, or even the fees required of the teams in order to enter and compete in local tournaments. Yet the money needed to obtain these crucial resources is not always readily available.



Jean Cepeda, an organizer for the Guam Youth Basketball Association "Parents would pay fees, but that's still not enough...you can go to the mayor, and some mayors go all out. But, hand in hand too, we work with businesses, and the mayor can only sponsor so much," according to Jean Cepeda, an organizer for the Guam Youth Basketball Association and Club President of the Dededo Heat Basketball and ASC Islanders Soccer teams.

Cepeda explained that company sponsorships enable teams to order uniforms for their athletes and pay the necessary league fees, provide funding for other club-related activities such as newsletters or jamborees, and ultimately help to simultaneously keep their player registration fees low in order to attract interested players to their teams. She agreed that without these corporate sponsors, the overall success of teams may be compromised.

“There cannot be a team without any sponsors. There are teams that do not have corporate sponsors, but then you end up paying a couple hundred dollars, so it works hand in hand. So you have a choice: well, we either look for sponsors or charge this much and how many people can we get if we (were to) charge this much,” adds Cepeda, whose own teams are sponsored by ASC Trust, Employment Services, Star Press, and Island Business Systems and Supplies.

Funds are not only needed for team uniforms or league fees, but also to improve some of the facilities athletes need in order to practice and compete. The importance of adequate facilities for athletes can be likened to the importance of a well-supplied classroom for a child; success or improvement is compromised if the child lacks the basic necessities required to learn.

As a result of such support from the business community, athletes now have a better chance of achieving their sports-related goals. But what are the benefits for the companies involved?

Tom Shimizu, general manager, Ambros Inc. “The ultimate goal is to see each and every single sport grow on Guam and in the neighboring islands. With the development of the sport come new or renovated fields and stadiums for the enjoyment of the players and spectators alike,” Says Tom Shimizu, general manager of Ambros Inc., one of the more well-known sponsors within the athletic community.



The company (more popularly recognized through their distributing brand, Budweiser) has been able to assist in the completion of the Harmon Soccer Field and the maintenance of the Wettengel Rugby Field through their sponsorships of the Guam Football Association and the Guam Rugby Federated Union, respectively. Ambros also has contributed to many other sports organizations on island, including but not limited to: the Guam National Olympic Committee (GNOC), Philippine Amateur Basketball Association (PABL), the Guam Kayak and Canoe Federation, and the Budweiser Softball Kings and Queens of the Diamonds.

“We also wanted to give back to the community and by supporting sport federations and teams; we hope to develop the sport as a whole for the athletes and future generations to come,” adds Shimizu.

Likewise, the intended goal through the Pepsi Bottling Company’s donations to the sporting community is “to make Gatorade a partner, and to give back to the teams and athletes that have supported our products,” according to Pepsi general manager Jon Denight.

Pepsi Bottling Company, the island’s distributor of the Gatorade brand of sports drinks, is known for its sponsorships of many leagues and events, including the Guam Football Association, the Guam Basketball Confederation, the Guam Youth Football League, the Guam Major League (through their sponsored team, the Gatorade Giants), the Dededo Soccer Club, the KUAM 3 on 3 Basketball tournament, and the annual Payless “Kick the Fat” 5k Run/Walk event.



Gus Sablan, vice-president, TakeCare “(The) goal is to encourage a healthy lifestyle at any age and to keep generations of our island’s children fit and active through sports. Through our donations, we hope that the beneficiaries will provide a safe place and necessary support for our children to play sports,” said TakeCare Insurance Senior Vice President, Gus Sablan.

TakeCare’s contribution to the renovation of the Tamuning Basketball Gym has proved to be the company’s most inspirational contribution. “We were inspired because we were able to contribute to the Tamuning mayor and the entire community,” according to Sablan. “His goal was to be able to host athletic events in a central area. We helped him accomplish this goal by providing a facility for physical fitness, which at the same time keeps our children off the streets and in the gym.”

But the Tamuning Basketball Gym is not the only example of the company's generosity; the TakeCare Tigers Youth Soccer Teams and the TakeCare Youth Basketball Program, as well as the sponsorships of cycling events led by the Guam Cycling Federation, are also included in TakeCare's involvement with the community.

The support these establishments offer Guam's teams and facilities has a huge impact on the community; without their generous donations, a child who dreams of becoming the next Michael Jordan or David Beckham may not be able to afford to participate in a sport, or an athlete may have to continue practicing in a facility that is in need of repairs. These businesses are unsung heroes that embody the true spirit of Guahan through their generosity and constant support of the community-at large.

To quote the GameStop motto, these businesses truly give "power to the players."

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Source URL: <http://www.guahanmagazine.com/node/38>