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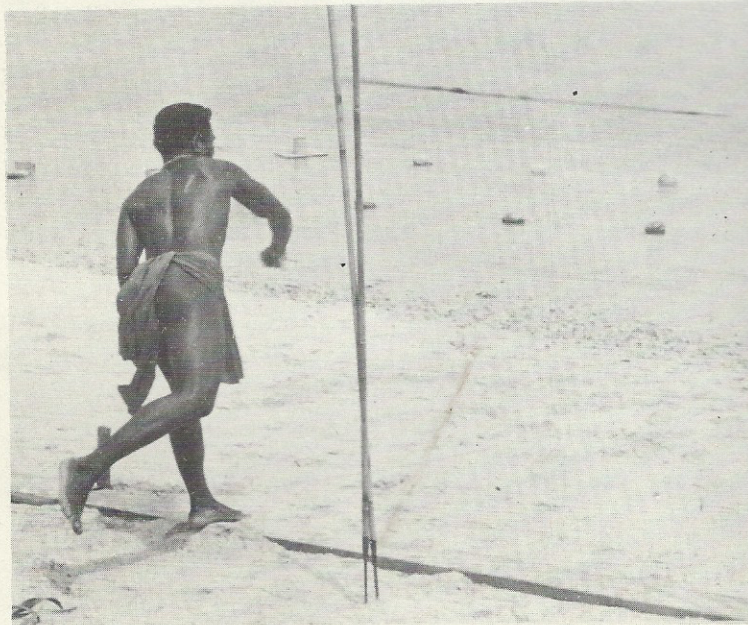


MICRONESIA OLYMPIC GAMES 1969

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with
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No Greek astrologer, back in 776 B.C. when the first Olympiad began, dared foretell that during the month man first would set foot on the moon he also would be climbing coconut trees and spearing fish as part of an Olympic-style competition. The Micronesian All-Around, fashioned after the decathlon, measured islanders for their skills and stamina in diving, underwater swimming, spearing fish, coconut tree climbing and husking coconuts.



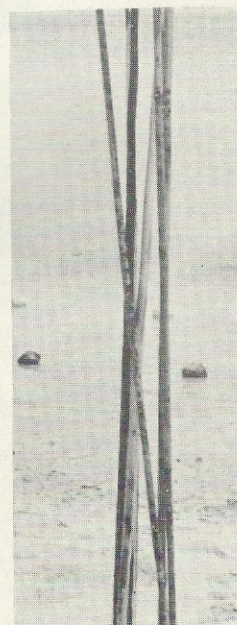
Floating coconuts, anchored in the reef, served as target fish for the spear throwing event.

Above:

The coconut husking record: twenty nuts in less than two minutes.

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Tree-top targets were tapped by athletes who scampered up as fast as they slid down. For four tall trees, each spaced about sixty feet apart, the record time was thirty-seven seconds.

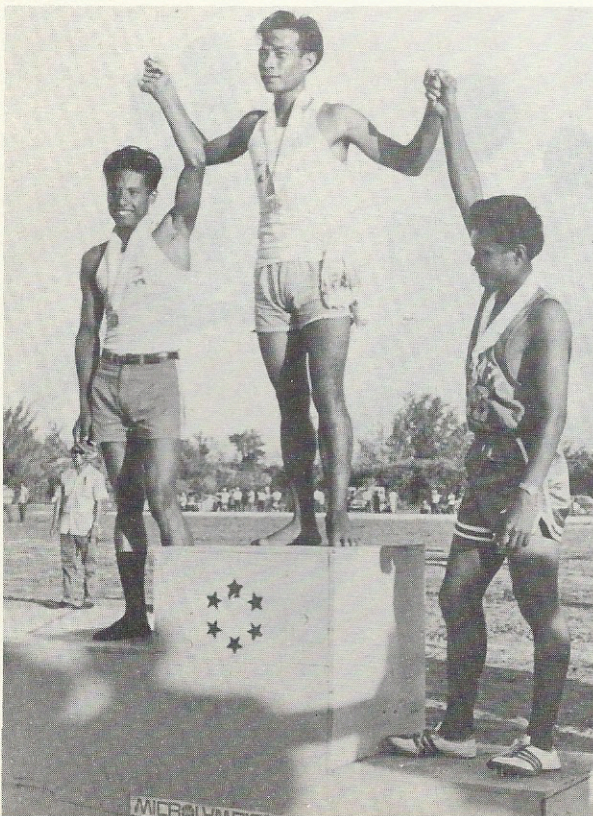


Predicting the outcome of the first Micronesia Olympic Games was something like trying to bake a cake for the first time . . . and not having any recipe to follow. Here were all the ingredients spread about, each one easily identified when standing alone, but when all were thrown together and thoroughly mixed, who could foretell what the outcome would be.

For the first time in the long history of Micronesia, athletes were brought together from all six districts of the Trust Territory, to match their muscles, skills and cleverness. Billed as a test of an individual's performance, the Games couldn't be steered away from home town feelings. If there were to be found any place in the Territory where district differences have blended somewhat it would have to be the headquarters atmosphere of Saipan. And although a great effort was made to soft-pedal inter-district rivalry, when the first teams began arriving July 1, Saipan's Palauans quickly became Palauans again, the Trukese crystalized. Pona-peans, Yapese and Marshallese also separated to welcome and to join their visiting cousins. And the Marianas hosts, gracious in their hospitality and hard-working in their preparations, were not about to give any hope for points on the field to any individual guest or team.

The groups of 75 athletes from each district left their island homes, many persons for the first

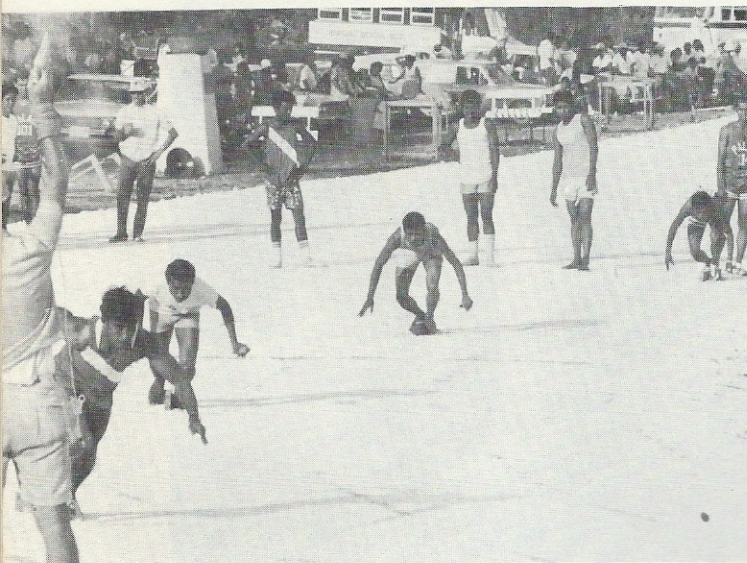
Winner of four gold medals, Ishiro Hairens joins hands with two runners-up in a long-distance event. Gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded in each competition.



Five American sky-divers delivered baseballs autographed by President Nixon and Interior Secretary Hickel. Four parachutists landed right in the ballpark. Another landed in the hospital after floating beyond the target, skillfully maneuvering over the packed grandstand and dropping himself onto a refreshment stand, feet up.

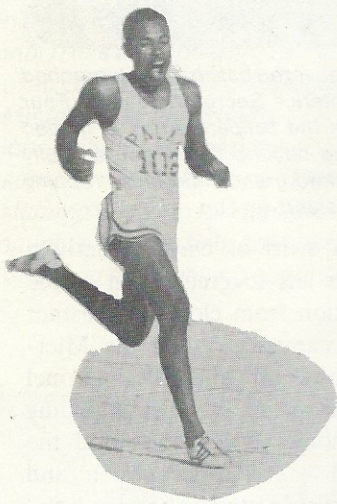
time, to be caught in a swirl of carnival activity . . . pretty maidens with leis to greet them at the airport . . . fond attention from close and distant relatives . . . an air of camping out at the Micronesian Villages (Hopwood and Mt. Carmel High Schools) . . . sightseeing by bus, including fabulous Capitol Hill, home of Congress and the Administration as well as 92 Micronesian and American families . . . even a stop to view a hole-in-the-wall called The Snack Shop about which one overwhelmed young visitor exclaimed, "Hey, it looks just like a picture of a Paris sidewalk cafe."

The exhilarating atmosphere intensified for the 450 athletes on the eve of the Games. A signal bonfire atop Saipan's 1530 foot Mt. Tagpochau climaxed a U.S. Navy band concert and showing of Olympic films. The following morning, marching through villages proudly and neatly in their district uniforms, the chosen young men and women of Micronesia stood before the palm-thatched track and field grandstand. Suddenly they no longer were kids from back home but the athletes of the first Micronesia Olympic Games. And the glory of their districts now rested on their untested shoulders.



Athletically, the MicrOlympics did not produce record breaking champions. It was not expected. While barefooted, uncoached players occasionally had gotten together in the past for village or district competition, it was not until this year that territory-wide concentrated interest was shown in developing top-flight athletes. Most sporting contests previously had been limited to high school events or to special holidays such as United Nations Day and Micronesians Day when communities celebrated with picnics and games. Palau perhaps had the best preparation with its history of more than two decades of holiday track and field matches. Ponape, with its setting of island-wide streams and pools, has always had fun with its swimming meets and boat races.

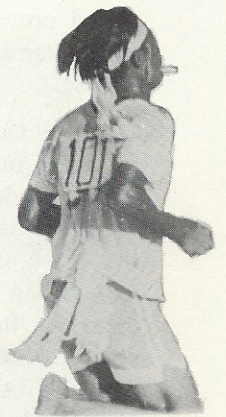
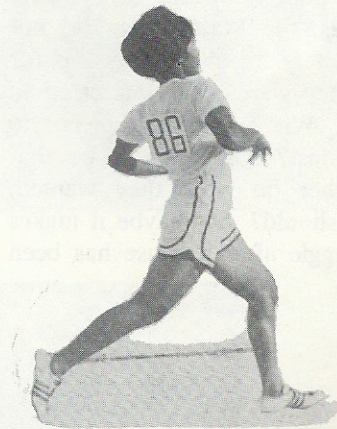
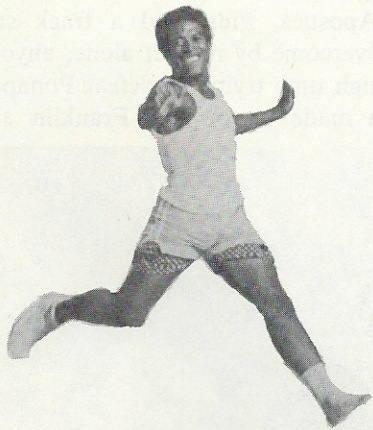
This past experience became evident in the first MicrOlympic games. Of the 148 Medals awarded, 102 were divided between Palau (59) and Ponape (43). Athletes from Palau won 26 gold medals, mainly for short distance track and the relays, plus men's swimming, baseball and basketball, while Ponape took 17 gold awards for long distance track, women's swimming, paddling



and sailing. The other districts shared the remaining eight gold medals.

Baseball offered the single, most exciting, continuing contest through the 9-day period. Truk and Palau, knocking off their opponents one by one with scores sometimes reaching 20 to 5 and 26 to 4, eventually paired off in the last dramatic game. Palau squeaked by 1 to 0. An identical countdown in basketball placed Palau one step ahead of Truk.

Favorite of the fans was a deer chaser from Ponape, Ishiro Hairens. The 26 year old farmer won four gold medals (greatest individual number) by taking all the distance foot races from 1500 to 10,000 meters. Having developed his speed and stamina through overtaking deer in the hills of his home island, Hairens easily could become the darling of the tobacco industry. During the 6.2 mile road race he paused at times to take a drag from bystanders' cigarettes. Upon his entering the track for the final lap, a butt dangled from his smiling lips and he flung his arms in warm embraces to the groups of spectators cheering him on.



Each district brought bits of its own culture . . . an interesting variety of many things from morals to magic-making. And anthropologists and sociologists would have had a hey-day eavesdropping at MicrOlympics village and trying to tie actions on the field to their book learning.

Was it true that the Trukese contingent had brought, as one of its athletes, an apprentice witch doctor to bedevil others? Could the Palauan cheer leaders, grinding and bumping in what they called their "very special exotic dance," zap a spell across the field? Could any group, chewing pieces of certain sorcerous plants, breathe clouds of bad luck around their opponents? Would the Marshallese, chanting their age old incantations, produce more whammy than anyone else's witchery? Even though such wonderment was not a major factor in the playing of the Games, there was some concern and the questions did arise in soft spoken conversations. In fact, the Yapese, just for a little added protection, requested marching a safe distance from the Trukese during the opening day's parade.

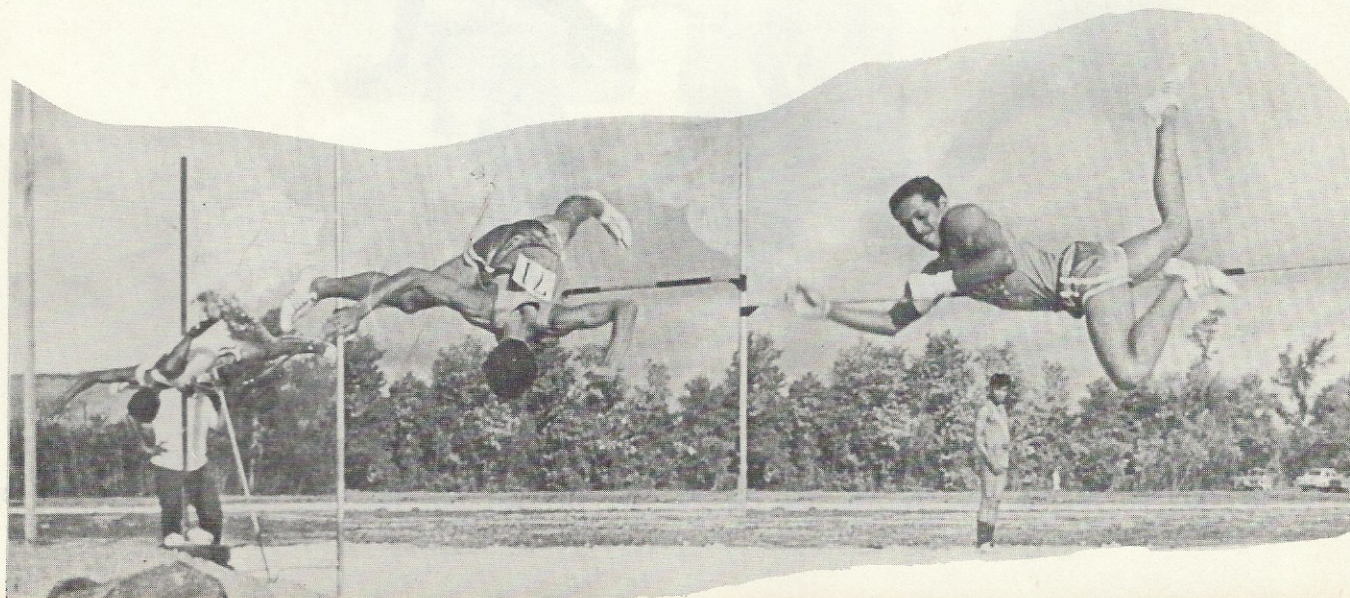
Puzzling, during events which were supposed to bring out the driving determination of each athlete to do his best, was the frequency in which those coming in last would drop out just before the finish line. After poor showings in the first two sailing canoe races, the Marshallese did not enter the third. Swimmers failed to show up for some meets because they were more interested in watching other events. Was it face saving not to be recorded as being last? Or might it be that some folks would rather do what they wanted, rather than what they should? Or maybe it makes good sense not to struggle after a cause has been lost.

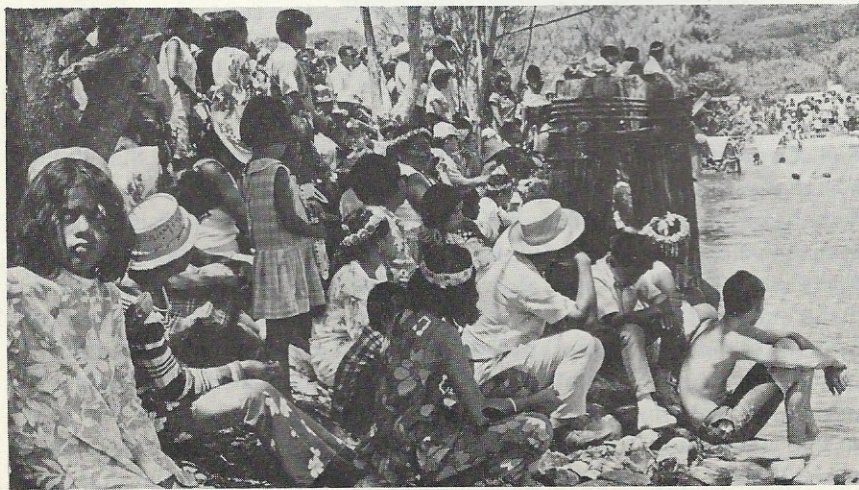
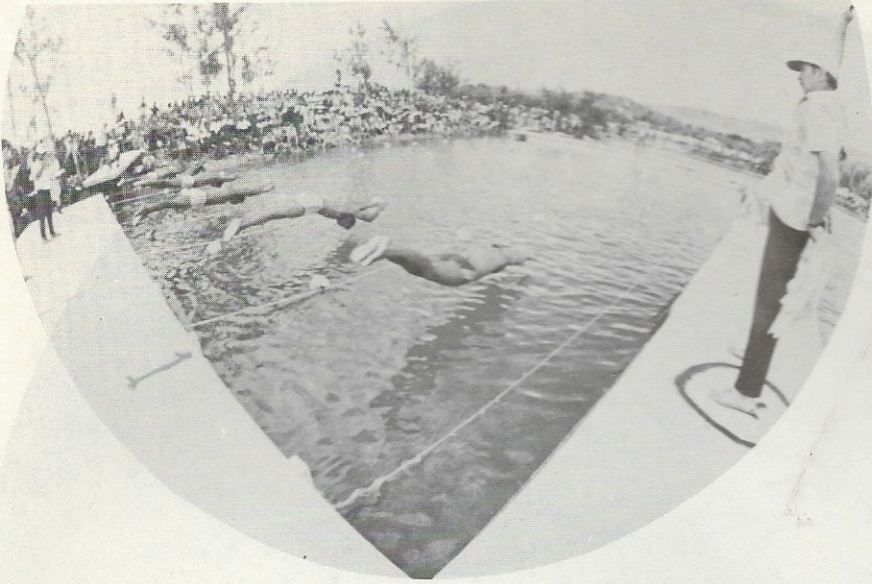
To show a woman's thighs is conduct unbecoming a lady in much of Micronesia. Competition in the hurdles and high jump suffered through this moral standard . . . also the swimming events. Can you imagine perhaps having a special MicrOlympics 50 yard backstroke for girls in their ankle length grass shirts . . . topless? Maybe next time.

The Trukese sportsters in their attractive pink and white uniforms at times comprised the liveliest cheering section. In one baseball game, after taunting their opponents with chants for nine innings and eventually winning by a lopsided 24 to 0 . . . when the final out was made, the jeering and cheering stopped abruptly, as if by signal, and the Trukese in their renowned humbleness quietly emptied the bleachers.

The Games were unique in other ways. Where else could you find an Olympic size swimming pool, rising and falling with the tides of the Philippine Sea, using floating coconuts as lane markers, and bearing a sincere concern by officials over how to prevent sharks from turning a free-style event into a free-for-all.

Names of athletes and coaches made an interesting study: eyeball bobbler such as Ngiraecherang, Ngirchohit Tolngli, Yleisah, Fanagyiluy, Falan-yoruw, Kadnanged, as well as a baseball player whose full name, first, middle and last, amounted only to Max; sweet sounding first names as Shine, Neighbor, Salmon, Belly, Swiney, even Sweeter; and a long list of most illustrious personages including Caesar, Napoleon, Jesus, Barnabas, all the Apostles, Pius, and a track star named Hitler. Overcome by respect alone, anyone would have a tough time trying to defeat Ponape's table tennis duo made up of Ben Franklin and Moses.







As if pursued by an ominous, dark cloud, girl tracksters flee toward the finish line. How serious was the concern over magic? Enough to cause a stir in the MicrOlympics villages and playing fields.

That the first MicrOlympics was a resounding success is beyond question. High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston told a nation-wide TV audience "it exceeded the predictions of the most optimistic." Interviewed on Saipan by a touring network television film crew, he gave special credit to the Peace Corps Volunteers who nurtured the idea of the Games, helped in training athletes in all districts, assisted in drawing up rules and constructing facilities, and acted as officials in most contests. He also credited the Congress of Micronesia and District legislative bodies for their

foresight in providing funds. To the U.S. military, "our friends who are often criticized," he paid tribute for their various forms of assistance, especially the air transportation of athletes which saved a considerable amount of money in air fares. Countless other residents and business firms also hustled for the big event. It was a mammoth public undertaking that exceeded the dual goals of training Trust Territory young people for competition and bringing together for the first time, in a non-political, non-governmental fashion, the peo-

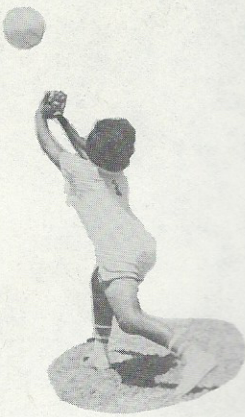


Ponape's gold medal sailing canoe showed the results of designing and redesigning by generations of Kaping-amarangi lagoon sailors. Here at sunset it rests behind Yap's silver medal winner.

ple of all six districts of Micronesia. It showed a remarkable spirit of cooperation. It also brought Saipan its first major traffic jams, Micronesia its first network radio sports coverage, and the Trust Territory its initial set of official records for a wide range of sports events.

Already, the second Micronesia Olympic Games is being sketched. Palau has asked to be host for the 1971 affair which will be followed by the next South Pacific Games. Between now and then, the Territory's athletes can be expected to

buckle down. Much more is known now about what is to be expected at an Olympic-type event. Even though times and distances of the first Mic-Olympics were substantially below South Pacific Games records, there is no reason to doubt the next two or three years will produce several Pacific area champions from Micronesia. Perhaps with modern research and extra drilling, some district may come up either with a new technique for exorcising or a striking magic spell with double zap and whammy.



A pirouette, a jump shot, an slam—In the heat of competition, women scrambled for supremacy moments when the action seen classic stage presentation being a master choreographer. Here scenes from the graceful perform

MicrOlympics



ump shot, an arabesque, a
of competition, as men and
for supremacy, there were
he action seemed to be a
entation being directed by
grapher. Here are a few
graceful performance of the

Olympics Ballet

