

HIGHLIGHTS

OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS



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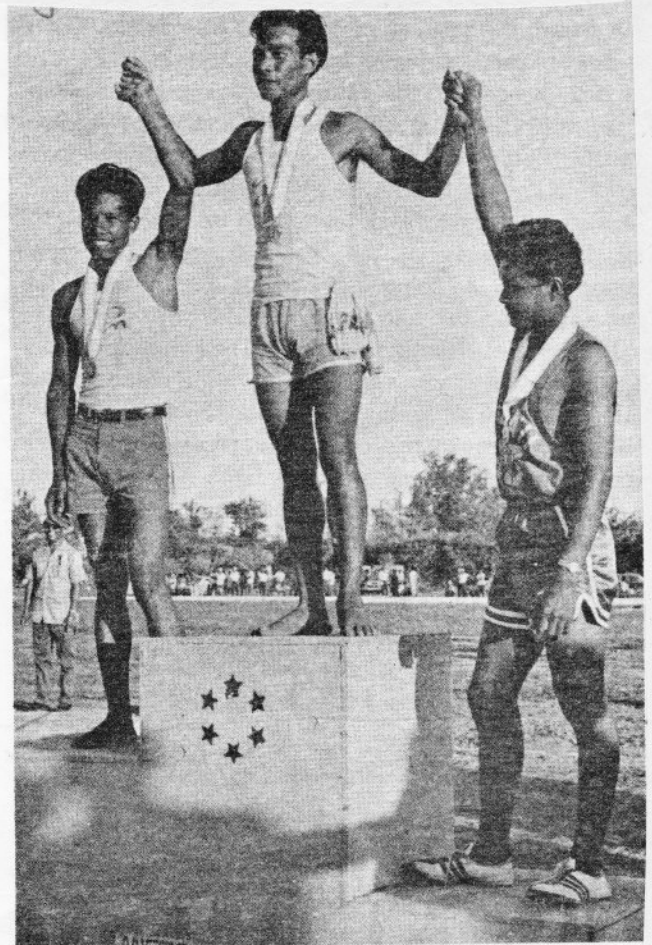
Trust Territory Joins in First Micronesia Olympic Games

Micronesia's first Territory-wide sports tournament, the Micronesia Olympic Games, concluded July 12 after nine days of intense competition among athletes from all six Districts. The contests attracted estimates of five to seven thousand persons to some events and saw Saipan bristling with excitement from the moment the athletes started arriving July 1. Some 450 competitors took part in the games ten categories.

Defining the importance of the MicrOlympic, during opening ceremonies, High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston said, "I think all of us are in agreement, that this will be a day we will long remember, a day we will remember as long as we live. For many years the people of Micronesia, scattered along their six Districts over three million square miles, needed something to bring them together to make them one wonderful working team. The first break was in 1965 at the start of the Congress of Micronesia; elected leaders gathered together, to legislate together in the best interest of the entire Trust Territory. But we still needed some great non-political event to bring the people together and to continue the process of bringing Micronesia into one working unit."

Giving special thanks to the military for their assistance, particularly in providing air transportation to Saipan for outer District teams, the HiCom said, "this MicrOlympic event would have been totally impossible without the cooperation, the dedication and the understanding of the Armed Forces of the United States....we thank them from the bottom of our hearts." He concluded, "We will benefit most from these games from the spirit of friendly competition which I'm sure will bring inspiration from the start of this event."

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rep. Bethwel Henry, said that the first Micronesia Olympics and the others to follow will carry greater mutual understanding and respect and will hasten the breakdown of the barrier that has divided us in the past. As the six teams stood side-by-side on the playing field, Henry said, "Those aspiring athletes gathered here today have not come only to test skills in competition with one another, but also to learn about one another." As he was handed the torch



THE WINNER'S STAND for the MicrOlympics presents the first place gold medal winner standing in the center, flanked by the second place silver medal holder on his right and the third place bronze medal champion on his left. Awards were given to the top three winners in each category.

which had brought the flame from Mt. Tapochau to the Olympic site, Henry said that in yesteryears, the thought of creating a Micronesia "was a spark of hope, and today that spark has become a flame in a torch for us to follow."

The games began on July 4, America's Independence Day, and concluded on July 12, designated Micronesia Day in observance of the founding of the

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More on Microlympic Games

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the Congress of Micronesia. The competition continued day and night, with several events taking place at the same time. On the eve of the games, a US Navy band concert and sports films at the Microlympics Village at Hopwood High School started the official program. At the same time a giant bonfire was being built atop 1530 foot Mt. Tapochau.

The following morning at 9:30 a parade of athletes, dignitaries, officials, and color guards moved through several villages of Saipan to the track and field stadium where the opening ceremonies took place. Leading the parade was the Insular Constabulary color guard followed by the Marshalls team in green and white, the Yap team with its red and white banner, a military color guard and the Air Force Blue Berets marching unit, automobiles with dignitaries, the black and white dressed Palau team with its blue and white flag, the Navy band, the blue and white uniformed Ponape team, a second group of automobiles, the Truk team in pink and black, the Marianas team and finally the Girl Scouts of Saipan. The athletes marched around the track and lined up in the center of the field before the palm-thatched grandstand.

Midway through the opening ceremony, the hand-carried torch, bearing a flame from Mt. Tapochau, was brought by 30 Saipanese runners and six athletes representing the Districts. Started by the Saipanese runners, the torch was carried past the Congress of Micronesia building on Capitol Hill down to the village of Susupe where more than 5,000 spectators were awaiting the lighting of the Microlympics flame. As Marianas runner Tino Olopai stood with the Olympic

torch, House Speaker Henry stepped to the microphone at 10:35 a.m. and declared the 1969 Micronesia Olympic Games open. Olopai lit the flame and presented the torch to the Speaker who accepted it on behalf of the Congress and the people of Micronesia.

The day was warm and sunny, with a few scattered clouds blown along by a breeze which mercifully saved participants and spectators from some of the heat. The good weather continued throughout the entire ten days of competition.

Rainy season started in about 3 days later.
Baseball was the first sports event, beginning on the afternoon of July 4th. The opening day crowd was estimated between five and seven thousand persons, with tens of thousands more throughout the Territory slated to hear broadcasts of the games, taped on location and flown to the radio stations of all Districts. In addition, to keep residents scattered throughout the Territory informed of the status of the competition, three MNS news roundups were dispatched each day via the Territory's communications network. The TT's Micronesian News Service brought correspondents in from all Districts to report the fast-paced events.

A spectacular parachute jump by four members of the US Air Force set the stage for the first afternoon's excitement. Carrying smoke torches, the chutists dropped some 2,000 feet before opening their colorful parachutes. Upon landing at the ball park, they presented baseballs which had been autographed by President Richard M. Nixon and Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel and the Micronesia Olympic Games got underway.

THE INSULAR CONSTABULARY Color Guard, the Truk



Women's and Palau Men's Teams were among the marchers in the Microlympics opening day parade.

