

Angels in the outfield



JOGIN REY TAMAYO

OFF THE BENCH

What is the chance of somebody on the field being hit by a wayward javelin on the head? That is almost like winning the Lotto jackpot.

Here's a heartwarming letter by Teodora Botis, a teacher from Spring Hills Elementary School on how her grade 6 pupil Clifford Un-unod survived the freak accident at the Athletic Bowl last October.

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"The practice of children preparing for an athletic competition last October 2010 in running and javelin throwing left an unforgettable experience for this young athlete.

"A boy was accidentally hit at the head by a javelin that got stuck right to his skull. Medics who were having their practicum applied first aid and immediately brought the boy to the Baguio General Hospital. After an hour or more of medical examination and questioning, the attending physicians advised the parent to bring the boy to a regional hospital in San Fernando City, La Union for operation.

"Thanks to the BB-PCAG ambulance for swiftly bringing the boy to the said hospital. However, the hospital didn't have the needed equipment for the operation just like the latter. The boy was again transferred to Lorma Hospi-

tal, also in La Union with the javelin still stuck to his head. There was the saver—a certain Dr. Ordonio, who, without losing any single second, operated on the boy and successfully removed the javelin stuck to his head. The doctor gave his best without any monetary expectation from the boy's parents.

"The boy miraculously survived and is now attending his classes. *Mabuhay ka*, Dr. Ordonio for being a lifesaver. Million thanks to those who in one way or another contributed to the fast recovery of Clifford Un-unod."

Clifford Un-unod was 'killed' by one Baguio radio.

After that fateful day last year at the Athletic Bowl where Clifford was accidentally struck by a javelin in the middle of the field, no less than his father heard it on radio that he was dead.

Of course, it was far from the truth after he survived a delicate operation under one Dr. Ordonio which was done at Lorma Hospital.

My favorite TV anchor Dhobie De Guzman and I followed up the story including a re-enactment of the accident. He, however, refused to be the runner when I volunteered as the javelin thrower.

Clifford said one radio station announced that he was already dead. It was grim news to his father who was working at a mining site in Itogon when he heard it on air.

The javelin, measuring almost eight feet and made of hard but light aluminum with steel tip, was thrown by an athlete and hit Clifford while he tried to run across the field thinking it would not be thrown yet. Approximately two inches of the steel tip went through his skull with a part of his brain hit.

After rushes to several hospitals in Baguio and La Union, attending physicians including Dr. Ordonio was amazed at the athlete's recovery. Not even infections set in on Clifford. His guardian angel must be doing a good job.

He now sports an ugly scar on his upper left temple, but other than that everything seems normal now for Clifford as he started attending classes at Spring Hills Elementary School in Apugan, Loakan Barangay. However, he has stopped his dreams of being a runner someday. He was training for the district meet in the 100 meter dash then when tragedy struck. (For obvious reasons, we cannot reveal the name of the javelin thrower).

Clifford would feel pain when he runs or jumps. Teacher-in-charge Teodora Botis said he would have to take medicines for at least eight years as pain management.

With Clifford's miraculous recovery, his story also brought his little school to the public's eye. While waiting for the interview, Dhobie and I were staring at their makeshift comfort rooms located outside their two-storey building. "I-project *natin*?" I dared Dhobie with a laugh.

After a few days, Dhobie and his staff members conducted a feeding program for the 200 pupils of Spring Hills.

It was a good start. And Clifford is still making wonders.



BACK TO SCHOOL -- After a horrific freak accident last October where he was struck by a javelin, grade six pupil Clifford Un-unod is now back in class at Spring Hills Elementary School in Loakan. -- Jogin C. Tamayo