

DepEd Story

Of travails and triumphs: CALABARZON's 'water princess' and her journey to *Palarong Pambansa*

Life is a battle, and those who win it are armed not only with talent and skills. More importantly, they are strong and determined enough to make their goals and dreams come true—come hell or high water.

Roz Ciaralene Encarnacion, also known as Cia, was a third grader when she first joined a swimming competition in 2014 at a provincial meet. She fell short and landed only on the 15th spot, so she did not qualify for the next level.

But Cia did not stop pursuing her passion. When she was in fourth grade, she competed again and ranked 11th. Unfortunately, only the top 10 swimmers would compete in the 2015 Southern Tagalog CALABARZON Athletic Association (STCAA) Meet. Two weeks later, however, she was notified to replace one of the selected swimmers who backed out of the STCAA.

Giddy with excitement, Cia immediately participated in an in-house training program in Santa Cruz, Laguna. Even her parents and relatives were eager for the competition, until Cia told them the news that she was not given a swim, even just for a relay. Her coach told her that she is not yet ready for the regional meet.

The incident shattered Cia's self-confidence but this downfall only blazed her drive to strive harder to achieve what she has always longed for—a ticket to the regional and national meet.

Cia got back on her feet, this time, more aggressive and strong-willed. She trained hard for the 2015 STCAA, for she did not want to be left alone in the bleachers again. Her hard work finally paid off when she bagged a silver medal for 100-meter breast stroke and a gold medal for 50-meter breast stroke which opened the doors for her in the 2016 *Palarong Pambansa* held in Legazpi City, Albay. Though she did not earn medals in the said event, she was included in the top eight finalists and her parents were proud of it.

Her journey continued. She competed in the 2016 *Batang Pinoy* National Championship held in Tagum, Davao del Norte, where she won a gold medal in the 200-meter breast stroke and silver medals in 100-meter and 50-meter breast stroke. The fire of her passion kept burning inside her; she trained harder than ever in every competition she is into.

In the 2017 regional meet, Cia bagged four gold medals in her 400-meter and 200-meter freestyle, and 100-meter and 50-meter breast stroke, and a silver medal in the 200-meter individual medley. This winning streak made her the top qualifier in the CALABARZON team to compete in the 2017 *Palarong Pambansa* in San Jose De Buenavista, Antique, where she bagged two gold medals for her 50-meter and 100-meter breast stroke. Since then, she has been named "CALABARZON's Water Princess."

When she was in Grade 7, at the age of 12, Cia kept her fervor burning and further strengthened her drive to push herself to the limits. She topped the One Laguna

(division) and provincial meets, and qualified in the 2018 *Palarong Pambansa* in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, where she earned two bronze medals in the 100-meter and 200-meter breast stroke. This became her golden ticket to the 10th ASEAN Schools Games held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from July 21 to 27, 2018 where she ranked 10th on her 50-meter breast stroke. Cia was a little disappointed with her own performance, but she later realized that what matters is the experience and learning that she gained. “I am very blessed to be one of the athletes to represent our country. Yehey! Philippine Team *na ako!*” Cia said with a big smile on her face.

In the 2019 One Laguna Meet, CALABARZON’s water princess proved herself worthy of the title when she nailed seven out of her seven swims with gold medals. These events were 100-meter and 200-meter breaststroke, 400-meter freestyle, 200-meter and 100-meter butterfly, and 4x50-meter and 4x100-meter medley relay. In the regional meet, dubbed as the CALABARZON Heroes Games, held from February 12 to 13, Cia bagged gold medals on her 100-meter and 200-meter breaststroke, and 4x50-meter and 4x100-meter medley relay, and a bronze on her 400-meter freestyle.

Cia was overjoyed to be qualified again in the 2019 *Palarong Pambansa* to be held in Davao City. She ranked third among the secondary swimmers in Region IV-A CALABARZON.

It was never easy for this student-athlete from Alaminos Integrated National High School to reach the peak of success. She went through various travails before she emerged triumphant. She had to undergo non-stop training while studying—the most difficult challenge for her.

“I love to swim. My life is in the water. This is my choice, so I will do my best all the time,” Cia shared.

Finally, Cia feels very blessed that her parents are always there to support her every step of the way.

END

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