

## Para Dancesport Athletes- Julius Jun Obero and Rhea Marquez

Para Dance Sport in our country was once part of our coach's advocacies. It aims to help build and promote Para Dance Sport in the Philippines. Through this, everyone can see that Filipino Dancesport athletes excellence encompasses not only the able-bodied but also the physically challenged.

The training of Para Dance Sport started as a kind of therapy. Later on, our coach discovered that we could actually raise this skill in to competitive level- thus the birth of Para Dance Sport Philippines.

We started to conduct shows, and as years go by Para Dance Sport Philippines went out their comfort zone and joined TV shows.

The Decision to participate in Para Dance Sport began when our coach, Genice Marquez was invited to become one of the Adjudicators of a certain Para Dancesport competition held abroad. Upon seeing that we also have the potential to compete and join such events, he then started to come up with a National Para Dancesport Competition and later on, finally organized an International Para Dance Sport Competition having Philippines as the host country. The winner of the event will become the country's representative for Para Dance Sport competition that will be held abroad. Luckily, I won, and was chosen to be the country's representative.

The highlight of my sport career was when me and my partner, Rhea Marquez joined the Para Dance Sport World Championship in Rome, Italy last November 2015. Being the lone representative of our country had brought me both honor and pressure. During the competition, it is still engraved in my memory how we both managed to make it to the top; firstly, as the only Asian country who made it to the finals and ranked 4th in the Combi Latin-Class 2 Category, and second, we became World Champion in the Freestyle Category. The second highlight of my career was during our first competition for the year, the "2017 Para Dancesport World Championship" in Malle, Belgium, where we grabbed the gold medal in both Combi Latin and Combi Freestyle competition.

As an individual, I (Julius Obero) hope to do good in both careers, on being an athlete and an employee. My partner (Rhea Marquez) hopes to do good in her work and as an athlete as well. As partners, we are always eyeing for the best that both of us could achieve.

Challenges will always be there, and we all have that certain weaknesses in ourselves. We don't avoid those things, instead, we gladly welcome and acknowledge it. With the great help of our coach and to those people who never ceased to believe in us through ups and downs, and with all the powerful prayers that each of our family, friends, and supporters gave, solutions are always possible. The weakness, became our strength, and the challenges became our motivation.

I have been in the Para Dance Sport community since 2013. I have competed with different partners before, I also had several great competitions with her and in 2015, I started competing with another partner, who, is up to now, my present partner. I never knew that I would reach this far because Para Dancesport started as a therapy on our country.

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"You can be the World Champion if you decided to become one" That was so far the best piece of advice that I have kept in mind and heart all these times. That advice was from our coach, he never misses to remind me every training, that advice is the reason why I kept on going no matter what obstacles I will be facing soon. To the young athletes, and to all those who are aspiring, the key to success is to always believe in yourself. When you learn to believe in yourself, that will be the time others will believe in you. Do not ever let your disability be a hindrance for reaching your goals in life. Make your disability a motivation to always move two steps forward. Never be afraid of failure, never get discouraged once you failed, and never get tired of trying. Consider these things as your stepping- stones towards success. Don't be afraid to fail, worry about the chances you miss that you don't even try.