

Just in: movement to make Arnis the Philippine National Sport

By marppio

(This is reprint of an article taken from the Manila Bulletin)

Arnis pushed as nat'l sport

May 5, 2009, 7:44pm

Members of Filipino Martial Arts, led by Harbour Centre owner Mikee Romero, have thrown their full support behind the bill filed by Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri to make arnis the country's national sport.

Romero and Zubiri, both avid arnis practitioners, are rallying strong support for arnis to be the country's answer to Thailand's muay thai, Japan's karatedo and Korea's taekwondo.

Zubiri recently filed Senate Bill 1424 that hopes to make the bill move on to its third reading in the senate and get a corresponding approval from the House of Representatives before hopefully the bill turns into law late this year.

Romero, meanwhile, is calling for a national Filipino Martial Arts congress this year to revive interest in local martial arts, especially in arnis.

"This is one sport that we can proudly say a genuine Filipino sport and that's the reason why we are making efforts to revive its popularity," said Romero.

"We have to do something about it because arnis is part of the Philippine culture. We were the ones who introduced the sport to the world."

Arnis is a local form of martial arts that uses sticks as weapons.

The sport suffered a big blow recently with the death of Grandmaster Roland Dantes — the former Mr. Philippines who helped popularize arnis.

"We have to restore and preserve our own national treasure. If nobody would help arnis now, our 400-year-old martial arts would just die a natural death," added Romero, who likewise wants to incorporate a World body for arnis like that of FIBA for basketball.

Helping Zubiri and Romero revive the sport are media practitioner Bill Velasco, URCC founder Alvin Aguilar and members of the Phil. Council of Kali, Escrima and Arnis Masters.

Romero said his passion for arnis and the Filipino Martial Arts is co-equal for his love of basketball.

The successful businessman bankrolled the training and participation of the Philippine basketball team in 2007 SEABA Championship in Indonesia and the 2007 SEA Games in Ratchasima, Thailand.