

REPORTERS PROGRAM

Young reporter hits new beat

Guam native enjoying the experience of covering sports after several years of reporting on hard news at home

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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Jerick Sablan, a young reporter from Guam, had never been able to shift his focus from covering hard news to light and fun events until the Nanjing Youth Olympics.

The 23-year-old has worked for the Pacific Daily News, a newspaper in Guam, for three years, during which he discovered fascinating stories about war veterans and survivors from the World War II period on the Mariana Islands.

Still, he wanted some new experiences and covering sports as part of the International Olympic Committee's Young Reporters Program offered him that chance.

"It is my first time covering sports and to do it at the Youth Olympics is a dream come true," Sablan said at the young reporters' lounge on Saturday.

"Coming from a small island (in the western Pacific), I am so excited to see the sportsmanship from throughout the world."

Covering competitions has been more challenging than he expected. "(The experience) has given me a new understanding of sports terms and rules. A lot of the Olympic sports are not played in Guam, so I have needed to do a lot of research. I bought books to do my homework but even though I did that, when I am out there, it's hard to understand quickly," he said.

After graduating with a communications degree from the University of Guam in 2012, Sablan started to work for the paper covering crime and emergency services including murders and fatal car accidents.

His stories about locals' lives have been recognized back home as an effort to document and preserve the history of



Jerick Sablan, a young writer from Guam and member of the Young Reporters Program, takes notes during a media conference at the Nanjing Youth Olympics. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the country while also educating current and future generations of Guam about the struggles of their ancestors.

Compared to what he did back home, Sablan found life as a sports journalist is more enjoyable, despite the long hours.

"It's a long day but good to have a lot of work to do. However, the workload here is much lighter than back home, where I sometimes have to write seven stories a day. Here, just maybe two or three," Sablan said.

"In sports, you ask the athletes more about personal things and fun questions. Back home, they (interviewees) don't like to answer (my question). But here you don't get

turned down and you get more about their lives and other fun stuff"

The Young Reporters Program encourages journalists to change sports each day to cover as many events as possible.

Sablan has covered six events including judo, basketball and swimming. Golf is his new favorite.

"I knew little about it before, I only knew Tiger Woods. I had to learn a lot about it beforehand but when I was out there to cover it, everything seemed different.

"Golf is really about using your mental skills. It requires a lot of planning so you can hit the ball the way you want to. I admire golf."



Saeed Zaki, a communications student from Sudan, is seen at a training class of the Young Reporters Program. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Quiet Sudanese sets lofty goals

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While other members of the IOC's Young Reporters Program chat cheerfully in the lounge, Saeed Zaki remains quiet and focused on what he is doing following a talk with one of the mentors in the program.

The softly-spoken Sudanese, who is a final year communications student at the Sudan University of Science and Technology, has lofty goals despite his low-key approach.

"One of the dreams I have is to contribute to my country, participating in different things such as sports events to spread peace and the Olympic spirit," the 23-year-old told China Daily.

"The Olympic spirit is not well spread in Africa. I plan to focus more on the Olympic Movement back home. It's very helpful. When you see these things (of how to organize a major

sporting event and how to unite people) come together, you realize nothing is impossible," he said.

Although he is yet to graduate, Zaki has worked on several thesis projects during his degree which have been presented to the Sudanese government for implementation.

They include the National Recycling Project, which focused on recycling efforts and opportunities to create a more sustainable environment.

He has represented his university at many conferences and seminars and served as the president of the country's Multimedia Society for three years. He played an integral role in the establishment of the College of Communication Science Media Center in his university and is the founder and president of Skills National Group, established in 2011.

What he has experienced at the Youth Games, especially living inside

the Youth Olympic Village, has strengthened his belief that the Olympic Movement can help settle some international disputes.

"Maybe I will become a sports journalist in the future but I think (to promote) the Olympic Movement is more important. There are a lot of cases of using sports to spread friendship and other values. Many important values that communities need are missing.

"When you go out for tourism, you see one country. But here (in the YOY) you see many countries and meet people from all over the world. If you visit the village, you visit the whole world. This should be a message delivered to the world: if more than 3,000 athletes from different cultures can live in friendship and harmony, that means the Olympic Movement could help resolve all the conflicts in the world. This is a lesson. This must be shared," he said.