



MIS Mabuhay Awardees: Inspiring Stories of Dedication, Discipline, and Determination

The MIS community gathered in the Auditorium to witness a special seminar where the school's Mabuhay Awardee Representatives shared their inspiring experiences

QUENTIN GARCIA,
AARON GIDA, &
CHELSEA MACABIOG



PHOTO TAKEN BY FRENTE GO

The morning began with two familiar faces — the dynamic BFF duo **Fiona Sibal and Kaila Ancheta from Grade 10** — introducing fellow students to a world of diplomacy, debate, and global change through Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN). With infectious enthusiasm and eloquence, they shared what it means to engage in discussions that shape a better world.

They explained how delegates from different countries work together in simulated sessions, learning to reach consensus, negotiate, and propose solutions for global issues. More than just an academic exercise, MMUN teaches empathy and leadership — lessons that Fiona and Kaila carry close to heart.



PHOTOS TAKEN BY BENN CARINO & FRENTE GO

“Leadership isn’t about being the loudest voice in the room,” they shared, “but creating space for others to speak out.”

These words resonated deeply with their audience, reminding everyone that true leadership comes from understanding and empowering others. The two also announced an exciting milestone — **their upcoming trip to Thailand to serve as official MMUN Bureau members, representing both the school and the country.** Through their journey, they aim to inspire others to embrace responsibility, curiosity, and compassion — traits that build not only leaders, but changemakers.



PHOTOS TAKEN BY BENN CARINO AND FRENTE GO

The stage then welcomed **Naomi Rey, also from Grade 10**, who shared the challenges and triumphs of being a dedicated badminton player. Balancing her academics and athletic life, Naomi wakes up as early as 5 A.M. to train twice a day — all while maintaining her honors and commitments in school.



Her story painted an honest picture of what it means to chase excellence. She spoke of the pressure and fatigue that often accompany her routine, yet also of the immense support she receives from her family, mentors, coaches, and friends. Even though she started badminton later than most athletes, Naomi proved that beginnings do not define success.

“It’s okay to start late,” she said confidently, “It’s not a matter of when you start — it’s about how you finish.”

Her story is one of courage and perseverance, showing how passion, when paired with determination, can overcome any obstacle.



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From racket swings to powerful kicks, the next speaker, **Gavyn Mondares** from **Grade 10**, brought the energy of martial arts to the hall. A versatile and active student who has tried several sports, Gavyn found his true passion — and discipline — in Taekwondo.

He described his journey as one filled with trial, pain, and growth. Early on, he admitted struggling to maintain focus, but the structure and discipline of Taekwondo helped him channel his energy and ambition. Through relentless training — three times a week, on top of his academics — he discovered the power of persistence.



There were moments, he recalled, when exhaustion made him question, “Is this worth it?” But then, a quote from his favorite fighter Georges St-Pierre reignited his drive:

“There is no fear without courage.”

That belief pushed him through every challenge. Over time, his consistency and patience paid off — he earned several gold medals, mastering both the physical and mental demands of his sport. Gavyn’s journey shows that greatness is not just about skill, but also about resilience, humility, and heart.



PHOTOS TAKEN BY BENN CARINO & FRENTE GO

Next came the swimming representatives, **Aguila Solis** and **Ethan Dulin** from **Grade 11**, who shared a glimpse into the rigorous world of competitive swimming. To them, swimming is more than a sport — it’s a way of life.



PHOTOS TAKEN BY BENN CARINO & FRENTE GO

“Your biggest opponent is yourself.”

At first glance, swimming might seem like just another sport — a routine of strokes, laps, and competitions — but as Ethan and Aguila revealed, it is far more than that. To them, swimming is not merely an extracurricular activity; it is a lifestyle, a discipline, and a test of endurance that continues both inside and outside the pool.

They began by sharing the rigorous reality of being a swimmer. Training starts early, sometimes before the sun even rises, and often ends late, with aching muscles and homework still waiting to be done. It’s not uncommon for swimmers to feel the weight of exhaustion — from long hours of practice, early call times, and the endless cycle of balancing academics with athletics. Yet, amid all of this, both Ethan and Aguila learned one of the greatest lessons sports could teach: resilience. They reminded their fellow students that true success in swimming — and in life — requires consistency.

“There are no shortcuts,” they said, and their dedication proved that growth comes not from comfort, but from perseverance through discomfort.



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PHOTOS TAKEN BY FRENTE GO

If swimming is a sport of rhythm and control, **open-water swimming is one of courage, endurance, and the unknown.** This is where **Jada Cruz**, a proud MIS student-athlete, found her calling. What began as a routine love for pool swimming evolved into a journey of self-discovery and strength — one that pushed her past her comfort zone and into the vast challenges of open water.

Unlike pool competitions, where everything is measured and predictable, open-water races are unpredictable, shaped by the tides, currents, and elements. It’s a sport that demands not only physical strength but also immense mental resilience. The first time she faced the open sea, Jaa admitted feeling a mix of fear and excitement. **“It’s different,” she shared during her talk. “In the pool, everything feels safe and familiar. In the ocean, you have to trust yourself completely — your body, your training, and your will to keep going.”**

In her most recent competition, Jaa nearly broke the national open-water record for the 5KM distance — an incredible feat that left both her coaches and teammates in awe. Her performance captured not only her speed but her endurance, strategy, and mental strength. That moment marked a turning point in her swimming career, and it was clear to everyone that Jaa wasn’t just swimming to compete — she was swimming to conquer.

Her success earned her a place on the **Philippine National Team**, and she is now set to represent the country in the **Southeast Asian Water Games in Thailand**. The honor brought immense pride to the MIS community, as one of their very own students rose from local pools to international waters.