

**By ARMAN D. ARMERO**  
**Manila Standard Today**

The ASEAN Age-Group Championships held last June 8-17 in Nanyang Technological University Sports and Recreation Center, for all intents and purposes, was a resounding success, save for an incident which left a bad taste in the mouth not only for the participants, but also for visiting officials, particularly the Philippine delegation led by National Chess Federation of the Philippines Executive Director and GM Jayson Gonzales.

The incident, which occurred on June 12, ironically the celebration of Philippine Independence, marred an otherwise orderly conduct of the tournament organized by Mr. Ignatius Leong of the Singaporean chess federation.

The unfortunate incident involved a certain Mr. Tony Tan, a Singaporean chess arbiter, and a subject of many complaints not only of the Philippine delegation but other participants because of his uncouth and boorish behavior.

On that particular date, this writer witnessed firsthand how Mr. Tan mistreated others, including young kids, in a brazen display of uncivilized behavior not worthy of a sports official.

Some time that afternoon, while the parents, coaches and the kids who had just finished their matches were staying at the analysis room. Mr. Tan's attention was called by two Filipino young chess players running around the area. Shouting at the top of his voice, Mr. Tan berated the kids, later identified as Michael Concio and Dwayne Pahaganas, who are both below 12 years old. Not contented of berating the kids, Mr. Tan made them stand in front of him for several minutes as if they were a pair of criminals. This is unacceptable, because first, the kids were not Singaporeans, and therefore he should have asked Filipino officials, or even older Filipino chess players, to be the ones to discipline the kids.

Secondly, he should have considered that he was dealing with young children, who are easily intimidated by his actions. In fact, and I've seen this with my own eyes, the kids were near tears because of fear and embarrassment as they nervously stood in front of him.

Several minutes later, GM Gonzales arrived and saw what was happening. He immediately took hold of *the two players and pulled them towards the exit. Seeing this, Mr. Tan shouted and demanded that GM Gonzales stop what he was doing, and followed them towards the exit. All this time, his loud voice was heard all over the building, drawing the attention of the parents, officials of other countries and other young participants.*

As people, including this writer, followed them outside the center, GM Gonzales never once raised his voice, and only reminded Mr. Tan in a firm voice that he has no right to treat the children that way.

But Mr. Tan continued to shout, boasting that he can do what he want because he was the organizer of the tournament. He also made a veiled threat if GM Gonzales continue to ignore his orders. At that point, GM Gonzales tried to escort the children to a waiting vehicle. It must be noted here that one of the children, Michael Concio, was then suffering from flu, and as head of the Philippine delegation, GM Gonzales requested for the vehicle to take the young kid to a nearby hospital.

Seeing this, however, Mr. Tan even tried to prevent Mr. Gonzales from boarding the car. Even though I didn't understand what he was saying, it was clear that he was telling the driver not to allow GM Gonzales and company to board the vehicle.

The situation was prevented by getting out of hand with the timely intervention of the tournament director, Dr. Gan Yeow Beng, who mediated between the two parties.

Still, Mr. Tan's boorish and uncouth behavior ruined what was an otherwise good handling of the tournament by the other Singaporean officials. By doing so, he had also shown disrespect for his co-officials, to GM Gonzales, a high-ranking Philippine chess official, and to the participants of the tournament, who expect no less than the highest level of professionalism, hospitality and proper behavior.