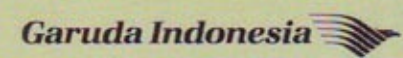


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Bali:
Menjangan Magic

Sydney:
Into the Blue

Makassar:

Growing Rapidly





The First Open Mepantigan Bali Championship was held at Green School, Sibang Kaja, Badung Regency on 15 and 16 August 2008. Mepantigan is a traditional Balinese martial art similar to wrestling, combined with dance and music, making it an exciting spectacle.

The word *mepantigan* comes from the Balinese *panting*, meaning "push" or "throw". The founder of Bali Mepantigan Arts, a Taekwondo athlete, Putu Witsen Widjaya, was inspired to hold this recent event by the Mepantigan event held on the beach at Sanur on 15 August 2003. Noting that mepantigan looked quite exotic when the competitors, greased with coconut oil, were working on sand, Putu got the idea to present it in a new format: Mepantigan on mud.

A Balinese Martial Art Steeped in Tradition

Its intensely Balinese cultural trappings make Mepantigan a unique form of martial arts.

Text and Photos by Sari Widiati

There are several good reasons why Putu chose a muddy arena: to use the rice field land that is still available in Ubud, to send a warning signal about the shrinking area of rice fields in the region, and most importantly, to honor Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice and symbol of fertility. And so the first Mepantigan in Ubud was held in 2006.

Putu's desire remained to present Mepantigan on a larger scale that could attract even more tourists, so this year he has presented it as an art form.

"Mepantigan has many meanings: it's not just local wisdom, but also a special feeling, steeped in a sense of celebration, a spirit of togetherness, solidarity, and sportsmanship," Putu explained. He refers to Mepantigan as a traditional sport and an achievement.

Many took part in the Mepantigan – men and women, from small children to adults, and even some tourists. The regulations are similar to those of international martial arts events, with weight categories ranging from fin through fly, bantam, feather, light,

welter, and middle up to heavy, with the names for the categories translated into Balinese.

The sport requires sportsmanship and sincerity. The referee carefully supervises each match. There must be no jabbing or kicking; only pushing and holds are scored, though aggressiveness and smiling both bring extra points. Though most of the competitors come from other martial arts clubs, such as judo or taekwondo, they have to set those standards aside, because this competition is only for art and solidarity.

During the match, the competitors are required to wear traditional clothing – sarong and *udeng* (traditional Balinese men's headdress). The match is accompanied by Balinese gamelan, which adds to the excitement.

As well as the Mepantigan matches, the championship also featured Balinese body painting, a demonstration of ancient Balinese *pentjak* (another martial arts form), mud and fire dances, Balinese bamboo fire kecak dance, and traditional ceremonies in honor of Dewi Sri.

