



LAA Sports Participated in the Second Annual July 4th “Boun Bang Fai” Sports Festival at Wat Lao Siribuddhavas in Royce City, Texas

Boun Bang Fai (Rocket Festival) has been celebrated by Laos and others Southeast Asian countries for many centuries. The traditional celebration in Laos takes place in May or early June. It is an important event because its mark the start of the farming season. It is an annual ceremony and celebration to ask Phra Ya Thaen the “God of Rain” and Phra Ya Nark “Naga” for rain, so the farmers will have a good harvest season. Here in America, we still maintain the tradition for similar reason. We ask for good health, prosperity in our work and success in things we pursue. And what’s a better way to celebrate our traditional holiday than on the national holiday, July 4th – Independence Day, which we learn to love and appreciate?



LAA Kataw members consist of “A” team, “B” team and “C” team.

The festival consisted of a soccer tournament and kataw tournament. Teams came from neighboring cities and states to participate in the tournaments. There were more than 80 athletes competing in the soccer and kataw games.

There were many spectators watching the games, enjoying the food and drinks sold that throughout the day, while listening to live music performed by a band from Ft. Smith, Arkansas. At night, fireworks were displayed and people dancing to the music. Everybody has fun celebrating not only our traditional “Boun Bang Fai” festival but also the Independence Day of a country, which we now call home – The U.S.A.

-- Happy Birthday U.S.A. --



Bang Fai

LAA “A” Team Won First and “B” Team Won Second in Kataw Tournament



“A” Team

Kataw has been played in Southeast Asia dating back more than 500 years ago. The sport’s name can vary from country to country. Hmong calls it “Kato.” Thai calls it “Takraw.” Lao calls it “Kator” or “Kataw.”

Kataw is our traditional sport back in Laos. You can see children play the game at schoolyards; grown-ups play as a pastime and in tournaments held during various festivals and holidays.

LAA is proud to preserve and participate in our traditional sport.

Three teams from LAA attended the Kataw tournament at Wat Lao Siribuddhavas. There were a total of eight teams in the competition. Teams from San Antonio, Dallas, Ft. Worth and surrounding areas participated. Houston LAA “A” team was undefeated with a 4-0 record and took home the first-place prize. Houston LAA “B” team took home second place with a record of 3-1. Houston LAA “C” team also participated in the tournament but fell short in getting into the second round by losing to the San Antonio team.

Upcoming Events...

- Kataw and Volleyball Practice at Cypress Wood Park – August 12, 2006 from 2 P.M. to 7 P.M.
- Labor Day Weekend – **Houston Annual “Labor Day” Kataw Tournament** – See Flyer for Detail.

Other Sports Activities in Houston, Texas

Practice at Eldridge Park (Sugar Land, TX)

On July 15, 2006, LAA held a kataw practice at Eldridge Park in Sugar Land, Texas. Located in the southwest portion of the Houston MSA, Sugar Land is a planned community recognized as one of the fastest growing cities in the State of Texas and the U.S.

There were many people at the park playing soccer, walking and jogging. Some just came out to spend the afternoon with their children at the playground. Houston is a diversified city with people from many different nationalities. We noticed the different ethnic groups at the park that day. While practicing kataw, a couple of gentlemen from Eritrea, Africa, came and inquired about the sport that we were playing. They were amazed at the game, having never seen it before. We told them about the sport, where it originated from, and the rules of the game. They picked up the kataw ball themselves and kicked it around. All around



it was a fun day at the park. We got a chance to meet new people and had fun playing and sharing, the game we love, "kataw".

Basketball at Paddock Subdivision (West side of Houston)

A friendly game of three-on-three basketball was played by our Lao youngsters with their American, Mexican and Vietnamese friends in the west side of Houston. It was nice to see our Lao community integrate with friends and neighbors of different races and cultural back-grounds.



Color-blind of each other skin, we played, talked about our moves and bragged about how many shots we made. Afterwards, everyone sat around to chit-chat and catch up with what others had been up to. It was definitely a fun evening, full of jokes and put-downs, nothing short of trying to hurt each other's feelings. We were able to joke and laugh about things. Indeed, this was the true meaning of being a Lao-American.

Soccer at Tramontina USA, Inc.

Several Lao Houstonians practiced soccer with friends from Brazil, Croatia, Mexico and Japan at Tramontina USA, Inc. Pictured here, Sengthong "Rick" Vongsengdeuane, was playing some great defense against a Brazilian forward from the opposing team.



Soccer is a skill building sport. It sharpens the mind and the body. It involves a lot of running, which exercises the cardiovascular muscles. It requires quick decision making and quick body movements.

Great Britain is the undisputed birthplace of modern soccer, known as football throughout Europe. British historians have documented soccer being played as early as the 8th century. Today, soccer is played all over the world. It is the world's largest spectator sport, with the "fever" catching on enormously here in the United States.

Kids had Fun at Memorial Park

It was a *great turnout* for our picnic on Saturday, July 29, 2006 at Memorial Park! Our community came together for a great outing on a wonderful, sunny afternoon at the park. There was definitely something for everyone. The kids played kickball, ran around and played on the swings. Several people went jogging around the scenic 3 mile trail. Others played kataw, volleyball and soccer.



Everyone brought a little something to add to the "pot-luck" picnic. There was definitely plenty of good food and cold drinks. The kids were never short of hot dogs and cold juices to keep their bellies full throughout the day. Little ones ran around, filling their parents faces full of joy. Grandparents smiled at the sight of playful grandchildren. The sharing of the kids, the participation of the adults, and the involvement of everyone that came together and made it possible, on this sunny, beautiful afternoon, can only be summed up in 2 words, "**OUR COMMUNITY**".

Vision Statement:

Lao American Association of Houston, Sports Department, is committed to building a stronger, healthier, more united Lao community. Through community involvement and participation, we will strive to preserve the culture and tradition of our Lao heritage. With sports as our ambassador of good will, we shall succeed by hosting and participating in tournament events and activities, locally and nationally. This will promote introduction and interaction with other communities, near and far. Through continued interaction and involvement, we will strengthen our community and our heritage.