

BASKETBALL

RI youngsters to represent Asia Pacific at Jr. NBA global c’ship

Ramadani Saputra  
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Three Indonesian teenagers, Angelica, Brian and Vanissa, could not hide their smiles after hearing they had been picked for the Asia Pacific basketball team for the upcoming 2019 Jr. NBA Global Championship, which will be held in Orlando, Florida, the United States, in August.

After showing off their skills and dedication at a two-day training camp at Pelita Harapan University in Karawaci, Tangerang, Banten, from Saturday to Sunday, Jr. NBA head coach Carlos Barroca announced on Sunday the names of 20 teenagers, 10 each for the boys’ and girls’ teams, who will represent the Asia Pacific team at the global championship. The 20 players were selected from 68 teenagers from 10 countries across the region, including Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines, who were selected to participate in the two-day training camp.

Brian Leonard, a 14-year-old student from Bunda Mulia private junior high school, said being selected came as a huge surprise for him.

“I had a good time [during the camp]. I met new friends and experienced something new, despite the language barrier,” said Brian, who aspires to play in a professional league such as the NBA in the future.

Fellow Indonesians Angelica Jennifer Candra of Pangudi Luhur 1 Yogyakarta junior high school and Vanissa Renata Siregar of Jakarta 19 state junior high school said the chance to play at the world championship was the big-



Courtesy of PRAXIS/ Jose Karsten

**NBA dream:** Angelica Candra (left), Vanissa Siregar (center) and Brian Leonard are interviewed by the media during the Jr. NBA’s Asia Pacific qualifier on Sunday. They have been selected to represent the Asia Pacific team in the 2019 Jr. NBA Global Championship in Orlando, Florida, in August

gest opportunity they had been given in the sport.

Coach Barroca said he was not surprised three Indonesian had been picked to represent the Asia Pacific region, noting that the country’s youngsters played with plenty of passion on the court.

“In the last two years, I have seen the passion grow with more and more kids playing basketball with better skills and better attitudes. So, the talent that is coming from this country is no longer a surprise to me,” he said.

This year is the first time the Jr. NBA has brought together young talents, aged 13 and 14, from 10 countries in the Asia Pacific region to train and compete together.

It will also be the first time an Asia Pacific team competes at the Jr. NBA Global Championship, which is being held for the second year from Aug. 6 to 11. At the inaugural competition last year, the

Kansas City girls’ team from Missouri won the championship after beating the European team, while the boy’s category was won by Overland Park of Kansas after outclassing the joint Africa and Middle East team in the final.

Associate vice president of marketing partnerships for NBA Asia Jim Wong said his team was still exploring the possibility for an Asia Pacific talent scout program to become part of the annual Jr. NBA Asia program.

“What we want to do is we want to make sure we’ve done it right. We want to make sure we pick the right location, the right venue. It’s taken us a year to get this and make all those decisions, but we feel with the support of all the people here in Indonesia, the result was fantastic,” he said.

Wong added that Indonesia could possibly host the training camp again next year.

NASA

‘Moon Rock Hunter’ on quest to track down Apollo gifts

Chris Lefkow

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/HOUSTON, UNITED STATES

After Neil Armstrong took a “giant leap for mankind” on the Moon nearly 50 years ago and collected rocks and soil along the way, Richard Nixon presented lunar souvenirs to every nation —135, at the time.

Dozens of the “goodwill” moon rocks — some only the size of a grain of rice, others as big as a marble — have since gone missing, and Joseph Gutheinz Jr is on a mission to find them.

The 63-year-old retired NASA special agent is the “Moon Rock Hunter.”

“Some people go rock hunting,” Gutheinz said in an interview with *AFP* at his law office in a Houston suburb decorated with awards from NASA and the United States military. “I go Apollo-era rock hunting.”

Gutheinz’s quixotic quest to track down missing moon fragments intersects with the coups, wars, assassinations and other political turmoil of the past half-century.

“The Libyan moon rocks? Gone,” Gutheinz said. “Afghanistan’s? Gone.”

The journey features a colorful cast of characters — from a Texas billionaire and a Honduran army colonel to a Las Vegas casino mogul, not to mention the late Spanish dictator Francisco Franco and the Ceausescus of Romania.

Gutheinz, who teaches college courses in addition to practicing law, retrieved one moon rock himself through an undercover sting operation. His criminal justice students have located 78 others as class assignments.

Beginning with Apollo 11, which landed on the Moon on July 20, 1969, and ending with Apollo 17, in December 1972, US astronauts collected 842 pounds (382 kilograms) of rocks and lunar soil.

Moon rocks collected by Apollo 11 and 17 were given to every country and the 50 US states.

Encased in clear Lucite, they were affixed to a wooden plaque that featured a miniature flag of the recipient nation, which had been flown to the Moon.

Some have been stolen, ending up in the hands of private collectors who paid millions of dollars to own a tiny piece of Earth’s satellite. Others have simply been lost or destroyed.

Gutheinz, a former US Army helicopter pilot and intelligence officer, is determined to restore the missing rocks to their rightful owners.

“These were gifts,” he said. “We didn’t give them to individuals.

“I wanted to make sure that we



AFP/Loren Elliott

**From space:** Joseph Gutheinz, an attorney known as the “Moon Rock Hunter,” displays meteorite fragments in his office on May 22 in Friendswood, Texas.

took these pieces of history and we gave them back to the people.”

Gutheinz became involved with moon rocks while working as a special agent for NASA, where he ferreted out corruption among contractors by day and studied for a law degree at night.

“After the Apollo 11 landing, con artists were going door-to-door selling bogus moon rocks to the hopeful and the unsuspecting,” he said. “I didn’t like that.”

In 1998, Gutheinz launched a sting operation, “Operation Lunar Eclipse,” aimed at nabbing fraudsters.

Gutheinz and Bob Cregger, a US Postal Service agent, adopted false personas and created a fictitious company, John’s Estate Sales.

“We went after the con artists,” Gutheinz said. “What we found was the real thing.”

They put an ad in *USA Today* saying “Moon Rocks Wanted” and were contacted within weeks by a man named Alan Rosen, who offered to sell them an authentic moon rock for US\$5 million.

After federal agencies declined to put up the money, Gutheinz secured \$5 million from Texas billionaire and one-time presidential candidate Ross Perot.

Rosen handed over the moon rock in a Miami bank vault, where it was impounded by a US Customs agent posing as a bank officer.

“It was not until we actually seized the moon rock that we learned it was the Honduras Apollo 17 moon rock,” said Gutheinz, whose desk features a replica of it mounted on a plaque.

“There was a military coup in Honduras,” he said. “And the dictator that came in gifted the moon rock to one of his colonels to say thank you.”

The Honduran colonel had originally demanded \$1 million but Rosen ended up buying it for \$50,000, said Gutheinz, who retired from NASA in 2000 to set up shop as an attorney.

The moon rock was eventu-

ally returned to Honduras after a years-long court case.

A stolen moon rock given to another Central American nation — Nicaragua — also underwent a circuitous journey.

The country’s Apollo 11 fragment ended up with a Las Vegas casino mogul named Bob Stupak, who bought it from a Baptist missionary who had obtained it in Costa Rica.

Stupak displayed it for a time in his Moon Rock Cafe but when the casino owner died, Gutheinz was contacted by his lawyer, who asked him what he should do with the moon rock.

“Give it to NASA with the promise that they’ll return it to Nicaragua,” Gutheinz said he told him. “And that’s exactly what they did.”

While the Honduran and Nicaraguan moon rocks ended up going home, dozens of others remain unaccounted for.

Spain’s Apollo 11 moon rock is believed to be in the hands of the family of the late Spanish dictator Franco.

“The story is that one of Franco’s grandchildren tried to sell the Apollo 11 moon rock in Switzerland and that was blocked by Interpol,” Gutheinz said.

One of Romania’s two moon rocks also is missing. “After the Ceausescus, Nicolae and Elena, were executed on Christmas Day 1989, the estate of this horrible communist dictator sold it to some capitalist,” Gutheinz said.

“It’s out there somewhere and someday I’m going to go find it.” Gutheinz is pretty sure he knows where Ireland’s Apollo 11 moon rock is, but it’s unlikely to be recovered any time soon.

It was housed in the Dunsink Observatory in Dublin when a fire erupted in 1977, and the debris ended up in a landfill.

Fortune hunters have been known to go “looking for their pot of gold” there ever since, Gutheinz said.

Wanted: GrabBajay drivers in Jakarta

Valerie Halim

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Striving to be an all-round everyday super app, Grab has expanded its wings by introducing GrabBajay in Jakarta. With several subsidiaries throughout Southeast Asia, this is not the first time the company has worked together with another form of local transportation.

In 2018, Grab Cambodia launched Grab Tuk Tuk (three-wheeled motorized rickshaw) and Grab Remorque (motorcycle-pulled trailer), in an effort to cater to customers who prefer these more traditional forms of transportation.

Similarly, Grab Thailand also introduced Grab Rod Daeng (modified pick-up trucks) in 2018 and the electric Grab Tuk Tuk earlier this year.

After its official launch on May 23 in Jakarta, GrabBajay started operating in five locations, namely around Jakarta Kota Station, ITC Mangga Dua, the Mangga Besar area, Sawah Besar and Pasar Baru — all in Central and West Jakarta — with a total of 60 drivers.

However, a week after the Idul Fitri holiday, finding an available GrabBajay driver has proven difficult. With the limited number of vehicles and high demand from Grab users, finding an idle conventional bajaj (three-wheeled motorized vehicle) is still much easier.

Khoirun, a 33-year-old GrabBajay driver, told *The Jakarta Post* that the majority of his fellow drivers had not yet returned from celebrating the Idul Fitri holiday in their hometowns. He also added that GrabBajay drivers did not work full-time for Grab, which allowed them to still accept regular passengers.

Consequently, the supply of GrabBajay drivers fails to meet the demand for app-based bajaj in the capital.

Grab Indonesia public affairs head Tri Sukma Anreianno said the company was still monitoring



JP/Norman Harsono

**Going online:** Drivers of three-wheeled taxis wait for passengers after the launch of Grab’s new GrabBajay ride-hailing service in Jakarta on Thursday.

GrabBajay launched in May but total number of drivers sits only at 60

Grab hopes to expand service as ‘bajaj’ an icon of transportation in Jakarta

GrabBajay drivers have been able to earn some additional income.

Despite not receiving bonuses like other Grab-based transportation drivers and having to transport passengers for much less than their usual fares, both Khoirun and Dachirun said they could still earn up to Rp 50,000 (US\$3.5) in additional income a day by picking up five to seven more passengers.

Anreianno expressed hope that by developing and further expanding its GrabBajay service, it could provide multiple benefits for Jakartans, as the company covered insurance for both passengers and drivers and offered lower fares than regular bajaj.

Running on environmentally friendly compressed natural gas (CNG), GrabBajay is more environmentally friendly than regular fossil-fuel-powered bajaj.

“As bajaj are an icon of the capital, we hope that GrabBajay can be of benefit to Jakartans and tourists alike,” he said.

user demand for this new mode of app-based transportation.

“The demand for this service [GrabBajay] significantly increased during the Idul Fitri holiday,” he told the *Post*.

Noticing this rising trend, he expressed hope the Singapore-based technology company could bring more bajaj drivers into its fold to support tourism in Jakarta as the city celebrates its 492nd anniversary.

A number of Jakartans have shown their enthusiasm for Grab’s new feature.

Dachirun, a 46-year-old GrabBajay driver, told the *Post* that most of his Grab passengers had ordered a GrabBajay out of sheer curiosity.

As a result of this enthusiasm,

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