

Central Jersey Athletic Group's Memorial Weekend Tourney in Toms River, N.J.

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SPORTS

Edited by L.P. PELAYO

NBA's Blatche granted PH citizenship

Aquino expected to sign bill

MANILA — Brooklyn Nets center Andray Blatche is one step away from becoming a citizen of the Philippines and playing for the country's national team in the upcoming FIBA Basketball World Cup this summer.

A Senate bill granting Blatche Filipino citizenship was unanimously passed (20-0) Monday.

Filipino Sen. Sonny Angara, who sponsored the Senate bill, said the process still has one step to go before Blatche is able to play for the national team. The paperwork will be sent to President Benigno Aquino III, who is expected to sign it.

"Andray Blatche has openly



Brooklyn Nets center Andray Blatche at the free throw line earlier this year. He is this close from becoming a citizen of the Philippines.

expressed his desire to play for the Philippines," Angara said. "He is in a position, at age 28, to make significant contributions to Philippine basketball and, accordingly, eligible for the conferment of the honor of being a Philippine citizen.

"Blatche is possibly the best

center from the NBA that we can get who is willing to shun more lucrative offers now and in the future just to be part of our national team," the senator added.

Blatche has played eight seasons in the NBA and averaged 11.2 points and 5.8 rebounds in

the this season for the Nets.

The Philippines will take on Argentina, Greece, Croatia, Senegal and Puerto Rico in Sevilla's Group B of the World Cup, which will take place starting in August.

Blatche will have dual citizenship. He is not of Filipino descent, but joked that he was "half Filipino."

According to netsdaily.com, Blatche has played a huge role in the Nets' success their first two seasons in Brooklyn. He's been their leading scorer off the bench both seasons, but he's one of the lowest paid players on the roster, it said.

He has a player option with the Brooklyn Nets for 2014-15, but he has said he's going to opt out and become an unrestricted free agent.

Blatche is being eyed as an alternative to current naturalized center Marcus Douthett, a 33-

year-old player who helped the Philippines earn an elusive ticket to FIBA World after finishing second in the Asia qualifying tournament hosted by Manila in August last year.

It marked the first time in almost four decades that the Philippines entered the World Championship.

Angara said international tournaments allow countries to be represented by naturalized players subject to certain conditions like the number of naturalized players in a team.

"Other countries, while ranking higher than the Philippines, have opted to take advantage of this naturalized-player rule, meant to equalize the world basketball landscape historically ruled by American and European countries, with great benefit," Angara said.

The Philippines is currently ranked 34th in the world.



Tykes Team: Central Jersey Athletic Group (CJAG) sports director Romeo Laxamana, Megan Sy, Kenneth Elgayon, Gabriel Laxamana, Gabriel Dela Plaza, Jafew Dela Plaza, John Michael Tan, Angelo Dela Fuente and coach John Tan.



Pee-wee Team: Joshua Enriquez, FJ Galindo, Matthew Mayte, Julio Juarez, Matthew Padron, Kyle Balao and Kerry Regis.



Juniors Team: Sarah Sy, Marvin Bernardo, Jed Domingo, Kim Sarza, Giovel Laxamana, Paul Navarero, Kyle Quimbas, Matthew Mabutas, Derek Quimbas, Justine Enriquez and coach VG Bernardo.

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Master's Team: Standing, L-r: CJAG chairman Eugene Yossico, Jim Mallari, Romeo Laxamana, Erwin Camacho, Dennis Mejares, Richard Rognot, Mark Mansel, Ed Jamandron, Joe Laistro and Jojo Dela Torre. Seated, L-r: Eric Naminata and Dodo Morales. Not in photo: Wilson Pacaldo.



Champion Team: CJAG Pee-wee-Pee-wee Division Champ (kids with medal and trophy).



CJAG Master's - Master's Division Champ (with champion shirt and trophy).

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