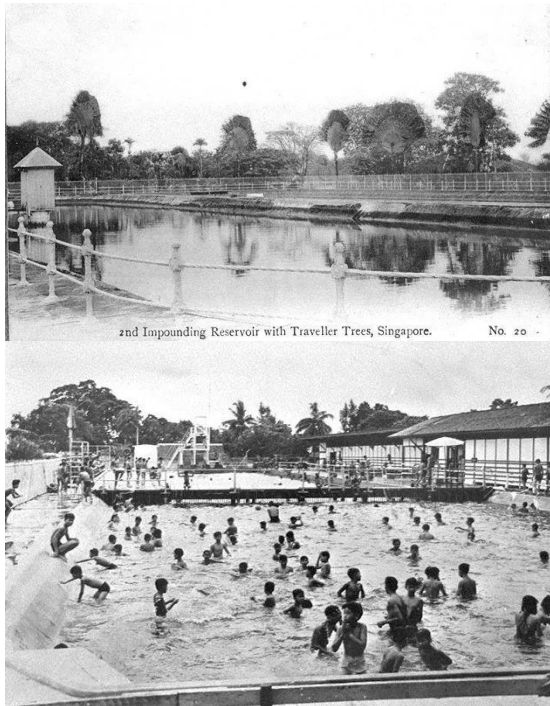


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Boxing, Bushido and Bahau

Top photo: Mount Emily Reservoir, along Upper Wilkie Road. Part of the municipal reservoir was converted in 1931 into Singapore's first public swimming pool and the first pool to use fresh water instead of seawater. 1911. Arshak C Galstaun Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 19980005504 – 0021)
Bottom Photo: c.1960. Source: Singapore Sports Council (Media - Image No: 19980005602 – 0095)

Swimming at Mount Emily Pool

One of the few activities open to all during the Japanese Occupation was swimming. Mount Emily Swimming Pool was open daily with allocated times for different groups. Sessions were chiefly for men and boys. Women and girls could access only 2 sessions a week. Mixed bathing took place on Sundays and holidays.

A swimming competition was scheduled and there were events for Men, Women and Boys. The swimming carnival was due to be staged on 3 October but was postponed to 7 November 1943.

Boxing for Entertainment and Fund-raising

As the occupation moved forward, boxing became a chief form of entertainment. Gate money was collected and there was betting. An innovation occurred in June 1943 – which was to donate proceeds from amateur boxing matches for charity.

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A second major innovation in the sporting culture occurred in September 1943. Women would be allowed to join the Syonan Sports Association and participate in their chosen sports. The committee made special provisions for an extension to the clubhouse – a room for women.

Lawn Tennis opportunities brightened when the former YMCA courts on Bras Basah were restored, providing courts for tennis, badminton, basketball and volleyball.

The introduction of judo, kenjutsu and other martial arts at the 'Butokuden' in the Syonan Town Hall (Memorial Concert Hall) meant a widening of available activities.

Food Cultivation at the Padang

There were plans to create a New Syonan sports organisation with sports fields and amenities. However, as a stark reminder of wartime shortages, it was announced that any open spaces would be dedicated for food production.

The Tokubetu-si Padang in front of the Tonan Club (Singapore Cricket Club) and the Konan Club (Singapore Recreation Club) were prime targets.

With a touch of irony, members of the Free Labour Service Corps of the Syonan Sports Association were detailed to till and cultivate the fringes of the Padang with tapioca and sweet potato plants.



Happy World (opened 1937, renamed Gay World in 1964) was one of three popular amusement parks built before WWII, known for entertainment and sporting matches, especially boxing and wrestling. Ticketing booths for Victory Theatre was on the right, and for boxing on the left. During WWII, it was used as a gambling den and later converted it into a Technical School for Aeroplane Works for youths. Post-war, it was a venue for the 7th Southeast Asian Peninsular Games. 1940s. Source: Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 19980005879 – 0034)

Boxing – Revealing the Spirit of Bushido

Boxing was promoted strongly by the Japanese coach Hisao Saito. Both amateur and professional contests were envisaged. The rules were changed to account for the heat and high humidity - bouts lasted 2 minutes per round rather than three.

It was Saito's desire that boxing reveal the true spirit of Bushido. The ways of the warrior reflected samurai values, which stressed loyalty, mastery and honour. A front-page feature of the Syonan Shimbun extolled the virtues of boxing and its possible value at a time of war.

"Boxing has come into its own...the public owes its thanks to those sports minded individuals who have come forward on every occasion."

- Syonan Shimbun, 9 March 1944

Sport in Aid of Bahau Fund

A soccer match was planned in aid of new farming settlements at Bahau (Fuji-Go, meaning Beautiful Village in Japanese) and Endau (New Syonan), set up to address problems of food scarcity and rising discontent. The land at Bahau was unsuitable for agriculture and many settlers suffered from malnutrition or died from malaria and other illnesses.

Advance tickets sold and donations received yielded \$5,000. The games featured the Pasir Panjang Rovers and the Cosmopolitans, who were coached by Olympian Chua Boon Lay.

Boxing and hockey organisers were also involved with fund raising for settlers. A prominent Chinese businessman paid \$5,000 for a ticket to the open amateur boxing championships.

A regular yet diluted programme of sports events continued between bombardments but press coverage was becoming sporadic. The only well publicised sporting event at this stage was a Boxing Tournament in August 1944. Proceeds were donated to the Bahau Fund. There were signs that the dreadful war was turning.



View of the main road leading to the Bahau Settlement. On the right was the Police Station and on the left was the Community Hut used for gatherings by the settlers from Singapore. After the Japanese Occupation ended, majority of the surviving settlers were repatriated to Singapore by Force 136. c.1945. Source F A C Oehlers Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 20050000319 – 0004)

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Visit the **Singapore Sports Museum** to discover Singapore's sporting heritage and the Hall of Fame (HOF), which honours more than 50 sporting legends. The Hall of Fame was created in 1985 by the Singapore Sports Council (Sport Singapore) to recognise and celebrate the achievements of Singapore's top athletes.