



GoodSport NEWS

S R I L A N K A O L Y M P I C W E E K L Y N E W S B U L L E T I N

SPORTS NEWS

Commonwealth Games 2022


SCALING CHALLENGES IS HIS DAILY BUSINESS

The local athletic world is excited about the prospects of this track star who is improving by the day. Young Lankan star Ushan Thiwanika Perera who currently holds the Sri Lanka National Indoor and Outdoor High Jump records and has also topped the South Asian High Jump record.

Following his selection to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and the 19th Asian Games, we at Voice of GoodSport invited Perera for a discussion. He spoke about his preparations and what ways Sri Lanka can improve when it comes to the sports arena.

"Perera, who hails from Mahabage, Sri Lanka, won the high jump at the NCAA DII Outdoor Track & Field Championships with a clearance of 2.22m (7-3¼). He went undefeated against NCAA DII competition this season and topped 2.27m (7-5¼) at the Texas Relays, which is tenth in the world this year and notches another all-time top-10 mark in NCAA DII history.", stated the "Men's Field Athlete of the Year" list for the 2022 NCAA Division II Outdoor Track & Field season by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association.

We started off by congratulating him and asking him about his latest win at the NCAA Division 2 Outdoor Track & Field Championships.

"I am very happy about my win. This win marks the 4th time I've won the NCAA Division 2 tournament in a row. Actually, we couldn't practice much these days because of snowing. I'm happy because now that I have finished the university season, now I can focus on my side to represent Sri Lanka. Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and the World Championships are now coming along. So far this year, I have been participating -

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just in a certain number of tournaments only and many have been asking why I don't continuously participate. Still, according to my long-term plan and the agreement I came under, I cannot do that. So actually, even more than the competition, I am happier now that I can participate in International unattached competitions."

We then bridged back to the inception of his illustrious athletics career on his first steps and his first forms of inspiration.

"I first started the sport when I was 9 years old and back then I was a student at the Karunarathna Buddhist Maha school. I first did events like 100m and long jump and definitely had a general liking to the sport. My father encouraged me to many sports from a very young age.

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"Then after the grade 5 scholarship, I transferred to Maris Stella College and there my coach was Mr. Phillip Ranjith and then Mr. Suranjith Fernando and he was the one who first entered me to the high jump event. I took a liking to the sport immediately and participated in tournaments such as John Tarbet and Peace Corps and slowly climbed the hierarchy. Eventually, with more practice, my performance improved and I started placing 1st.

"That's when I first got the taste of this and started touring as well. So, the first boost was certainly given to me by my alma mater, Maris Stella College, and I received a lot of support from the principal and coaches."

"When you first moved to the international arena from the local arena, how did the change affect you? How is the difference between the local and the international level?", we inquired.

"The local and international levels are totally different. I first went to an international meet in 2017 and at that time itself, I thought to myself "This is the place. Here is the real competition." So parallel to my studies, I committed a lot to the sport and worked hard. Then also rather than just participating in school tournaments, I started searching from my side about how I can carry on with the sport after I have finished schooling.

"In 2016 I met mentor Dr. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingam and he encouraged me to pursue a scholarship in the U.S. and offered me support. So, I think, if we want to go forward in the sport, you need to step into the international level. You cannot stay in the local level and have to go beyond it."

"I first started the sport when I was 9 years old.."

We moved on to speak about the differences between Sri Lanka and the U.S. when it comes to the sport.

"When it comes to facilities, it's like the sky and the earth. Here, there is a whole community that stays by us when it comes to training. I think that is what the most important thing to an athlete. When it comes to Sri Lanka, we only have the coach and just the coach and I can't do everything. We definitely need to have resource people like a trainer, a physiotherapist, a doctor, etc.

"Injuries can occur to any athlete. I first got a serious injury in 2016 and I could not find facilities in Sri Lanka to treat my knee at that time. Therefore, I had to travel to France, then to China to receive treatments. So, in my point of view, I think the biggest difference is shown in the treatments and the nutrition side.

"Speaking of practice, what I did in Sri Lanka and my procedure right now is generally the same. But, the post-recovery and the post nutrition side after practice is totally different. Back in Sri Lanka, I used to go home after practice and sleep. Here, I have a separate practice session after training for post-recovery. These changes helped me a lot because last year when I was at 2.30m, my practice plan didn't change but the coach and nutrition doctor discussed and changed my nutrition and post-recovery plan. I think that is what makes the difference between Sri Lanka and here.

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"In addition, the pattern of competitions; here there are seasons for every sport and during the season, competitions are held every weekend. So, I am still a student-athlete and for example, if I want to enter a grade A tournament, I can find one any weekend which makes it very convenient for me to collect the points I need and it's easy to travel as well. After the season, no competitions will be held and seasons for other sports will begin."

"I got selected for the Games when I achieved a 2.27m record at the 2022 Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays"

We then questioned, "You are already selected for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and the 19th Asian Games. How are your preparations so far? Do you think you are ready?"

"I got selected for the Games when I achieved a 2.27m record at the 2022 Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays. When I started this season, my coach and I made a long-term plan. So now that I have managed to get selected for the games, now our goal is to go to the World Championships.

Asian Games got postponed recently so preparations are underway for Commonwealth Games. I will be starting a separate practice season in New York with another coach later this June. So, the long-term goal from there is to perform well in the Commonwealth Games to then pave the way to the World Championships."

Lastly, we inquired him, "Do you think you'll be able to bring a medal to Sri Lanka in the Commonwealth Games?", where he responded with,

"My only hope is that too".

He concluded our discussion by giving a message to our youngsters, "Do well in sport and carry on your education simultaneously. If you do anything with commitment, you will most certainly get results in due time."



Commonwealth Games 2022

THREE SQUADS UP AND READY FOR THE CHALLENGE

Three Lankan teams are shaping up for the forthcoming 2022 Commonwealth Games, officially known as the XXII Commonwealth Games and commonly known as Birmingham 2022, scheduled to be held in Birmingham, England from 28 July to 8 August 2022

The Lankan Women Cricketers, the Lankan athletic Contingent and the Lankan Wrestling Team are bubbling to make their presence felt at this multi sports event.

The women's cricketers who qualified for the games by beating Bangladesh in the playoff are busy shaping up for this big one and are currently engaged in a series matches under batting star Chamari Athapaththu.

Meanwhile Imesha Dulani sustained a serious knee injury while on tour to Pakistan hence she has been replaced with Vishmi Gunarathne in the standby list. The women's squad for the games would be Chamari Athapaththu (Captain), -

Achini Kulasooriya, Harshitha Samarawickrama, Inoka Ranaweera, Ude-shika Probodhini, Prasadini Weerakkodi, Oshadhi Ranasinghe, Ama Kanchana, Nilakshika Silva, Manel Kumari Dasanayaka, Anushka Sanjeevani Meegama, Kaveesha Dilhari, Sachini Nisansala, Dulani Witharana and Hasini Perera

Standby: Kawya Kavindi, Sewwandi Silva, Sathya Sandeepani, Malsha Shehani and Vishmi Dewmini Gunaratne.

Commenting on the challenge the coach of the Lankan women's cricket squad Hashan Tillakaratne said "Before the Commonwealth Games qualifiers, we floundered and could not get qualified for the Cricket World Cup and I think that spurred our girls buckle

their boots and come up with an improved performance and proved that they were good enough to be a part of the Commonwealth games.

"The qualifiers were definitely a testing time for them, but we were well prepared and the girls played very good cricket so we successfully concluded by winning in Malaysia beating Bangladesh." Tillakaratne said.





Wrestlers are ready for combat

Sri Lanka Wrestling team comprising Chamodya Keshani, Nethmi Ahimsa Fernando, S.P.S. Niroshani and coach T.S. Suranga Kumara will fly to Hungary today for a six-week training programme prior to the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The three Wrestlers flew aboard a flight from New Delhi, India on the 7th morning

The Lankan Wrestling team will fly to Birmingham directly from their training which will take place Budapest.

President of the Sri Lanka Wrestling Federation Sarath Hewawitharana told the GoodSport that they are confident of winning a medal at these games. "These three contenders are ready for the challenge and the training stint in Hungary will help them come up improved performances. This task became a reality courtesy the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka.

"The three Wrestling lasses will flight in the 50kgs, 53kgs and 57kgs weight classes respectively. These three classes suit the Asian style. -

The heavier classes we do not stand much of a competition. But, where we are competing is good for us and I am sure that we could make an impression".

Seven athletes in the Birmingham squad

Sri Lanka's track and field team for the 2022 Birmingham Games from 28 July to 8 August 2022 will comprise seven Lankan athletes – four males and three females. Among the male medal hopefuls are -- Sprinter Yupun Abeykoon, 400 metres specialist Kalinga Kumarage, US-based high jumper Ushan Thiwanika and Javelin thrower Sumedha Ranasinghe.

The three female track stars would be steeplechase athlete Nilani Ratnayake, 800 metres specialist Gayanthika Abeyratne and long jumper Sarangi Silva.

The secretary of the National Olympic Committee, Maxwell de Silva said that the National Selection Committee had decided to pick only two officials for the track and field team. He said "NSSC allocated two slots for officials giving priority to coaches of athletes."

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About the composition of the team including the renowned Chamari Athapaththu, Tillakaratne said: "We have eight batswomen, two wicket-keepers, four genuine spinners and two spin all-rounders and three fast bowlers.

"Of course, Chamari is the main player we have and she's respected worldwide. Her experience is always shared among the girls and it gives them a great platform as well."

Meanwhile the officials for the games will be Nishantha de Silva (Manager), Hashan Tillekeratne (Head Coach), Sanjeewa Kumara Alakkarage (Assistant Coach), Dumesh Aravinda Jayadeva (Physiotherapist), Kaviranga Perera (Analyst).



According to de Silva, national coach Y.K. Kularatne and Italy based sprinter Yupun Abeykoon's coach will travel with the team.

TEAM SCOTLAND CELEBRATES 50 DAYS TO GO WITH 50 ATHLETES SELECTED

Team Scotland has marked 50 days to go to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games with the selection announcement of 50 athletes across seven sports including badminton, boxing, judo, netball, para-powerlifting, squash and triathlon.

Gold medallists at Glasgow 2014, Sarah Adlington and Chris Sherrington lead an exciting line-up of 11 judoka and, should either repeat that achievement in Birmingham, they would become the first athlete to win two Commonwealth Games gold medals in Judo. The remaining nine judokas will all make their debut as the sport returns to the Games programme, having not been included at Gold Coast 2018.

With three Games and two medals already under her belt, Kirsty Gilmour is ready to go for further glory on the badminton courts at the NEC this summer. Having recently added a fourth European Championship medal to her tally with silver in Madrid, the Glaswegian is joined by fellow European medallists Alex Dunn and Adam Hall - who took men's doubles silver - and return to Team Scotland after both making their debut in Gold Coast. Julie MacPherson and Eleanor O'Donnell are also back for a second Games, with a further four athletes making debuts.

Boxing holds the accolade of being the only sport in which Scotland has won at least one medal at every Games since the first edition in 1930 and the eight-strong contingent heading to Birmingham look extremely capable of upholding

that record. Just a week ago, 2017 Commonwealth Youth Games medallist Sam Hickey secured Scotland's first European Championships medal for 16 years with bronze in Armenia, with that success coming on the back of Fauldhouse boxer Reese Lynch becoming the first Scot ever to win a World Championships medal at senior level with bronze in Serbia in November.

Para-powerlifter Micky Yule will compete at his third Games and will be looking to add a Commonwealth medal to his Tokyo 2020 Paralympics bronze after fourth place in both Glasgow and Gold Coast. A member of the British Army, Micky was injured by an improvised explosive device (IED) whilst serving in Afghanistan in 2010, an injury that required more than 40 operations and left him a double amputee.

The squash selections combine youth with experience with Birmingham 2022 a fourth Commonwealth Games appearance for Alan Clyne and a third for Greg Lobban and Lisa Aitken, as they are named alongside Georgia Adderley, Rory Stewart and Douglas Kempself, all making their debuts. Confidence is high after a sensational World Doubles Championships in April saw Scotland take silver and bronze in the men's event, bronze in the mixed event and fifth place in the womens.

Seven of the 12-strong netball team will make their Games debuts in Birmingham in a squad lead by captain Claire Maxwell and Lynsey Gallagher, both competing at their third Games. Emily Nicholl takes -

on the vice-captain role at her second Games, while Beth Goodwin and Niamh McCall also return from the team that took 9th place in Gold Coast.

In triathlon, Grant Sheldon, Cameron Main and Sophia Green join the already selected Beth Potter and Alison Peasgood. Sheldon will compete at his third Games, while Elgin duo Main and Green make debuts after Europe Cup podium places helped secure their selection.

SELECTED ATHLETES:

Badminton (9): Alexander Dunn, Kirsty Gilmour, Christopher Grimley, Matthew Grimley, Adam Hall, Julie MacPherson, Eleanor O'Donnell, Callum Smith, Ciara Torrance
 Boxing (8): Sam Hickey, Tyler Jolly, Sean Lazzarini, Reese Lynch, Matthew McHale, Lennon Mulligan, Stephen Newns, Megan Reid

Judo (11): Sarah Adlington, Finlay Allan, David Ferguson, Kirsty Marsh, Dylan Munro, Billy Rodman, Christopher Sherrington, Alexander Short, Rachel Tytler, Malin Wilson, Hannah Wood

Netball (12): Emma Barrie, Kelly Boyle, Iona Christian, Rachel Conway, Lynsey Gallagher, Beth Goodwin, Hannah Leighton, Sarah MacPhail, Claire Maxwell, Niamh McCall, Emily Nicholl, Lauren Tait
 Para-Powerlifting (1): Micky Yule

Squash (6): Georgia Adderley, Lisa Aitken, Alan Clyne, Douglas Kempself, Greg Lobban, Rory Stewart

Triathlon (3): Sophia Green, Cameron Main, Grant Sheldon