



# 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*Commonwealth Games 2022  
Birmingham

## BIRMINGHAM IN RETROSPECT

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games were held from the 28<sup>th</sup> July to the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2022, carrying the motto "Sport is just the beginning". The Games was the largest ever held with 72 participating nations and territories, and Sri Lanka successfully concluded at the 31<sup>st</sup> place, with a total of 4 medals.

Followed by the Games, we at GoodSport sat down with Mr. Gobinath Sivarajah who was in Birmingham as Press Attaché for the games and he opined in this manner.

"Organizing wise, I think it was a huge success."

"There were no unexpected or unforeseen issues and everything happened smoothly in line. Especially, I believe credit should go to volunteers as they did an amazing job. There were 14000 volunteers recruited and I heard there were around 42000 applicants.

"Climate wise also, even the residents were saying the climate was so fantastic compared to the last 10 years so it was timed perfectly, in a way there was no disturbance to the athletes. All the facilities, especially the venue facilities were good. Most of the time, the stadiums were full with ticket bookings.

"Apart from that, there was no lack of fun. Everywhere there were a lot of activities and the support of the people were so amazing. The organizing committee provided a lot of assistance to us; we had to go through a very tough time because we had to change some accreditations because of the late arrivals by the Covid 19 positive cases back in Sri Lanka.

"There were many people including officials but the organizing committee rescheduled everything smoothly in a way we wouldn't go through any issues."

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“In a Sri Lankan contingent perspective, I would say it’s really good news for Sri Lanka that we won 4 medals despite the country’s situation and I know that it was very tough for the athletes to train themselves here.

“If you look at the four medal holders, except one, others were all trained in foreign countries.”

Palitha Bandara who won the Silver medal in the Men’s Discus Throw F42-44/61-64 after clearing a distance of 44.20 meters with 944 point, became the first Sri Lankan to win a Para Sports medal for Sri Lanka in Commonwealth Games history.

“The Para-Athlete Bandara was supported by the Commonwealth -

Games Federation under the GAPS programme; there he was assisted to train in Birmingham before the Games.

“Two weeks before the Games started, he went there and got the support, and it’s a great success story for us.”

“GAPS” is a sport for development and peace programme that supports the development of inclusive sport pathways throughout the Commonwealth.

GAPS is for emerging athletes and coaches from the Commonwealth.

It aims to support the development of inclusive sport pathways, removing barriers to participation for people with a disability and for women and girls to become actively involved in sport.

A three-stage strategy is used to focus on specific outcomes for the athletes.

This framework of the GAPS Programme is based on the acronym: G.A.P.S.

**Gather** – gather information about the current health, training status, and high-performance practices of the participating athletes and support staff.

**Adjust** – adjust, where the appropriate, current athlete and system practices.

**Prepare, Practice, and Provide** – this stage will help:

- **Prepare** athletes and coaches to transfer their knowledge learned during the GAPS Programme to their domestic programmes
- **Practice** techniques learned during the GAPS Programme
- **Provide** athletes and coaches with feedback regarding athlete progress over the 18-month period

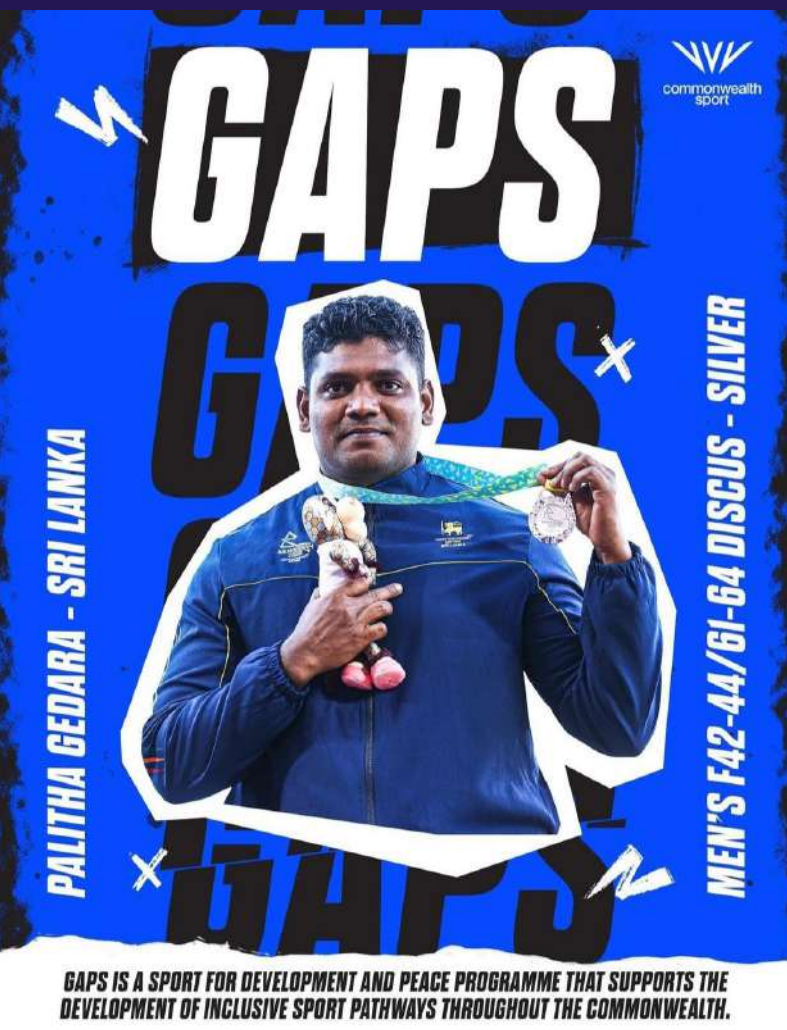
**Sustain** – This is across all camps where the goal is to sustain the transfer of knowledge throughout and sustain the whole programme in its ongoing delivery.

Sivarajah continued, “Next is Yupun; he has been training in Italy and winning the Bronze medal was a great success to him and his crew.”

Yupun Abeykoon won the Bronze Medal in Men’s 100m with a time of 10.14 seconds.

Consequently, Abeykoon became the first Sri Lankan to win a Commonwealth Games medal in athletics after 24 years since Sriyani Kulawansa and Sugath Thilakaratne’s medal feats at the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

He also became the first Sri Lankan to win a Commonwealth Games medal in either men’s or women’s 100m event. During the heats, he set an all-time fastest ever timing in Commonwealth Games history in the heats after finishing with a timing of 10.06 seconds



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*Yupun Abeykoon with his Bronze Medal*

"Then very remarkably, this youngest medal winner for Sri Lanka in the Commonwealth Games history, 18-year-old Nethmi Poruthotage; she was funded by the NOC Sri Lanka - Crysbro Next Champ scholarship programme for the last 1 year.

"We identified her potential to win a medal in the Commonwealth Games, so the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka took the leadership and initiative to send her to Hungary for a 2-month training programme prior to the Commonwealth Games.

"So with the support of the Hungary Olympic Committee and the United World Wrestling (UWW), she successfully completed the training and succeeded to win the Bronze medal,

beating former Commonwealth runner-up Irene Symeonidis of Australia with a score of 10-0 in the Women's 57kg Bronze medal encounter.

"She worked very hard for this achievement and she is very young so we believe she has a lot of potential and we are definitely targeting her as a next Olympic Games medal prospective. There are some other growing female wrestlers also coming and I think it's very important to identify them.

"We need to send more athletes abroad for training since high performance training is not as developed; for example, bio mechanism technology and such are still not available in Sri Lanka so we are stuck at one level technologically.

"If you look at the Sri Lankan contingent this time, 75% of the medal holders were trained abroad. So for athletes, it is important to get that higher level of exposure since in the International arena, the level is much different from the local level and competition.

Further we discussed about a few sports and events which were highlighted at the Games.

**Athletics**

Out of the 7 athletes, 2 athletes managed to win a silver and a bronze medal and three more athletes placed in the finals.

"However, when we compare it to their performance levels still we have to improve a lot. This is where foreign training comes into play. Beyond an athlete's physical and mental status, to improve and harness them we need technology and science. As an example, their movements and bio mechanics should be calculated. We don't know their body functionality.

"The lack of participation in Sri Lanka also plays part in this. Participation and therefore experience is fundamental in an athletes' growth.

"For instance, Yupun is training in Europe and there is a much bigger variety and number of competitions there than locally. Our local athletes are missing out on that aspect."



*Nethmi Poruthotage with her Bronze Medal*

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"On top of that, the recent past has been incredibly tough to Sri Lanka because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic crisis so travelling to these competitions was also halted for a considerable amount of time."

**Aquatics – Diving**

Dulanjan Fernando in his very first Commonwealth Games appearance qualified for the finals of the Men's 1m Springboard event and managed to come in 11th overall.

**Aquatics – Swimming**

Akalanka Peiris in his final event at Birmingham 2022, Men's 50m Backstroke established a new Sri Lankan National Record with a time of 26.15s renewing his own earlier record of 26.24s. Subsequently, he upgraded his personal best and the National record by 0.09 seconds finishing.

**Badminton**

"Compared to the previous games, the team performed very well. Still if we want to improve more, we need more practice and competitions. Though we now have a foreign coach, the players".

Sachin Dias and Buwaneka Goonethilleka advanced to the Quarter-final in the Men's Doubles event while Sachin Dias and Thilini Hendaheva advanced to the Quarter-final in the Mixed Doubles event. Moreover, the Mixed Team comprising of Dumindu Abeywickrama, Sachin Dias, Buwaneka Goonethilleka, Niluka Karunaratne, Thilini Hendaheva and Suhasni Vidanage placed 2nd in the Group Stage and qualified for the Quarter-final.

**3\*3 Basketball**

Both the men's and women's team unfortunately lost in the preliminary round itself.

**Beach Volleyball**

This was the first time Sri Lanka competed in the women's event. However, both the men's and women's team did not advance after the preliminary rounds.

**Boxing**

Rukmal Prasanna qualified for the Quarterfinal in the Men's 54kg event.

**Cricket**

Unfortunately, Sri Lanka was in the Group Play with 3 very strong teams; England, New Zealand and South Africa. It wasn't easy but we performed well in the first match but the next two matches weren't successful and the team placed 4th in the Group Play".

**Gymnastics**

Ruchira Fernando was placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Men's Subdivision 1 in the Artistic Gymnastics Event.

**Judo**

Chamara Dharmawardana qualified for the Quarter-final in the Men's 73kg event.

**Rugby Sevens**

"Another unfortunate event actually; we had to play against 3 giants in the Rugby world; the men's team against New Zealand, Samoa and England and the women's team -



*Isuru Kumara with his Bronze Medal*

against New Zealand Canada and England. However, the men's team had a historical win against Zambia (27-14) in the Classification Semi-finals."

**Squash**

"Chanithma Sinally and Shamil Wakeel advanced to the to the Mixed Doubles Plate Finals. Our teams had the opportunity play in many ties and matches since they have many categories".

**Weightlifting**

"This was our most medal prospective sport but they only managed to win 1 medal."

Dilanka Isuru Kumara won the Bronze Medal in the Men's 55kg event.

# SRI LANKA CHAMPIONS AT THE DAVIS CUP BY RAKUTEN 2022 ASIA/OCEANIA GROUP IV EVENT AND QUALIFIES TO GROUP III IN 2023

*Harshana Godamanna bids farewell to the Davis Cup court  
after 20 illustrious years*

The Davis Cup by Rakuten 2022 Asia/Oceania Group IV Event "A" was held at the Sri Lanka Tennis Association in Colombo, Sri Lanka from the 08th to the 13th August 2022 at Greenpath.

There were 20 teams in Group IV Asia/Oceania category which were divided into 2 events, 10 teams each.

While Event A took place here, Event B will take place in Bahrain from 17<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2022.

Out of the 10 teams, three teams withdrew;

they were - Macau, Oman and Qatar. Seven teams were drawn into two groups; Pool A comprised - Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan and Bangladesh Pool B of four teams - Iraq, Yemen, Maldives and Brunei, with the country finishing on top position of each group play-off for promotion to Asia/Oceania Group III.

In team Sri Lanka featured Harshana Godamanna who stood as the most decorated player of the side, having played in the Davis Cup by Rakuten, with a career spanning two decades since 2002. Yasitha De Silva was another seasoned Davis -

Cup by Rakuten player who has been representing Sri Lanka since 2016. Thehan Wijemanne and Chathurya Nilaweera were both former Junior Davis Cup players and represented Sri Lanka in Davis Cup by Rakuten for the consecutive 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years respectively. As for Ashen Silva, this was his debut appearance at Davis Cup by Rakuten.

Non-Playing Captain Udith Wickramasinghe is a former national player and Coach Renouk Wijemanne is a past national champion and a former Davis Cup by Rakuten player himself.

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L-R: Renouk Wijemanne (Coach) , Ashen Silva, Chathurya Nilaweera, Yasitha De Silva, Udith Wickramasinghe (Non-Playing Captain), Harshana Godamanna, Thehan Wijemanne, Cmdre. Pradeep Karunatilake (Manager)

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The ITF Referee for the event was Mr. Abhishek Mukherjee (Silver Badge) from India and the Assistant Referee was Mr. Dharaka Ellawala (Silver Badge) from Sri Lanka. There were a total of 6 chair umpires comprising of 2 Bronze Badge and 4 White Badge chair umpires from Sri Lanka, India, South Korea, Iran and Pakistan.

over Bangladesh and Brunei Darussalam respectively, and Yemen had a win of 2:1 against Maldives. Followed by, in Day 02, Iraq defeated Maldives with a score of 3:0.

Day 03 featured Kyrgyzstan winning over Bangladesh with a feat of 3:0 and Brunei Darussalam winning through a tough fight against Yemen with a score on 2:1.

played in 58 ties with an impressive win/loss record of 78/28. Godamanna was the recipient to the prestigious Davis Cup Commitment Award in 2018 for his long standing contribution representing Sri Lanka at the Davis Cup.

The final play-off started with a victory to Sri Lanka when Yasitha De Silva of Sri Lanka had a victory of



*Godamanna after his final victory on a Davis Cup court*

The Chief of Umpires for the event was Ms. Leena Nageshkar (White Badge) from India assisted by Mr. Mufaddal Hazari (White Badge) from Sri Lanka, who together headed a team of 26 Line Umpires and 26 Ball Kids.

The tournament staff was led by the Tournament Director Mr. Anupa Maththamagoda and Assistant Tournament Director Mr. Sooriyakumaran Hariprashanth.

The Tournament started with Day 1 concluded with Sri Lanka and Iraq having comfortable wins of 3:0 -

The Day 4 thriller featured Sri Lanka, Iraq and Maldives playing against Kyrgyzstan, Yemen and Brunei Darussalam respectively. Sri Lanka topped in Pool A after beating Kyrgyzstan 3:0 while Iraq concurrently topped Pool B after beating Yemen 2:0, qualifying Sri Lanka and Iraq for the promotional play-off. The final promotional play-off marked a very special moment to all Sri Lankan Tennis enthusiasts as Harshana Godamanna announced that this will be his final Davis Cup appearance. The beloved Lankan tennis star first debuted in Davis Cup in 2002 and since then has -

6/4, 6/2 against Abdullah Ali Hatem Ghrairi of Iraq. Ensuing, 37-year-old Godamanna bade farewell to the Davis Cup court on a high note with a victory over Adil Mustafa Al-Saedi of Iraq with a score of 6/3, 6/2, making Sri Lanka the winner of the play-off and qualify to the Group III in Davis Cup by Rakuten 2023.

Concurrently Kyrgyzstan won over Brunei Darussalam in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> play-off and Bangladesh won over Yemen in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> play-off., successfully concluding the Davis Cup by Rakuten 2022 Asia/Oceania Group IV Event "A".