



# 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

*Federation News*



## THE INNER STORY OF A STORY OF GRIT AND SILVER

Young Palitha Bandara was crazy to when the 1996 Cricket World Cup was in action, but at the Millaniya Village where he did his studies, there was no such facility or anyway avenue to have access to a television, so he sadly resigned to that fate. Then, when celebrity athletes in the calibre of Susanthika Jayasinghe and Damayanthi Darsha performed, he cut their pictures and pasted in his scrapbook, or even pasted them in his wall.

Yet, for him to have the real taste of sport, he had to finish his obligations with the Sri Lanka Army and see the light at the end of the tunnel -

after the 30-year war.

There, he learned the finer points of playing Volleyball and soon was a member of the Army National Guard Regimental Volleyball pool, and for him being selected from around 17,000 soldiers, was a huge achievement.

Could he call that a fateful day?

On 2013 November 13 at the Nochchiyagama Camp court, a friend fell on him and the end result was he ended up with an ACL injury and a new prosthetic kneecap.

His first part of his sports dream had ended there, but, inner drive said, that there is a way out.

“In 2012 while in the Army, I saw a para athlete by the name of Pre-deep Sanjaya winning a Paralympic Bronze and suddenly, I decided that this is going to be my destiny. But, still I was in crutches. My friends also gave me the much needed moral support to become a Para Athlete.”

“Even today the real Doctors are for him to be on crutches in my day-to-day activity.”

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Then Palitha delved into the reason why he has to believe in the Rubber-ball theory.

“I was born in the Village of Thalagoda in the Matale District, but soon my family moved to Millaniya – my mother’s village to enable for me and my two siblings to do their schooling.

“Then under C.T. Anurakumara, I delved into serious training in these two sports in Nochchiyagama.

However, after around two and a half months I was moved back to the Kurunegala camp.

Then even without a proper coach I continued with my training via-YouTube.

With that I qualified for the Paralympic Games and I ended up at the 5th place.”

Soon after he and his coach were told that they had to prepare for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, but, ironically they had to change sport to Men’s F42-44/61-64 discus throw because the shot put was not there in the list.



*Palitha in his younger days of playing Volleyball*



*2018 Asian Para Games - Silver Medal - Men's Shot Put event*

“My father was a daily wage earner, mostly working in a rock quarry or engage in sand mining for a trader. Meanwhile my mother moved to an overseas location seeking greener pastures, but in general, it was a struggle to eke out a living until I joined the Army.

“I was always a survivor not ready surrender meekly. I decided that I was stop and lay down with my knee injury, so I decided to seek my future in sitting volleyball. Being a member of the sitting volleyball unit, I got my first opportunity compete overseas in 2017. Even during that period I was engaged in shot put and discus throw, but it was only a hobby at that time.

Suddenly at that juncture, the National Paralympic Committee invited me to move to Colombo promising coaching assistance and help said that there is long road ahead of you in Paralympics. In 2018 in preparation to the Asian Paralympic Championships I was put under Pradeep Nishantha and won the Silver in the shot put with a distance of 13.21 metres.

“In 2019 I took part in the World Paralympic Games in Dubai and in that effort I was placed 8th. In 2020, I had the opportunity of teaming up with Prabhath Dhanushka Perera as coach and in February 2021 I took part in the shot put at the Grand Prix in Dubai and I won the third place there with a distance of 13.41 metres.

“I was told that I had to prepare to take part in the Discus Throw.

“At the same time, the National Olympic Committee afforded me the opportunity of taking part in the Commonwealth GAPS programme, where they give special training to Para-athletes prior to the games. As I was among the first five performers at the Paralympics, I got this opportunity. There, I was put under a high performance coach from New Zealand John Eden - who happens to be New Zealand's first ever Paralympian. From him, I learned a lot to polish up my discus throw and up to date, I work with him through video.”

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“Changing from the put shot to serious discus throw itself was a huge challenge. I was committed to the shot put throw for almost four years prior to that. I only had about seven months to become a fully-fledged discus thrower. On top of that, they gave me a target of clearing 40 metres.

Then he and his coach Prabhath decided as his event was going to be held around 8.45 in the evening, to do most of our training during that time. Then when the real date of the competition arrived, I was ready for the climatic aspect of it.

“However the day of the real thing - the atmosphere was almost electric. The din was almost deafening.

“For the first time, I engaged in an international competition of this magnitude. Yet, in the back of my mind, I wanted to prove my worth.

“By my side, there were two Indian and two British competitors, but, I knew that they were feeling the cold more than me and I was more comfortable than them at that moment.



*Palitha training at the GAPS Programme*



*Palitha with his coach Prabhath Dhanushka Perera at the 2022 Commonwealth Games*

“Then in April 2022 at a GAPS competition – this was by another para athletic championship in Britain, I cleared 40.20 metres and qualified to take part at the games proper.

“Then through the GAPS programme, I underwent further training in Birmingham and this was before the start of the real programme got underway. It was on June 17 2022 and I had time to prepare as my event was take place on August 3 2022. As a result, I had sufficient time to acclimatize myself to the Birmingham conditions.”

Palitha said the climate was always in the region of 16 to 17 degrees.

“In spite of standing so close to each other, I could not hear what my coach was telling me. Luckily, it was not so cold for us that day, but, my other Asiatic competitors were feeling the cold.

“Maybe because Yupun moved there from Italy, he also could stand up to the situation there, and I was sharing the stadium the same day. At the same time, I could feel - when some other competitors were receiving huge cheering I had none. But, that did not matter at all.

“I had not seen such crowd before; it was awe-inspiring. I was really frightened when I took my first throw.

“In fact, they were getting cramps because of the cold. Then after the third throw, I had that inner feeling that I was line of a medal of some nature. I reached my peak during the third and fourth throws, yet, I did not know that I really had won a medal at that time. Then, on the other side, Yupun had got his Bronze Medal and I rushed to congratulate the 100m runner for his achievement. Upon my return, I did my sixth throw, but there I had touched the line. But, it was in my fifth attempt that I made the difference and sealed the fate. I had cleared a distance of 44.20m to clinch the silver medal, which had also happened to be my new personal best. I did it for my country and I am really happy that I was a part of the country’s celebrations.”

# RATNAPALA SET TO BECOME FIRST ATHLETE FROM VEDDA COMMUNITY TO REPRESENT SRI LANKA



*Newly crowned national marathon champion Thala Warige Ratnapala poses with Vedda chieftain.*

The national marathon witnessed its fastest time in nearly five years in the men's category when the event was held at Gampaha recently.

Thala Warige Ratnapala, who fell off the radar a couple of years after Sri Lanka Air Force recruited him in 2010, emerged victorious at the national event as he became the first athlete from the Vedda community to clinch the national marathon title.

"I would like to thank the Air Force and my coach Sajith Jayalal for all the support they have given me to reach where I am today," Ratnapala said in an interview with *The Island* after the newly crowned champion met Vedda chieftain at his residence.

"The chieftain is happy that I could win it for the Vedda community. This is also the first time an athlete is winning it for the Eastern Province. The chieftain is happy for my achievement," said Ratnapala.

Competing in his first-ever marathon, Ratnapala clocked two hours, 25 minutes and 49 seconds to win the title ahead of his training partners, namely the former champion Dhammika Anurasiri and Sisira Kumara.

Ratnapala first competed as a track athlete when he was recruited by Sri Lanka Air Force for his impressive performances at the junior level. He was briefly with Sajith Jayalal before disappearing from the national scene.

"I was reintroduced to Sajith Sir in 2020. That was the turning point. I could have achieved much more had I concentrated on the marathon and trained under his supervision," said Ratnapala, who is eager to achieve success beyond the national level.

"I had the ability. The other thing was the opportunity I got to train with the best in the country. Those stood me in good stead. Training with athletes who were faster than me under the guidance of Sajith Sir was the reason behind my success," said Ratnapala who turned 30 in July.

With the success he has achieved at the national event, Ratnapala will also be eligible to represent the country at one of the two forthcoming international marathons.

The National Marathon was considered a selection ground to pick teams for the Dhaka International Marathon and the Hong Kong marathon.

Sri Lanka Athletics selectors will pick separate teams for the two international marathons from the winners of the last weekend's marathon.

Ratnapala who returned home to Hennanigala to take a well-deserved rest said that he would recommence training again in a couple of days with the international marathons in mind.

*Reemus Fernando  
Courtesy - The Island*

# RAVINDU LAKSIRI STEPS OUT OF HIS DREAM AND BAGS THE TITLE

*Marks the First ever PSA International victory for Sri Lanka*

## 2<sup>ND</sup> BANGABANDHU INTERNATIONAL SQUASH TOURNAMENT 2022

5 - 9 October 2022 | WSF & PSA Events: PSA Challenge Tour 5, PSA Satellite Tour (Female) & Junior Championship

### PRIZE DISTRIBUTION CEREMONY

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> October

Venue: Gulshan Club



**D**reams are there to be dreamed; but, making your dream happen in reality is indeed the real achievement.

Young Ravindu Laksiri recently broke the cudgels to stepped out of his dream and won the first place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bangabandhu Squash Tournament Presented by Ishaphani Ltd, to claim his maiden Tour victory in the Professional Squash Association (PSA) Challenger Tour.

The Sri Lankan had never even made a final during his fledgling -

Tour career prior to his trip to Dhaka, and the World No.199<sup>th</sup> as of 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022 came into the Challenger 5 level competition as the No.8 seed.

“One of my dreams close to my heart has come true.

“I am very happy with my performance and I can be very proud of being the first Sri Lankan player to win the 5K PSA Challenger tournament”, expressed Laksiri on social media.

He continued, “After this tournament my latest world ranking was renewed.

“My new world ranking is 204 in the world.

“This is the highest ranking achieved by a squash player in Sri Lanka.

“I see this as the result of years of my commitment and hardwork. But this is just the beginning and more to go.”

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He started his week with a comfortable 14-minute victory over Bangladeshi Abid Mansur, before then getting the better of Iranian's Sepehr Etemdapoor as his giant-killing run got underway.

The Sri Lankan defeated the tournament's No.5 seed in four games, recovering from dropping the third to the Iranian. He fought back to win the fourth and secure his quarter final spot, where he then took on No.2 seed Duncan Lee.

Laksiri led twice in the contest, only to see the Malaysian fight back on both occasions.

However, the Sri Lankan was able to take the fifth to keep his run going.

In the semis, the World No.281 came up against No.4 seed Amir Amirul, and won in straight games. The first two games of their last four contests were tight, but Laksiri came through to win in half an hour to book his spot in the final.

He took on Egypt's Ziad Ibrahim in the final on Sunday in Dhaka, and started strongly. The Sri Lankan won the first two games, but saw Ibrahim fight back to win the third. However, Laksiri regrouped, and took a tight fourth game 11-9 to get over the line and clinch his first Tour title, with 6000USD as the prize money.

Results of the Tournament are as follows.

Final

[8] Ravindu Laksiri (SRI) bt [3] Ziad Ibrahim (EGY) 3-1: 11-8, 11-6, 5-11, 11-9 (48m)

Semi-Finals

[8] Ravindu Laksiri (SRI) bt [4] Amir Amirul (MAS) 3-0: 11-7, 11-8, 11-3 (29m)

Quarter Finals

[8] Ravindu Laksiri (SRI) bt [2] Duncan Lee (MAS) 3-0: 11-6, 9-11, 11-7, 5-11, 11-8 (60m)

# HONORARY DOCTORATE FOR INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE PRESIDENT THOMAS BACH



Today (18<sup>th</sup>), Seoul National University awarded an Honorary Doctorate (Doctor of Sports Management) to Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), who is dedicated to creating a peaceful and better world through sports.

President Thomas Bach, an Olympic fencing gold medalist and a lawyer, elected as the President of the International Olympic Committee since 2013.