



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



NOC SL PRESIDENT LOOKS AT THE NEXT PHASE OF OLYMPIISM

Four years ago, when the incumbent executive committee took control of the National Olympic Committee, there were a lot of stifles and asphyxiates aimed at the organisations by certain sections who misunderstood the path that the team had set them on.

Now, after the fourth year, most critics have mellowed down their belligerent stance despite still sitting on the opposite pew. It was evident at the AGM held on Wednesday.

Looking on to 2023, President Suresh Subramaniam takes stock of the accumulation and reads how he prefers to analyze how it was and how it's going to be.

Subramaniam with a determined stance spelled out, "When I came in 2018, on the invitation of Immediate Past President Hemasiri Fernando and Secretary General Maxwell de Silva, I myself did not know where I was heading. There were no positive reports - only negative reports. In short, there was nothing positive.

"Yet, I am a person who likes to take challenges and it is similar to the challenge that I took with Tennis. Tennis was also in the same situation when I stepped in.

"When I left after five years as President, it is running very well. I put in so many rules and regulations - there is a procurement that any president or secretary has to follow.

"This is exactly what I did at the NOC SL. There is financial discipline, procedure of purchases, procurement - there were so many things that were set in motion, putting them on the right track.

"When our athletes participate in the Olympic Games or the Asian Games or any Games that come with the purview of the IOC or the NOC SL and if they fail, they point a gun at us. They ask, what has the NOC SL done?

"A lot of people were ignorant about the role that the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka play and the role that the other Federations have to play!"

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“Champions are not produced by the NOC SL. Champions are produced by the respective Federations. NOC’s job is to convert the champion into a medal winner, in which, it is very difficult to point a finger at past NOC people because I do not think anyone produced real prospects. Where Susanthika Jayasinghe – the Year 2000 Sydney Games Silver medallist was concerned; Federations had her and the NOC SL took over her from that point. In the last twenty years or more than ten years or more, the Athletic Federation has not produced anything; for that matter, no Federation has come up with a medal-winning performance at the Olympics since the turn of the century.”

Subramaniam explained that to achieve the desired results at the top level, there were some prerequisites that had to be accomplished. According to the NOC SL President - first, they put their house in order and added “Then we looked as to where the problems were. Producing a medal winner cannot be achieved overnight. It is a ten-year-plus grinding; maybe it may take fifteen years. We learned that we had to learn at the junior level in sports. Our junior level is very good. The problem was when these kids leave school and till they reach the national level – the intermediary – they get lost in transit. Some of them make it to the top and some others give up because there is no proper guidance. It is a fact that most of the athletes from many sports hail from the outstations and most of them have no idea of how to move on to the next stage that the NOC SL is looking for.”

The Junior Development Committee of the NOC SL is a result of this looming predicament, he said.

Now we have in the region of twenty athletes below the age of eighteen and the NOC SL has undertaken to look after their needs up to fifty thousand rupees. He explained that it does not come in cash but, the necessary backing up items for their athletic needs. Even the coaches of these athletes are provided. Finances are one most pressing needs of fledgling athletes. Many parents cannot afford or do not believe in investing in sports because they do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. That is where we have stepped in, even though it is the duty of the respective Federation to come up with necessary action.

“Champions are not produced by the NOC SL. Champions are produced by the respective Federations. NOC’s job is to convert the champion into a medal winner”

“Now we have twenty athletes being nurtured under this scheme. We are glad that Crysbro also has a similar programme which is ongoing, while there are a few more companies who are looking at the possibilities of getting involved. They all agree that we are on the right track. Now, these athletes below the age of 18 and their medals are going to take time. From this point onwards, some of these aspirants may give up or there may be new additions, but it is we who have to provide the pathway – once they know that there is a pathway, the athletes fall in line.

“This is what happened at Tennis. Even there, I was very keen to provide the pathway.

“Whoever took up Tennis, they were assured once they reach the Sri Lankan ranking, they will be given the opportunity to play in the ITF tournaments. If they want to pursue tennis, they have the chance to get a scholarship to train in the United States and ninety percent of the aspirants have been successful. That is also why we are short of National level players in the circuit. But, I am happy about that. It is up to them to come back and represent the country and few of them have chosen to do that. The pathway does not stop there. In the second tier, we developed them to take up the Education aspect of Tennis and they became coaches. In the Education aspect of officiating, they became umpires. These avenues are also very lucrative. I mean not just local, I am talking about international exposure because they get the opportunity of going overseas and making the mark. The bottom line is - nobody is a loser when they take up tennis.” He said that this is the line of vision that we must inculcate in all Federations he said.

He added “As I mentioned at the AGM, we have to digitalize the system. It is done at the Tennis Association. Then they learn the importance of the new way of thinking – the approach for the athletes and everything is there. It is a must to move with times. People have no time in today’s context to do things manually.”

Talking about hesitancy and delays, the NOC SL President said “When they said that they were going to digitalize, I did not know exactly what’s going on, I was rather ascertaining what the pluses were and what the minuses were. Then during a visit to Germany and Spain, I saw what their Federations had done with digitalizing.”

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“Then I introduced it at the SLTA in 2018 with the consent of the committee and since then, they have never looked back. This is what I have envisaged with the rest of the Federations. In that manner they achieve improvement, then the whole jigsaw falls into place. It is transparent and we must inculcate improvement. There are a few Federations that have gone off the rail and as a result, people tend to think that all officials are crooked, but more than 90% of the officials are clean.

“All Federation officials are volunteers; when you are a volunteer, it is wrong for the volunteer to say that he or she is not accountable”

“Very importantly, all Federation officials are volunteers; when you are a volunteer, it is wrong for the volunteer to say that he or she is not accountable. That is a decision that has been taken by an individual and he/she is accountable for all his/her actions. As far as the Federations are concerned, they also should be held accountable. “We have a laid out plan - in fact, we are in the process of getting a professor from the University of Lausanne to do a five/ten-year plan. It would be costly, but it is okay because when I leave office one day, there is a plan put in and the others only have to follow the format already set in. Today sport is science. Even the administrators have to think along those same lines. We have our executive committee meeting. From January, every member of the committee knows when it is held. At the same time, if you are overseas you can join in online on zoom.

If the President is out of the island, the vice president would chair the meeting. Dates never change and there is no excuse for anyone for not attending the meeting. In short, if the head is disciplined, the tail will follow suit.

When asked about the short-term challenges like the Asian Games, Subramaniam explained “Recently the Sports Ministry stated that they have no money. The problem that we are facing – which I want to emphasize is, that we cannot be looking back and keep looking over our shoulders to see whether someone is going to play us out or someone is going to pull the rug underneath. That is the issue that we have today. The ministry! That is the problem. We are here to promote young athletes and not to squabble for positions, and see if the secretary or the DG is going to work against us. What we want here is to work together. They do not seem to understand. They are paid servants and they come on at 9 am and clock off at 5 pm. If the government today is in deep trouble financially, they are looking to privatize or sell corporations that are making losses - that is the right thing to do. When the shell company and Electricity Board were making huge profits, but the moment it went into government hands nothing has happened.

“In the past 74 years sports have been with the government and what have they achieved? Only two Olympic medals. Now they are trying to take sport back into the clasp of the government. The current government is trying to promote privatizing but they are trying to do the opposite.

“Without trying to promote sport with the private sector, they are trying to bring in regulation and take it over. For whose benefit? How to work? It is very difficult! These are the problems at hand.

“At the NOC SL, we are looking only at how to win a medal and whom should we support. Instead of that, I have to safeguard myself because someone is trying to pull the rug underneath. Our Secretary General has gone through a lot of difficult times because they don't like him. That is not the way! Nobody is perfect. You have to get the best out of people. But if someone has done wrong, they must be held responsible. I know people have fixed matches. There are documents, but they are not taking action. They are not taking action against them but they are trying to put rules to curtail the good officials. If someone has done wrong, they must take action. That is how I have survived. If you make a mistake, it can be forgiven. Anyone can make a mistake. But, when someone does wrong, I will not tolerate it. If there is a rule, I don't interpret the rule - I only apply the rule. That is what is needed. We have a plan to move forward and we must do that. We must be disciplined and as the IOC President Thomas Bach said ‘Let us join hands to go faster, aim higher, become stronger – together. In this true Olympic spirit, I wish you all a happy, healthy and successful pre-Olympic year 2023.’”



FOOTBALL HAS LOST ITS KING

PELÉ, 'THE KING OF FOOTBALL', DIES AT AGE 82

The Brazilian football legend, Pelé, born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, passed away on December 29th in São Paulo, Brazil at 82 years old, losing a long battle against cancer.

A three-time FIFA World Cup winner and top scorer in the history of the men's Seleção alongside Neymar, Pelé was not only a global icon of the most popular sport in the world, but also one of the most prominent sporting figures of the 20th century. His talent turned the Brazilian Selecao and its yellow shirt into global brands.

An all-around footballer with a special talent, Pelé won fans across all continents of the world. He played a crucial role in the rise of football to the position of most popular sport on the planet.

Pelé was born in Tres Coracoes, in the state of Minas Gerais, on October 23 1940. He was named after the inventor of the light bulb, Thomas Edison, however when his birth was registered, the clerk removed the letter "i", making his name Edson.

The nickname Pelé emerged when a young Edson couldn't pronounce the name of goalkeeper Bilé, who played in his hometown. He would always say Pelé. At first, his teammates would make fun of the mispronunciation, without realising how iconic that nickname would become in the future.

FIFA World Cup 1958: the youngest-ever world champion

In 1956, he began playing for Santos, the team that launched him into stardom.



In the 1958 World Cup in Sweden, he became the youngest-ever world champion at 17 years old, scoring in the final.

Pelé was also part of the team that won the World Cup in 1962, and became a two-time club world champion with Santos. He scored 77 goals for Brazil, a record he shares with Neymar. In 1970, he became the first - and still only - player to win three World Cup titles, as part of a squad regarded as one of the greatest teams in the history of sports.

In the late 1970s, Pelé played in the USA for New York Cosmos, before retiring in 1977. He continued to be involved in sport, working as a pundit on television and serving as Minister for Sports in Brazil between 1995 and 1998.

Over the past few years, Pelé fought a long battle with a cancer that was first detected in the colon and spread to several organs, including his liver and lung.

Pelé and the Olympic Games

The Brazilian legend never played in the Olympic Games, but in 1999 he was voted the Athlete of the Century by NOCs all over the world.

In the Closing Ceremony of London 2012, Pelé featured in the segment about the upcoming Games in Rio. Months before the Opening Ceremony of Rio 2016, he received the Olympic Order from IOC President Thomas Bach, in Santos.

"Even if I was an Olympic gold medalist in fencing, my love for sport started with football. If I hadn't become the president of the IOC, I would have missed the chance to hand in the Olympic Order to one of my sport heroes, Pelé, Edson Arantes do Nascimento, recognizing his sporting merit and his loyalty of the Olympic values", said Thomas Bach during the ceremony in 2016. Pelé also took part in the Torch Relay for Rio 2016, in Santos, where he lived until his last days.

MEN NOW ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE IN ARTISTIC SWIMMING AT PARIS 2024 FOLLOWING IOC APPROVAL

“The inclusion of men in Olympic Artistic Swimming was once considered the impossible dream. This proves that we should all dream big.”

For the first time in history, men will be able to compete in the team competition at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 after the IOC gave its approval for NOCs to include a maximum of two male athletes per team.

For the first time in Olympic history, men have been given the go-ahead to compete in the artistic swimming competition at an Olympics. On 22 December, World Aquatics (formerly FINA) announced that the IOC had approved male participation in the artistic swimming team event, with a maximum of two male competitors per team.

While artistic swimming has been on the Olympic programme since 1984, until now it has always been a female-only sport.

However, all of that is likely to change at Paris 2024 where 10 teams are expected to compete for the gold medal at the Olympic Aquatics Centre.



The addition of male athletes to the artistic swimming competition represents another step in the IOC's mission to provide gender parity at the Games, with Paris 2024 featuring as many female athletes as male for the first time in history.

The USA's Billy May, the first male World Champion in artistic swimming, spoke about how much of a breakthrough moment the inclusion of men in Olympic artistic swimming will be.

“The inclusion of men in Olympic Artistic Swimming was once considered the impossible dream,” he said. “This proves that we should all dream big. The male athletes have endured. Now, through their perseverance and the help and support of so many, all athletes may stand alongside each other equally, reaching for Olympic glory.”

World Aquatics President Captain Husain Al-Musallam was equally enthusiastic about the new development, saying: “Aquatics sports are universal and men have proven themselves to be excellent artistic swimmers. I look forward to seeing this new dimension of artistic swimming being shared with the world in Paris.”

“The inclusion of men in artistic swimming is a great credit to all those who have worked for many years to make this happen.”

The artistic swimming competition at Paris 2024 will include 96 athletes, with five events contested between 5 and 10 August 2024. The events include Free duets, Technical duets, Finale duets, Free teams and Technical teams.

WHAT IS THE QUALIFICATION PATHWAY TO PARIS 2024?



One of the sports that featured at the Ancient Olympics, athletics has been a mainstay of the modern Olympic programme since the revival of the Games at Athens 1896.

The Paris 2024 athletics programme will see a total of 1810 athletes - 905 women and 905 men, from across the world competing for honours.

Find out everything you need to know about the athletes, schedule and pathway to qualification below.

For individual events, there will be a maximum of three athletes per NOC eligible to qualify, with a maximum of two teams per NOC per team event and one relay team per NOC for relay events.

In terms of Universality Places, any NOC that has no male or female qualified athlete or relay team will be allowed to enter their best ranked male or best ranked female athlete in either the 100m, 800m or marathon.

Athletes will be able to qualify in two ways for the Paris 2024 Games, with **50% of qualification places based on achieving the entry standard** for an event within the qualification period, and the other **50% based on the World Athletics Ranking within the ranking period**.

The qualification and ranking period for all individual events - other than the 10,000m, marathon, combined events and race walks - will be between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024.

For the 10,000m, combined events, race walks and relays, the qualification and ranking period will be between 31 December 2022 and 30 June 2024, while for the marathon the period will be between 1 November 2022 and 30 April 2024.

All performances must be achieved during competitions organised or authorised by World Athletics, its Area Associations or its National Federations in accordance with its rules and published on the World Athletics Global Calendar.

For relay events, the **14 highest placed NOCs at the World Athletics Relays 2024** will qualify automatically for Paris 2024 with the remaining teams selected according to the World Athletics performance list for relays during the period of 31 December 2022 and 30 June 2024.

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The following is a full list of events that will be competed at Paris 2024.

- 100m (women's / men's)
- 200m (women's / men's)
- 400m (women's / men's)
- 800m (women's / men's)
- 1500m (women's / men's)
- 5000m (women's / men's)
- 10,000m (women's / men's)
- 100m Hurdles (women's)
- 110m Hurdles (men's)
- 400m Hurdles (women's / men's)
- 3000m Steeplechase (women's / men's)
- 4 x 100m Relay (women's / men's)
- 4 x 400m Relay (women's / men's / mixed)
- High Jump (women's / men's)
- Pole Vault (women's / men's)
- Long Jump (women's / men's)
- Triple Jump (women's / men's)
- Shot Put (women's / men's)
- Discus Throw (women's / men's)
- Hammer Throw (women's / men's)
- Javelin Throw (women's / men's)
- Heptathlon (women's)
- Decathlon (men's)
- 20km Race Walk (women's / men's)
- 35km Team Race Walk (mixed)
- Marathon (women's / men's): last weekend of the Olympic Games

Athletics stars to look out for at Paris 2024

On 5 December 2022, Sydney McLaughlin and Armand "Mondo" Duplantis were named female and male Athlete of the Year at the World Athletics Awards. For 400m hurdler McLaughlin, it came after a year in which she broke her own world record en route to gold at the World Athletics Championships in Oregon, following her Olympic title at Tokyo 2020.

Swedish pole vaulter Duplantis continues to raise the bar - both literally and figuratively - within his sport, setting a new world record of 6.21m at this year's Worlds to add to the indoor world record of 6.20 he achieved earlier in the year in Belgrade.

Venezuela's Yulimar Rojas is another athlete who continues to dominate her sport. The triple jump star is Olympic champion, a three-time world champion and holds the current world record of 15.74m.

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Entry standards approved by World Athletics Council in November 2022

Men	Event	Women
10.00	100m	11.07
20.16	200m	22.57
45.00	400m	50.95
1:44:70	800m	1:59:30
3:33.50 (3:50.40)	1500m (Mile)	4:02.50 (4:20.90)
13:05.00	5000m	14:52.00
27:00.00 (27:00)	10,000m	30:40.00
13.27	110m Hurdles / 100m Hurdles	12.77
48.70	400m Hurdles	54.85
8:15.00	3000m Steeplechase	9:23.00
2.33	High Jump	1.97
5.82	Pole Vault	4.73
8.27	Long Jump	6.86
17.22	Triple Jump	14.55
21.50	Shot Put	18.80
67.20	Discus Throw	64.50
78.20	Hammer Throw	74.00
85.50	Javelin Throw	64.00
8,460	Decathlon / Heptathlon	6,480
1:20:10	20km Race Walk	1:29:20
2:08:10	Marathon	2:26:50

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She will once again be a favourite for victory at Paris 2024. In the marathon, Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge became the back-to-back Olympic champion at Tokyo 2020 and at the 2022 Berlin Marathon broke his own world record in a time of 2:01:09.

In the men's short distances, keep your eyes on Fred Kerley, Noah Lyles and the young Erriyon Knighton, who is currently faster than -

the great Usain Bolt was at the same age. Hosts France will be also be anticipating strong performances from their athletes competing on home soil during the Games.

Among their strongest is decathlete Kevin Mayer, who won his second World Championships gold in 2022, following silver medals at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. He will be hoping to make it onto the top step of the podium in front of his home crowd in Paris.

Other athletes you won't want to miss at Paris 2024 include Chinese women's shot putter Gong Lijiao, men's 1500m runner Jakob Ingebrigtsen, Qatari men's high jumper Mutaz Barshim, USA women's 800m runner Athing Mu, USA men's shot putter Ryan Crouser and Brazilian men's 400m hurdler Alison dos Santos, among many, many others who will be aiming for gold at the next Olympic Games.

Athletics qualification timeline for Paris 2024

1 November 2022: Start of the qualification and ranking period for Marathon

December 2022: World Athletics to confirm the entry standards for all events. The standards will be distributed to all NOCs and NFs.

31 December 2022: Start of the qualification and ranking period for 10,000m, Combined Events, Race Walks and Relays

1 July 2023: Start of the qualification and ranking period for all individual events (except 10,000m, Marathon, Combined Events and Race Walks)

30 January 2024: End of qualification and ranking period for Marathon (80% of quota)

23 April 2024: Deadline for NOCs with no qualified athletes to apply for unqualified entries in Marathon

30 April 2024: End of qualification and ranking period for Marathon (remaining 20% of quota)

1 May 2024: World Athletics to (only for Marathon):

- confirm the list of approved Unqualified athletes

- confirm the list of athletes qualified by Entry Standard
- publish the World Athletics World Rankings and qualified athletes

3 May 2024: Deadline to decline a quota place for Marathon.

4-6 May 2024: World Athletics to re-allocate unused quota places in the Marathon

8 May 2024: World Athletics shall publish the last edition of the Road to Paris for Marathon with the final list of all athletes eligible for final entry.

April/May 2024 (Date TBC): *World Athletics Relays*

April/May 2024 (Date TBC): *World Athletics Race Walk Team Championships*

31 May 2024: Deadline for NOCs with no qualified athletes to apply for unqualified entries in 100m or 800m

30 June 2024: End of qualification and ranking period for all events (except Marathon)

2 July 2024: World Athletics to:

- confirm the list of approved Unqualified athletes
- confirm the list of athletes qualified by Entry Standard
- publish the World Athletics World Rankings and qualified athletes
- publish the list of qualified Relay Teams

4 July 2024: Deadline to decline a quota place for all events (except Marathon)

5-6 July 2024: World Athletics to re-allocate unused quota places in all events (except Marathon)

7 July 2024: World Athletics shall publish the last edition of the Road to Paris for all events (except Marathon) with the final list of all athletes and relay teams eligible for final entry.

8 July 2024: Paris 2024 Sport Entries deadline

26 July-11 August 2024: Olympic Games Paris 2024