



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

LANKAN SPORTS TEN YEARS HENCE

*Strategic planning through the eyes
Prof. Emmanuel Bayle*



To achieve success in any task in life or life's other essential goals like success in business or becoming a sportsman or a sport administrator one must be armed with a very clear vision and a plan of how to attain or arrive at the desired goal.

Being very precise in their goal and driving them into achievable vision, mission and objectives is one such undertaking that the sports world through the International Olympic Committee (IOC) parasol has embarked upon.

As far as the IOC is concerned their machine will not be on the road because it is there.

From this point onwards the National Olympic Committee around their realm would be encouraged to develop their strategic plans and work through a visionary pathway and encouraged to attain them through a measurable timeline and yardstick.

GoodSport was in conversation with Professor Emmanuel Bayle – a visionary who had authored over fifteen books on the same ilk – how to

achieve and arrive at the desired goals through a proper plan and how to stick by them.

During this journey, GoodSport had a few questions that we are trying to look through the eyes of a person of the calibre of Professor Emmanuel Bayle and find out how would he help us to cut the cloth to suit the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka's coat. It was a pressing need that we locals have been shelving since their inauguration back in 1937.

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The GoodSport initial question came in the form of “How and why a Strategic Plan is important for NOC Sri Lanka?”

Professor Bayle explained “It is a key tool of good governance and a best practice tool for the leaders.

“Also, it is a unifying apparatus for management and internal communication (better involvement of staff).

“Moreover, it is an external communication and legitimacy tool to strengthen a NOC’s image and the legitimacy of its action through the International Sport Federations, private and public partners, etc.

“It is also a tool to learn how we can overcome key challenges.

“Not only that, but it strengthens the role of the NOC Sri Lanka in serving the general interest of the sport movement as a key factor in the Sri Lanka sport system; mobilises for a sports plan to overcome the challenges notably in education, health and tourism through sport.

We then posed the query “Who would be the Strategic Partners in this programme and how serious would the respective Federations be, taking into consideration our current situation in the country and the state of affairs in the majority of our Federations and Associations?”

Emmanuel replied “There is a necessity to adopt a collaborative and partnership governance approach with the key actors of the Sri Lanka sports system, especially with the state.

“For a continuous long-run, the following actions ought to be undertaken with the below-mentioned key objectives:

- New contracts need to be developed with public and private partners – This could be possible through signing MoUs with the state ministries and institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Higher Education (University Grants Commission). Moreover, the signed MoU with the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs need to be reinforced and placed in practice.
- There are 72 National Federations (NFs) affiliated with the Ministry of Sports but only 33 of them are affiliated with NOC Sri Lanka. In this case, NOC Sri Lanka should encourage the rest of the NFs to affiliate which will spread the Olympism across other sports as well.

- To do so, the constitution should be revised to include the non-Olympic NFs. New sporting institutions such as Sri Lanka Universities Sports Association, National School Sport Association and International School Sport Association in Sri Lanka should also be encouraged to affiliate with NOC Sri Lanka.
- NOC Sri Lanka can create new NFs based on the public interest and available resources in the country such as Hiking/rambling, American Football, Frisbee, etc.
- Expanding sport networking through public institutions such as public banks, railway departments, petroleum corporations, Sri Lanka custom services and primary firms/companies in Sri Lanka will enhance large scale sport participation.

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National Federations are a vital mix of this ten year plan

- This could be done through signing MoUs with the above-mentioned institution with a long-run partnership. This could be done with the IOC's TOP partners. Partnership with leisure sport private companies will also be another strategy to promote sport in the country.

We moved onto asking a question of cohesion. We asked "One cannot clap with one hand. The programme is a huge vision for the future of our country's sport. How would propose the entire sports system of this country be involved cohesively and work for the future betterment of Sri Lankan sport?"

Professor Bayle explained "Success of NFs and NOC Sri Lanka are depending on the quality of Sri Lanka's integrated Sport System and National Sport Policy which is our strategic vision in and through Sport for Sri Lanka and the Nation.

"In this case, as I mentioned before, the five segments- Sports, Education, Tourism, Health, and Defense need to be well integrated in Sri Lanka's context."

Professor Emmanuel further added "A common strategic frame consisting of five primary strategic orientations and 21 sub-orientations drafted for the NOC Sri Lanka.

"This frame will inspire the NFs to develop own strategic plan in alignment with the NOC's proposed plans.

"Nothing can be achieved overnight; a lot of effort needs to be put together. Since the set objectives focus on short-, medium- and long-term developments and achievements.

"Therefore, Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games could be the ideal timeline which was validated by the executive board in the last meeting."

Emmanuel further commented that the NFs should sign MoUs with the Ministry of Sports and NOC Sri Lanka in every Olympic cycle for sport development and high performance which should be included in their operational annual action plan. In this case, NOC Sri Lanka can play a major role voluntarily to coach the NFs to be engaged in the process.

Another point that GoodSport stressed was "In most advanced sports nations including India now the moulding begins at a very tender age. They grow with their respective specialist sport, envisioned with a Strategic Plan. Could we achieve this by the year 2032?"

The expert Emmanuel said "Success of NFs and NOC Sri Lanka are depending on the quality of Sri Lanka's integrated Sport System and National Sport Policy and a national sport policy specifically dedicated to elite sport. To do so, the following objectives need to be targeted.

1. Support elite performance and strengthen the talent identification and development pathways with required sport infrastructure;
2. Improve the level of community engagement at every level to be excited about the sport, engage in the healthy activity;
3. Bridge the cultural and demographic gaps existing and emerging across Sri Lanka society;
4. Take into account that the young generation is growing up with new technologies, develop global connections, creating distinctly different behaviours and values.

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This could be achieved through the below-suggested actions plans:

- Support the creation of a National Sport Centre of Excellence and regional relocation centres
- Improve the athletes' social and economic status and training environment (through national and international scholarships/grants)
- Enhance the professionalism of the staff and quantity/quality of infrastructures/equipment
- Reinforce the key role of the Ministry of Defence and tri-forces (sport facilities and jobs for elite athletes)

Finally, we asked “Producing Olympic Medals, guided by a plan such as this?”

He replied, “Obviously, a clear policy on elite sport has to be developed.

“We can imagine different solutions • or reinforcing existing actions:

- Identify and detection of young talent with a focus on juniors
- Support from Sri Lanka diasporas both for connections of potential elite athletes (at it was the case for Mathilda Karlsson) and to welcome Sri Lanka elite athletes (Diaspora solidarity); it could be a specific programme named “Sri Lankan sport talent around the world”

“Nothing can be achieved overnight; a lot of effort needs to be put together. Since the set objectives focus on short-, medium- and long-term developments & achievements, Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games could be the ideal timeline which was validated by the executive board in the last meeting.”

Foreign training opportunities in the best conditions as it was the cases for Susanthika, Manjula Kumara, Yupun Abeykoon, Niluka Karunaratne... The Sri Lanka elite athletes need emulation, best training conditions and capacity to participate to a lot of international competitions... they must travel and go abroad for that (cost of 50 000 \$ per year)

Promote dual career system to get some scholarships from the powerful sport countries with the best universities in Australia, Europe, North America, South Korea ... ; we have to create tailor-made solutions for that

Launch some new financial support to help to build the 2028/2032 generation on the road to Olympics. For example, through the creation of an “Olympic SL foundation” with the support from donors, crowdfunding, social events (gala, dinners...) etc...

“This is not necessarily the only goal to achieve even if it can trigger positive things: pride and sense of belonging for Sri Lankans and inspire youth in particular. But I think we need to look at more comprehensive outcomes and see sport and physical activity as a potentially positive contribution to Sri Lanka society. Whether in terms of education, health and economic development and especially tourism, an Olympic medal is nothing if it is not accompanied by a policy to take advantage of the role and potential it holds for a better-functioning society. This requires a more unified and partnership sport system, notably with four key public actors (ministries of education, health, tourism and defence) and of course private partners who also want to support NOC policies and federations”.



Modern Pentathlon gaining momentum

Women's day feature

YULDUZ AND FARIBA HASHIMI: ESCAPING THE TALIBAN, CHASING A DREAM



It's a scorching hot June afternoon in the middle of an Italian heatwave. There hasn't been any rain for a month. But grey clouds are slowly rolling in and the humidity is rising fast. A storm is brewing. The kind that only happens once a summer here.

Two sisters are in the foothills of the Dolomites, about to start a 10km climb, weaving to the top of a small mountain. Three of their teammates, and best friends, are by their side. It's a beautiful route. There are few cars on the road up and a stunning view over a Veneto village awaits them as a reward.

They press on. There are 17 winding bends, numbered at each turn. They are elite cyclists - some of the best from their country. But they're not used to riding around bends, and -

they're certainly not used to cycling in pouring, driving rain.

It's far from the dusty landscape of northern Afghanistan where they come from, where often the rubbly roads are not even suitable to walk on. At the top, they pause to admire the view of their new home. Fat droplets of rain run down off their helmets. It's time to go. They grin at each other as they take off on the descent: "See you at home!"

Fariba and Yulduz Hashimi were born in one of the most remote, conservative provinces in Afghanistan, where it was practically unheard of to see women cycling.

In 2017 a local cycle race was put on in their local Faryab province, in the north. The sisters - then aged 14 and 17 - decided they wanted to take part.

But there was one small problem. They didn't know how to ride a bike. They borrowed a neighbour's to practice one afternoon. After a few hours, they finally got the hang of it. They had to take part in the race secretly because they hadn't told their family. They covered themselves up, wearing big baggy clothing, large headscarves and sunglasses so people didn't recognise them. They even changed their names. They ended up finishing first and second. "It felt amazing. I felt like a bird who could fly," Fariba, now 19, tells BBC Sport.

They carried on, entering as many small races as they could. It became harder to keep it from their family because they kept winning. Their parents soon found out from photos taken by local media. "They were upset at first. They asked me to stop cycling," Fariba says. "But I didn't give up. I secretly continued," she smiles. Their parents warned against the dangers, but eventually they were supportive.

The sisters faced regular harassment. "People were abusive. All I wanted to do was win races," Yulduz, 22, explains. "There were lots of threats," Fariba adds. "People tried to hit us with their cars or rickshaws. They threw stones at us." Even their female class-mates at school bullied them for riding bikes.

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Soon though, they got noticed, and were called up for the national team. "I will never forget the day," Yulduz says. "I felt on top of the world."

Their careers went steadily uphill from there, until the Taliban's return to power in August 2021. It changed everything, and immediately put their lives in danger. The hard-line Islamist group bans women from playing any sport. But that's not all. Since returning to power, the group have consistently cracked down on women's rights and freedoms. They've banned all girls from going to school, and most recently from attending university - entirely cutting off female access to education.

They've banned women from most areas of employment - including humanitarian aid organisations. Women don't have the freedom to dress how they want. The Taliban code of conduct says women must cover themselves entirely, but most women in big cities wear the headscarf. They are not allowed to travel long distances without a male chaperone, and have been barred from going to parks and gyms. Without so many rights, many women have wondered what's left for them.

The United Nations Refugee Agency estimated 2.6m Afghans became refugees during 2021 as the Taliban returned to power.

Fariba and Yulduz - and other female athletes like them - were representative of an Afghanistan which had been making some progress towards gender equality over the two decades since a US-led coalition's overthrow of the old regime. The new version of the country though was not one the Taliban recognised.



Faryab province, where the sisters come from, borders Turkmenistan in the north of Afghanistan

The sisters knew they had to leave if they had any chance of continuing their careers. So, they contacted Alessandra Cappellotto. The Italian, who won a world road title in 1997, now uses cycling to help women around the world.

Her charity Road to Equality had sponsored a race organised in Kabul for International Women's Day in March 2021. The Hashimi sisters had met Cappellotto then.

"They asked for help. Their lives were in danger. So it was natural to help them," Cappellotto says. She called every contact and organisation she could think of to get them out; from the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs to the United Nations. With her influence, Fariba and Yulduz, as well as three of their teammates - Nooria Mohammadi, Zahra Rezayee and Arezo Sarwari - got a seat on a flight from Kabul, organised by the Italian government.

Leaving Kabul airport was a chaotic, upsetting experience. They had to say goodbye to their families, not knowing when - or if - they'd see them again. "I never thought I would be a refugee. I never imagined that I'd have to leave my country," Fariba says.

Cappellotto brought them to a small, hilly town in the Veneto region of northern Italy, close to where she lives.

It's no coincidence that it's a location that's hugely popular with cyclists, with countless picturesque cycling routes. She helped the group settle in their new country, organised a house for them to live in, part-time jobs, and - most importantly - weekly private Italian lessons. Alessandra also crucially set them up with brand-new bikes, a professional coach, and a training schedule.

"Alessandra is an Italian cycling hero," Fariba says. "She's helped us a lot. She's like a mother to us." The group has formed a close bond with their coach, Maurizio. They affectionately call him the 'Capitano'. Under his care, the team have had to work hard. "We never had a coach in Afghanistan. When I arrived, I felt there was a lot to learn," Yulduz says. "It was a shock. It was like I didn't know anything about cycling."

"They had a more basic technical level of cycling, yes," explains Alessandra. "But it's true that the level of cycling in Europe and Italy is the best in the world."

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It was also an issue of safety. They weren't used to cycling on roads with cars. They had to take a cycling proficiency course - usually taken by children. They joined the Italian cycling team Valcar, taking part in races around Italy such as the UCI World Gravel Championships in nearby Vicenza - where they came 33rd and 39th.

In October they took part in their first big race abroad since arriving in Italy. The 2022 Women's Road Championships of Afghanistan was hosted in Aigle, Switzerland, because of the situation in the country.

Fariba won the race after an exciting sprint-off against her sister, to become the new Afghan women's road champion. After they crossed the finish line, the sisters embraced in a long, tearful hug. Fariba's win secured a contract with the Israel-Premier Tech-Roland team and she is set to step up to the Women's WorldTour level - the highest level in road cycling - later this year. "I did not expect this in my wildest dreams. I will race for all Afghan women!" she told media after.

Her older sister Yulduz, who got silver, has also won a place on Israel-Premier Tech-Roland's Development team. Zahra Rezayee - their friend and flat-mate - secured the bronze. "I am very happy for them," Fazli Ahmad Fazli, Afghan Cycling Federation President said. "These women are amazing riders and I'm sure that soon they will win in big races for Afghanistan."

Fifty riders took part in the race, many of whom fled Afghanistan in August 2021. They came from across different countries in Europe where they are claiming asylum, as well as Singapore and Canada.

The sisters have big dreams. They want to become the first cyclists ever - male or female - to represent Afghanistan at the Olympics. It won't be easy - qualifying for the Olympics is hugely competitive. And Afghanistan may not be there at all.

In December, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) warned the Taliban government that the country could be banned from Paris 2024 unless women and young girls were allowed safe access to sport. If that happens, Afghan refugees could have the option to compete under the IOC Refugee Olympic team instead - like Afghan cyclist Masomah Ali Zada did at Tokyo 2020. But Fariba and Yulduz, who have won Olympic scholarships giving them financial and technical support for their careers, want to represent their homeland - and the flag of its toppled government specifically.

"I want to raise the flag of Afghanistan," Yulduz says. "I want my father and mother to see me and feel proud. That would be the biggest dream ever." "Cycling is a sport where willpower, the desire to work hard and passion count for a lot. And these girls definitely have these things," Alessandra tells me. They desperately miss home, and become instantly emotional when talking about their families.

But too often they're reminded why they left. They have had social media messages from relatives who are members of the Taliban - telling them to cover up in photos they've seen of them racing in international media.

"My friends can't go to school or leave their homes," Yulduz says. "I think, what would have happened to me if I stayed?" The past year has been a huge culture shock. But Italy, and the community they have become a part of, has welcomed them with open arms. "When the Taliban came, my dream was dying. But Italy gave me another hope," smiles Yulduz.

It's a brutal decision to have had to make so young - choosing between your homeland and family, and your career and dreams. These sisters are thankful to have each other to share the highs and lows of such tremendous change. While the Taliban is in charge, returning home as professional athletes isn't an option.

In the meantime, the sisters want to prove to everyone, but most of all themselves, that the sacrifice of leaving everything behind was worth it. And they're throwing everything they can into their cycling to do so.

Courtesy BBC



The sisters fought out a thrilling finish in the national championships

15-YEAR-OLD RESHAN UPSETS CHAMP CHANAKA AND HEADS TO B'DESH C'SHIPS



The ORION Group 36th Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship 2023 gets underway at the Kurmitola Golf Club Course in Dhaka Bangladesh from 8th – 11th 2023.

Sri Lanka Golf will be represented by M. H. Chalitha Pushpika of the Sri Lanka Navy and fifteen-year-old Reshan Algama making his debut at the senior Amateur level.

Chalitha Pushpika finished as top Amateur in the Trials conducted at the Victoria Golf Resort course one stroke ahead of Reshan Algama and National Champion Chanaka Perera.

Sri Lanka Golf representatives Chalitha Pushpika and Reshan Algama will be accompanied by M. U. Chanaka Perera as a Private entry and National Champion invited by the Bangladesh Golf Federation.

The Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship is conducted over 4 rounds and Champion winner is the lowest gross score aggregate over the 4 rounds.

The players left Sri Lanka on Monday, 6th March 2023.

7th March is the designated practice round followed by the 4 Championship rounds.

Reshan Algama gets a huge opportunity at a tender age to make his debut in a national Championship played overseas and being the current Junior Silver Division Champion, he is surely on his way to shine for Sri Lanka.

The experienced Chanaka Perera and Chalitha Pushpika are expected to make an impact in the Championship, which has been previously won by Nandasena Perera and B. G. Lalith Kumara.



08th March 2023

Happy International Women's Day!

Enhance and ensure women's rights & aspirations to all Lankan Sports women through Olympic Values & Vision

