



# 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 NEWS

*Riding the waves of destiny*

**“Surfing”  
one of  
the fastest  
growing  
sport  
based  
industries**

*It's one of the youngest Federations in Sri Lanka. Yet it is also one of the fastest growing sports entities in the country. The reason is; it is an island nation blessed with many sights suited for Surfing which is an Olympic medal sport.*

The advantages of this are two prong. In one hand it is a sport where you stand to win Olympic Medals and from the other it is a tourist attraction which lures in a valuable clientele into the country who is willing to part with their dollars.

GoodSport set up a connection with Hiran Ukwatte alias Mr. Surfing to share his thoughts about the sport and see in reality where the game is perched at present.

GoodSport started by querying about the current status. We asked in 2019 in the post bomb blast period, Surfing became one of the sports to open the doors with a fully-fledged international event where the Arugam Bay became a sea of tourists ending a drought.

Thereafter after the first wave of the Covid pandemic it was the Surfers who opened the doors once again with another international event and how do you think the game is faring now?

Ukwatte said “We formed the Federation in 2017 and within a very short period time we began to grow.”

“In 2018 we did three good local events. If you take surfing it is like a round trip.

“You have to take surfing into different locations to conduct competitions.

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Hiran Ukwatte

Likewise, in 2019 we also did two good local events and with the support of the ministry of sports and the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka, we managed to get the World Surf league into the country.

“They came in the post bomb blast conditions and we were the first to carry out an event of this magnitude in Sri Lanka.”

The Surfing President said that they are very grateful to the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka for helping to set up the Federation and make it an Olympic medal event.

“In the 2019 event though we were besieged by the bomb blast issue the event was a roaring success.

“Yes, the Government spent a lot for the event, but we delivered more value than that towards the event.

“Ironically the elation was short lived then the industry and the sport was hampered by the Covid issue.

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“However, we staged two pocket events in Madihe and Hikkaduwa those were club events.

“The times were frustrating with the impact of the pandemic. Coaches did not have work, there were lessons being conducted the sport was at a standstill.

“Then in 2020 we managed to conduct a local event with an international flavour.

“In this tournament there were locals as well foreign nationals who were residing in Sri Lanka competing under their respective country flags.

“In fact, there were more than thirty foreign nationals competing at this event. At that time the bubble concept was not in operation for sports.

“Nonetheless it was a good boost for the sport in general.

“Though the NOC was not present physically at this event, it was conducted with their blessings.

Besides event Management Company LSR also played a big role in its success.”

We then asked this being mainly a tourist-based entity besides being a sport how do you see the short-term sustenance with the impact of the pandemic.

Ukwatte replied “Now the ministry has issued new health guidelines and the ministry of sport is backing and helping the sport to get back into action and with the NOC also supporting us with the participation of the postponed Sanya Beach Games it is a huge support.

So, we have to get on with our preparations and sustenance of the game.

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“Yet again we do have to be very strict with the health guidelines provided to us.

“So, we have started our coaches’ refresher programmes since the beginning of January and starting from that in spite of the international competitions are postponed, we have to be ready and remain a step ahead of the competition.



“The next is that we have the set up the process to hold the surfing nationals sooner than later and I am sure that we can accomplish it without any undue delay.

“We did conduct a junior completion in Madihe giving the opportunity to all the junior surfers and the feedback was very encouraging with about 20-25 juniors participating.

“In this manner we are trying striving to conduct events for local clubs.

“We have 14 clubs but if we can have competitions in at least in five of them under the present circumstances it would be encouraging.

“We have 190 senior surfers in Sri Lanka and the task is keeping them in prime condition.

“In all there are more than 3000 surfers and if we take the under 12 to 20, we would have 40 junior surfers in the fray. Now the onus is on us to develop it.”

GoodSport asked “You are speaking about junior Surfers, but what are the steps that you have adopted to develop it”?

Ukwatte replied “We have a plan at hand, but we have to work it through the Education Ministry and get their blessings.

“But, right now there have been a string of obstacles besieging the process that is common to the years between 2018 to 2020.

“There is a lot of responsibility involved when a sport of this nature is taken into consideration.

“The development of schools is in the cards, but right now it is coming from the discoveries at club level; of course, from there they could filter the message to the schools for the time being.”

Picture Courtesy - Daily FT / Google

# Yasitha and Anika hog the limelight

**Y**asitha de Silva and Anika Seneviratne hogged the limelight of Sri Lanka Tennis Nationals 2020 by clinching the respective men's and women's titles at Greenpath last weekend.

It was Yasitha de Silva who created the biggest upset when he got the better of Defending Champion Sharmal Dissanayake.

After the first set had gone into a tie-breaker, Yasitha got the better-off at 7-6 (3), but that was all the resistance that Sharmal could muster.

Thus, Sharmal who was injured was forced to concede a walk over, giving the 25-year-old Yasitha his first major title in local tennis.

In the last championship de Silva also moved to the semi-final but was beaten by Pakistan's Heera Ashiq and on this instance Sharmal went on to win the title.

In the women's championship, Anika Seneviratne -- this year's number one seed had hardly any opposition and did short work of Janali Manamperi at 6-0,6-4 to win her second singles title. Anika earlier won the title in 2018.

Playing with a lot of confidence Anika continued to go for her shots from the outset in the opening set and dominated the proceedings in the final.

There was a semblance of fight by Janali in the second set. However, Anika using all her skill and experience rowed the boat to safety to register her second title at 6-0, 6-4.

In the absence of defending Champion Anjelika Kurera, Anika kicked off the tournament as the favourite in the women's

category, where she defeated Tuvini de Alwis (6-1, 6-1) in the quarter-final to cruise to the last four and then overcame Savini Jayasuriya in the semi-finals.



# Varsity Athletes Shine at National Championships

**A**thletics is one of the popular sports in Sri Lanka. Also, it is the most medal-winning sport in the country. With its legacy, Sri Lanka Athletics organised the 98<sup>th</sup> National Athletics Championships in 2020 at the Sugathadasa Stadium under strict health regulations.

It was the only major event organised by the Sri Lanka Athletics in the year 2020 due to prevailing COVID 19 situation.

Nevertheless, many noteworthy performances were established during the championship.

Despite the prevailing situation among the athletes who performed well at Championships there was a special group of athletes.

Athletes from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, and the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka made their alma maters proud by winning national titles at the 98<sup>th</sup> National Athletics Championships.

First-year undergraduates of the Department of Sport Science of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura Amasha De Silva became the fastest woman of Sri Lanka by her impressive winning the 100m race.

Her timing of 11.55 seconds was her personal best and it is noteworthy to mention her time became the fastest time clocked on Sri Lankan soil since Olympian Susanthika Jayasinghe's feat of 11.33 seconds at South Asian Games in 2006.



When considering the athletic statistics Amasha's time ranked 4th at the all-time rankings for 100m in Sri Lanka behind Susanthika Jayasinghe (11.04-2000), Damayanthi Dharsha (11.19-1999) and Rumeshika Rathnayake (11.51-2018).

It was the first time De Silva became the national Champion in 100m.

Tharika Kumudumali Fernando became the national champion in the women shot-put event with a performance of 14.10m.

Tharika is the Sri Lanka record holder of the event with 15.25m. This was her 7th National Champion title. Hashini Balasooriya second-year undergraduates of the Department of Sport Sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura won the gold medal in the triple jump event with 13.07m and became the national champion of the event.

It was her second national championship title after the year 2016 which she became the national champion while schooling.

Second-year undergraduates of the Department of Sports Sciences and Physical Education of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka Roshan Dhammika Ranathunga became the national champion of the 110m hurdle event with a time of 14.33 seconds. It was his third consecutive national champion title.

Weranga Thisarani batch-mate of Roshan's won the bronze medal for hammer throw at the national championships with a performance of 37.42m.

Third-year undergraduate of the same department Subhani Aberathna won the bronze medal for women 400m hurdles with a time of 1 minute and 07.00 seconds.

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Omayya Udayangani Muthumala gold medallist at the South Asian Games was 4th in the 400m and Seventh in the 200m.

Kalani Gayathri was Fourth in the 100m hurdle event. However, she should be proud of herself for clocking her personal best time which is 14.91seconds.

Both Omayya and Kalani are third-year undergraduates of the Department of Sports Sciences and Physical Education of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

Chamal Kumarasiri first-year undergraduate of the Department of Sport Sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura was fifth in the men triple jump event.



The year 2020 was a challenge for everyone. COVID 19 pandemic kept everyone away from their usual routine.

Each of the mentioned athletes and everyone who participated in the National Championships surely could not engage with their usual sports training.

Nevertheless, the time or distance achieved all of them the courage to participate in the championships was truly remarkable and appreciated.

These varsity athlete' achievements were more valuable because they utilized whichever the opportunities they had during the prevailing situation while continuing their' online academic programmes.

The year 2021 is an important year for all the athletes and sports fanatics all around the world.

Therefore, we should wish them year 2021 to become healthier and sincere to heal the world.

**D. Sameera Lakruwan Perera (BSc. Hon. SSM USJ)**

Assistant Lecturer- Department of Sport Sciences and Physical Education/ Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

Committee Member- Sri Lanka Athletics

Picture Courtesy : Ceylon Athletics

