



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

Game with a lot of potential

Sarath looking to move the sport to the next phase

Sarath Hewavitharana is not a sports administrator who was plucked off the air just because he is a successful businessman nor a man who learned his basic Wrestling skills after joining an armed force or a university.

He got wrestling into his veins while a student at St. Paul's Kandy and then gradually filtered into the active part of the game.

So, it was only the love for his game that lured into the officialdom of this sport and the path to the pinnacle of it.

So, *GoodSport* and *Voice of GoodSport* asked a bit about his background and a bit about the present status of the game, which he took over only a few days ago. Sarath explained "While schooling at St. Paul's Kandy I was first introduced -

to the game, but I honed the finer skills while at YMCA and first hit the mat in the 55kgs category in 1973 and thereafter I joined the University of Peradeniya.

Finally, I ended up entering the National pool before concentrating and putting my eggs in the business basket and Wrestling Administration."

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Then speaking about the status of the game, the newly elected Wrestling President said “Going into history, Sri Lanka has a long history connected to Wrestling.

“In fact, historically, the first Wrestling Medal was won during the tenure of King Wimaladharmasuriya I and I am hoping to do a full-length programme on the subject very soon.

“Now in recent times, the sport has become Colombo centric. However, my goal is to spread the sport into every nook and cranny in Sri Lanka and that is what we have to do if we are hoping to make progress in the game.

“Now at the moment we have the game in only seven districts with voting powers. They are – Colombo, Kurunegala, Monaragala, Badulla, Gampaha, Kandy and Kalutara.

“Nonetheless there are places like Batticaloa; they do produce Wrestlers and we get quite a few of them at National meets, but they do not have voting rights.

However, Colombo, Gampaha and Kandy have two votes each.”

Then Sarath noted that during the last South Asian Games, their wrestlers managed to bring home the biggest haul of 14 medals which consisted – 2 gold, 10 silver and 2 bronze.

He added “This is one of the biggest achievements in Wrestling up to date.

“In the SAG list, we had the 4th best result. I thank the last executive committee for that achievement.

“Though I was the secretary prior to becoming the present president, I was not holding that position during that achievement.

I became the secretary on a technical point subsequently. So, I don't want to take any credit to what was not due to me”.

We asked Sarath about the present status of the game, how they are faring and about any other programmes for the near future.

He said “For the last year or so the sport of Wrestling has been inactive. We even cannot get on to a mat at present, because it is a contact sport much worse than even boxing. With the prevailing pandemic situation, it is difficult.

“When two persons grapple, they initially make contact with their faces.

“This has become our biggest dilemma at the moment.

“However, this situation is not likely to go on forever.

The moment the pandemic situation is over, we have to set up the Wrestling pool.”

Then GoodSport queried as to how many clubs are functional.

Sarath replied “We have about ten registered clubs within our ranks, representing districts from entities which have the voting rights.



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“However, the biggest drawback to this game is the lack of coaches.

“There are a number of coaches in the Colombo area, but the numbers get thin when it comes to outstation.

“This is one area that we have to take note of.

“Recently we conducted a coaching camp, but all who took part at this camp had to undergo 14 days quarantine.

“It was a camp that was worked for over two days and over 100 people took part.

“At the same time, I am hoping to work closely with my executive committee and conduct coaching camps in the nine provinces with small groups of around 25 persons each.

“Altogether we have around 1000 Wrestlers in the region spread around the island and the biggest number is



coming from the twenty-five schools that the game is conducted in, but ultimately our goal is to spread Wrestling in every school in the country.

“We do have a school have an association for wrestling and now we have to work closely with the Education Department to achieve this goal.

“If we can increase the number of active athletes to 5000 in numbers by the end of this year, I could say that we have achieved something.

“ During the last South Asian Games our wrestlers managed to bring home the biggest haul of 14 medals which consisted 2 gold, 10 silver and 2 bronze. ”

“In the international field we have Sampath Perera who has caught the eye of

the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka authorities and we are working closely with them to seek the possibilities of getting Perera included in the 2020 Olympics in June 2021.

“Besides that, we did have a programme eyeing games like the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games, but all those preparations went out of the window with the Covid-19 situation and for over one year the athletes have been inactive.”



Weightlifters set 16 new Sri Lanka records at trial meet

Sixteen new Sri Lanka weightlifting records were set at a trial meet to assess the performance of the Weightlifting Elite pool and select athletes for the Asian Weightlifting Championship to be held in Uzbekistan in March, according to Sri Lanka Weightlifting Federation (SLWF) secretary G. Nishanthan and national coach R.B. Wickramasinghe.

Conducted by the SLWF at the National Sports Complex in Polonnaruwa, members of the Elite pool comprising nine men and four women took part in the meet.

This was the first competition for the weightlifters after the 2019 South Asian Games in Kathmandu.

Army's Nilanka Isurukumara (55kg) and Thilanga Palangasinghe (64kg) of Polonnaruwa WC set three Sri Lanka records each. Navy's Chathurika Priyanthi (87kg) and T.N. Haputhenna (87kg) of Polonnaruwa WC also set three records each.

In addition, Navy's Shanaka Pieterz (102kg) set two new Sri Lanka marks, while Navy's Chinthana Vidanage and Indika Dissnayake also set records in the 81kg category.

Despite the coronavirus outbreak, the Elite weightlifting pool maintained a high standard in this competition, the SLWF secretary said.

Meanwhile, a trial meet to assess the performance of the 50-member National pool will be held next month, he said.

By Susil Premalal



40th National Squash Championships

40th National Squash Championships conducted by Sri Lanka Squash was successfully concluded at SSC Squash courts on 31st January 2021 adhering to strict health guidelines with the participation of close to 100 participants.

National Squash Championship being the most looked forward to National Ranking tournament in the Squash Calendar was worked off at SSC Squash courts under the following age group categories.

- MEN'S OPEN
- WOMEN'S OPEN
- MEN'S NOVICES
- WOMEN'S NOVICES
- MEN'S OVER 35
- WOMEN'S OVER 35
- MEN'S OVER 40
- MASTER'S OVER 45
- MASTER'S OVER 50
- VETERAN'S OVER 55
- VETERAN'S OVER 60

The Finals of the Open events followed by the awards ceremony was graced by Mr. Amal Edirisooriya – Director General of Sports Development Department attached to Ministry of Sports as chief guest.

This tournament was the first National Ranking tournament to be conducted, in the post covid pandemic situation and also the first tournament to be conducted by the Sri Lanka Squash Executive committee appointed last September.

The Men's Open Final saw Reigning National Champion and 7 times National title holder Ravindu Laksiri taking on the bottom seed Shamil Wakeel.

Both Ravindu and Shamil have won Bronze medals for team event at South Asian Games Commonwealth Games & World Doubles Championships in addition to representing their alma mater D. S Senanayake College some time back.

The Women's Open Final saw Reigning National Champion Fathoum Issadeen taking current junior top player Chanithma Sinaly.

Fathoum an old girl of Holy Family Convent has won a Bronze medal for team event at South Asian Games and represented the country at Asian Squash Championships while Chanithma who is currently pursuing her studies at Sirimavo Bandaranaike Vidyalaya too has represented Sri Lanka at Asian Junior Championships.

Men's Open and Women's Open Winners and Runners up walked away with valuable trophies, certificates and cash prizes while 3rd place winners of the Open event and all other top three winners in respective categories walked away with valuable trophies and certificates.

The Finals of the Open events followed by the awards ceremony was live streamed with commentary so that all squash enthusiasts will not miss any action as Sri Lanka Squash was were compelled to restrict access to squash court premises and only a very few limited personnel were allowed to visit the courts maintaining social distancing requirements.

EMPOWERING NEXT OLYMPIC HOPE

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AMANDHIKA AMARASINGHE
RIFLE SHOOTING (WOMEN - 10M)
DEVI BALIKA VIDYALAYA, COLOMBO 08