



# 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

*Table Tennis is in good hands now*

## Srinath's vision of TT's tomorrow



**T**able Tennis, akin to cricket, badminton and rugby, is a sport that has spread into every nook and cranny of the island.

Though Sri Lanka is yet to achieve international status in the sport, it is clearly a growing entity which has to be nurtured.

Srinath Wijetunga is an avid Table Tennis enthusiast; that is the primary reason that Srinath consented to accept the post of General Secretary of the TTASL – a position that came his way when the game was disrupted owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, GoodSport and Voice of GoodSport were curious to know -

the real status of this racket sport.

We paused to ask him about the present status of the sport. Srinath replied, “Recently, Table Tennis has gone through certain changes and even in the international structure they have made some notable changes, including some rules and the manner of the tournaments that should be conducted.

“In Sri Lanka, what has happened was during the Covid-19 period there was a certain void, but now the game is on the move once again. Now what you can see is the dawn of the future development programmes, short and long term.

“For instance, now we have set up the High-Performance Development Programme; we are in the process of selecting players targeting the 2022 Commonwealth Games also and later, the Olympic Games which will follow. Also in the pipeline are the Asian Games, the Lusofonia Games, the Island’s Games and the Youth Olympic Games.”

GoodSport asked, “You are targeting the big events in a true international level, but we witnessed during the last South Asian Games, that we were struggling against players from India, Nepal and even the Maldives.”

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The Table Tennis General Secretary noted it as an interesting observation.

He said “In reality, the South Asian Games was an eye opener for us. After this performance we effected many changes in the Table Tennis set-up in the country.

The main reason for that I saw was, we did not have a proper pool that was conducted running over a period of time.

“Also, there was no junior development programme and also, there were no proper coaches around and we had not appointed a National Coach.

“Also, at the same time, even internationally they are in the process of effecting significant changes to the structure of the game like new practicing methods.

“The need of the hour is that we have to upgrade ourselves and the game as a whole, but this was not happening in the past.

“Now we have understood what the problem is and we are working to rectify the situation.”

The next question we at this end cooked up was, the situation of the game in the schools’ arena and the conversion from schools to the senior level.

“In reality our association TTASL, is the main association, but most of the Table Tennis players come from our Schools’ section.

“In schools, there are so many stages to develop the system.

“Recently, there were some changes effected from the government; players who are under 10 and 12 were not allowed to take part in serious Table Tennis and they were forced to play at carnival level, but practicing and the coaching at school level is satisfactory.

“Then, after the school level, they have to take part in the Junior National Championship and then come the transition from school, to club and other senior levels. I mean, they can go for the trials at the higher level of competition.

“There, we have our national championships every year and in the last five years we have conducted four open ranking tournaments, all island open ranking tournaments and the National Tournament”, said Wijetunga in reply.

GoodSport then inquired about the coaching levels. Srinath explained, “This is the part that is lacking in our structure.

“There are school coaches, club coaches and individual coaches, and there is a Coaching Association as well.

“Though the thing is, to reach the International Standards which is given by the ITTF; -

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we have level I, Level II, Level III and the High-Performance Level, but, in the whole island we have only six coaches who have reached the Level III or the High-Performance level.

“This is not a situation that we could gloat about.

“We have to have more coaches reaching the top level and have more programmes to qualify them.

“I must say that now we have lined some programmes to take care of this anomaly.

“We are now hoping to send some of our coaches to international coaching camps and train them on some train the trainer situations.

“Actually, we have some programmes working in the local level for coaches online.

“Our players definitely know how to coach a player, but what is lacking is that they do not know to churn out a high-performance player – the techniques and creating a person who is really able take part in an international tournament is still lacking.

“Now we are giving the holistic understanding of Table Tennis coaching, to understand the players, to understand their physical and mental capacities, -



their endurance and learning how to convert them into high-performance players”.

Then we shot the question – “What are your short term and long-term goals”?

*“ Now we have understood what the problem is and we are working to rectify the situation. ”*

Srinath explained, “We have two plans. In the short-term plan, we are concentrating on the 2022 Commonwealth Games and the games that are coming close to them; we are in the process of forming a squad for that programme, with the Ministry of Sports and in the long-term plan, we are hoping to deal with player development, infrastructure development, financial viability of players and the Education.

“This plan is for five years and we started this in 2019 in the aftermath of the SAG.”



# Tour de Sri Lanka Air Force reduced to a one-day race

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Tour de Sri Lanka Air Force cycling event will be restricted to just one day, the SLAF Cycling Union has decided. It will be held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 from Colombo to Katunayake.

The Tour coincides with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the SLAF.

Held over three days in three stages on the previous 21 occasions, Air Force Commander Air Marshal Sudarshana Pathirana decided to make it a one-day event because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The Tour de Sri Lanka Air Force is for both men and women.

The men's race will cover a distance of 160km from Colombo to Katunayake, on March 7<sup>th</sup> beginning at 8.00 a.m. from the SLAF headquarters.

Starting from Colombo, it will proceed to Wattala, Ja Ela, Minuwangoda, Divulapitiya, Giriulla, Narammala, Kuliypitiya, Madampe, Wenappuwa, Kochchikade, Negombo and finish at Katunayake near the SLAF base.

Since the 2020 Tour de Sri Lanka Air Force, no cycling events were held because of the viral outbreak in the country.

A large number of entries were -

expected but now it has been limited to 180. The women's segment of the Tour de Sri Lanka Air Force will also be held on March 7<sup>th</sup> commencing at 10.00 a.m.

The 76km ride will go across Ekala, Minuwangoda, Divulapitiya, Giriulla, Pannala, Dankotuwa, Kochchikade, Negombo and will finish at the Katunayake SLAF base.

The organisers expect about 50 to take part in this race.

In the last three men's races, Air Force riders from the South Asian region took part. Although Air Force riders from India, Pakistan, Bangla-

des and Nepal were invited for this event, they have not confirmed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the SLAF Cycling Union Secretary Air Commodore Kithsiri Leelaratne.

SLT is the main sponsor of this year's Tour de Sri Lanka Air Force while People's Insurance will provide insurance cover to all participants.



Nalin de Gamage (Head of Project Management Office) presenting the token of sponsorship to the Air Force Commander Air Marshal Sudarshana Pathirana.

Picture by Nimalsiri Edirisinghe.

By Susil Premalal

# CGA SL signs MOU with Sabaragamuwa University on “eqUIP”



The Commonwealth Games Association of Sri Lanka (CGA SL) and the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUoSL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 about the eqUIP internship which is an initiative of the Commonwealth Sport Foundation (CSF) in the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) that aims to develop sustainable capacity in Commonwealth Games Associations (CGAs) and in this case CGA SL, in partnership with universities.

Miss. D.M. Dinkey Nilankani Bandara, the selected student from the Sabaragamuwa University, has been now working as an intern in the CGA SL since 2020 and will continue her internship until July 2021.

The CGA SL expects to provide educational and professional training to the ‘eqUIP’ intern with the aims of developing, promoting and protecting sports as per CSF guidelines.



The Sabaragamuwa university officials with NOCSL Secretary General Maxwell De Silva



## VIRTUAL SPEECH COMPETITION

CONDUCTED BY THE WOMEN'S COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF SRI LANKA



### THINK SAFE

The theme was derived by the Women's Committee of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka to create awareness on 'Make Sports a Safe Zone' to mark the Women's Day which falls on March 08.

**Topic:** You have to choose your own topic and it should relate to our tagline of 'Make Sports a Safe Zone'

**Participants:**

Open Competition (School children/athletes/coaches/officials/others for both genders)

**Language:** English

**Duration :** Two minutes (+/- 10 seconds)

**Deadline :** March 08, 2021

**Submission:**

You have to record your speech as a video using a high-resolution mobile phone or camera and it should reach sigoolympic.lk@gmail.com via wetransfer [www.wetransfer.com] with your full name, email address, and contact number.

**Results:**

- Judges decision will be final.
- Shall be released on Women's day on www.olympic.lk and our official social media.

**Prize:**

- Two upmarket mobile phones for the Winner and Runner-up
- The rendition of the winner and runner-up shall be published in article form on NOC Sri Lanka's bulletin – GoodSport and on [www.olympic.lk](http://www.olympic.lk)

**Video recording guideline:**

- Video position - Horizontal
- Use high-resolution mobile phone or camera for recording
- Background should be plain white colour or any other light colour
- Select a suitable place with minimum distractions
- Proper lighting is mandatory
- Look at the camera when delivering
- Have proper recording arrangements (height and angle to cover the participant's view when standing or sitting)
- Set up your technology in a space that reduces echo and background noise as much as possible.