



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

SPORTS NEWS

The official baseball of Tokyo 2020



The surreal saga of Baseball made in Sri Lanka

Baseball and Sri Lanka.....some may tend to think it's not the right combination. But if someone says that it is a multimillion-dollar business with space for a ten fold and more growth in a manufacturing business you might as well stick your eye-brow on your forehead and believe.

Amiable business Korean tycoon Jehoon Lah (President & CEO Skyline Baseball Company) brought this Baseball manufacturing business to Sri Lanka, not by mistake or default.

It came through a process of trial and error mixed with a lot of research. The pinnacle of this process was when SSK became the official baseball for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Lah smiled and said "All of a sudden everybody knows who I am and what I am doing. I have other businesses in Korea, but now I am known primarily as a Baseball manufacturer. Mind you in 1988 when Seoul hosted the Olympics my company SSK was also the official baseball supplier"

"In 1988 when Seoul hosted the Olympics my company SSK was also the official baseball supplier"

Lah then went on to explain how it really came about. He explained "In reality, the name of my company is not disclosed. I live behind the screen. The screen outside is actually a Japanese Sporting Company. Behind that company is SSK. Behind SSK is Skyline. We are content with SSK and supply balls to them."

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SSK could get this order – they supply to WBSC, WBSC they play everywhere – Mexico, Taiwan for many age groups under 15, 18, and 20. Then there is world baseball for them. We supply to WBSC under the name of SSK and now WBSC is supplying the Baseball to the Olympics.

“So, automatically we became the major supplier. As a result, SSK became very famous. Especially the American player took a liking to the product. Because in the major league they put mud on the ball before starting an inning.

“Because some balls are very slippery and when a ball is slippery, the pitcher cannot throw the ball. As a result, when a game is in progress all the balls look dirty.

“Our balls do not have to use the mud because we use a substance to prevent the ball from being slippery. Then for American Baseball is stronger and slippery, but we but Japanese leather; the Japanese leather is soft and sticky.

“Yet, we anoint it with Tack Oil before we supply it to the teams. Then the ball is quite sticky and they can throw the ball without mud and control the ball very correctly. The professional pitchers of America found our ball at the Tokyo Olympics and were WOWed by it and added Oh! They are made in Sri Lanka.

“They loved that baseball and they wanted that ball in their major league too; many major league pitchers said that. Maybe it would be our major breakthrough!”



Mr. Lah checks the quality of a ball while NOCSL Secretary General Mr. Maxwell de Silva looks on

Lah’s inside story of how he became a leading manufacturer of Baseball is as intriguing as the baseball itself.

Over a half-century ago his father who was a governor of the second-largest bank in South Korea helped one Mr. Lee who sought his fortune by manufacturing baseballs.

At that juncture the baseball market in South Korea was marginal. Lee lost his battle in this gamble and ended up bankrupt.

At the end of five years, Lah senior ended his tenure at the bank and restarted his trading company which he had before.

There Lee approached Lah senior and asked for employment. It was in 1972 that Jehoon Lah took over the baseball arm.

By then the South Korean economy was on the rise and the cost of manufacture – especially paying wages had become a task once again.

Lah then started to look at overseas trading partners. China at that time was still closed but he found one in Thailand – a joint venture.

Meanwhile, the Americans opened their doors to China and all business ran to China, but Lah stood his ground and continued in Thailand.

However, that also fell through over a trade disagreement on pricing and he was back on square one. In 1990 Senior Lah passed away.

By then he had a small factory in South Korea and he began to supply his merchandise only to professionals in South Korea.

Still, he was the only one who manufactured baseballs in South Korea.



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In 1980 Korea started their professional league he could survive there because the price of a professional ball is much higher than a normal ball. He then began to import from China and resell them to the rest of his customers, but not sell in Japan and America.

Lah said “2015 Korean Baseball Organisation like the MLB – the professional league organisation, there was a saying that Korea must follow Japan. That meant, until that time, Korea had eight professional leagues and each league decided which ball to buy for one year or one season.

“There they had four suppliers and they were all young people. At that point, it was a bargaining point with each manufacturer trying to outsmart the other. Then I was left with only two teams. I came down eight teams to only two. Mercifully this was not my bread and butter. I already have another major business running in Korea.

“At that same time, they also came up with a ruling that it would be the KBO who would name the annual baseball supplier. In America, it is the MLB that supplies balls to the leagues. Major leagues buy only Rollings there. In Japan also the same happened and they too opted for only one supplier. There I signed the contract as an official supplier to KBO. That is how I ended up in Sri Lanka.”

Lah was weighing his options and scanned maps from India and Indonesia. He said “Indonesia had the skills and the labour but there it has to be really large scale. India too had the labour with a population of one billion people but had too many regulations and to set up a business it takes a couple of years.

“The reason why I came to Sri Lanka is primarily because I could buy material from India. Sri Lanka is not India, but practically it is India. It is a different country, but I could be there in just two hours. In India there are so many state governments and languages and communication also may be a problem. Here in Sri Lanka, I found that there is a BOI and one gateway. That suited my case study. Also, Sri Lanka allowed one hundred percent investment.”

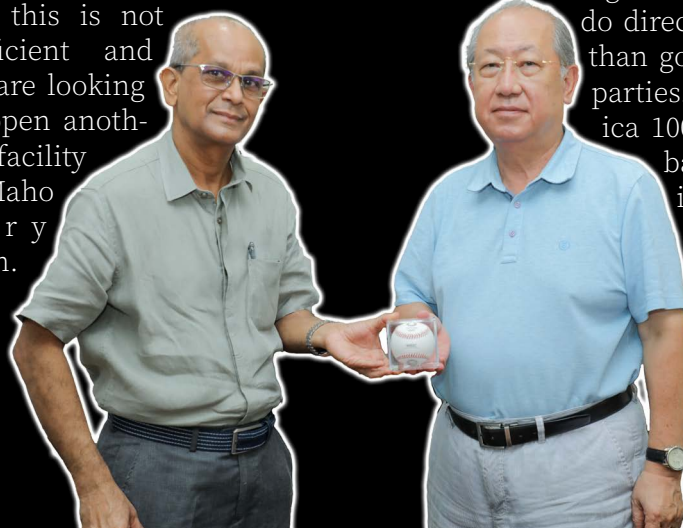
He said that another aspect that interested him was that the number of disabled Sri Lanka had as a result of the thirty-year war. I was under the impression that he could employ them and give them an opportunity.

But that fell through I could not match the opportunities that the Sri Lankan government was giving these disabled soldiers. Then he sought avenues of employing long-term prison inmates and teaching them the skills. But that also fell through as a result of technical difficulty.

Now I have this facility in Dunagaha where I employ 200 workers direct and 300 families in adjacent areas, but this is not sufficient and we are looking to open another facility in Maho v e r y soon.



Lah added “Now I am the sole distributor to KBO, in addition, I supply the balls to Japan my major partner is Sasaki (SSK) which is huge and he is the second-largest supplier in Japan. Now the orders are increasing, but the Japanese are very particular about quality, but through that practice, our standards also went up automatically. Now we are looking at the American market. The tool that I am using is Amazon where I can do direct business, rather than going through third parties. “There in America 100,000 schools play baseball and that is a huge market. Now my sales volume is around Rs 3 million US\$ but it can grow ten times bigger.”



ASALANKA FIRES SRI LANKA TO THRILLING VICTORY OVER BANGLADESH

Charith Asalanka and Bhanuka Rajapaksa fired superb half-centuries as Sri Lanka powered to a five-wicket win over Bangladesh in their Super 12s Group 1 opener.

Asalanka struck five sixes in his unbeaten 80 from 49 balls and Rajapaksa celebrated his 30th birthday in style with 53 from 31 as the Lions chased 172 to complete their highest successful run chase in ICC Men's T20 World Cup history with seven balls to spare.

Half-centuries from Mohammad Naim and Mushfiqur Rahim had led Bangladesh to a challenging 171 for four and two wickets in the space of four balls for Shakib Al Hasan seemingly put them in the driving seat in the chase.

But the Tigers paid for costly drops, Liton Das putting down both Rajapaksa and Asalanka on the boundary in the course of a blistering 86-run stand which turned the tide in Sri Lanka's favour.

Both sides made one change from their final qualifying group fixtures, with Sri Lanka plumping for the seam of Binura Fernando over the spin option of Maheesh Theekšana, who was nursing a slight injury, and opting to bowl first after winning the toss.

The Lions attack had mauled Netherlands on Friday, dismissing the Dutch for 44, but found Bangladesh openers Naim and Das in a determined mood in the powerplay.

The pair had struggled for fluency in their Group B fixtures, with opening stands of 8, 11 and 0, but successive free hits following Dushmantha Chameera overstepping allowed Naim to free his arms in the third over.

Naim lost his partner with the score on 40, bringing the influential Shakib to the crease, and he twice pierced gaps through the off-side before missing a straight one from Chamika Karunaratne, the pick of the Lions attack, to depart for 10.



Bhanuka Rajapakse and Charith Asalanka



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Naim and Mushfiqur began their partnership by rotating the strike effectively, carrying the Tigers to 72 for two at the halfway mark, before moving through the gears in style.

Mushfiqur smashed the first six of the innings over deep mid-wicket in the 11th over before slog-sweeping Binura into the crowd to the delight of the vocal Bangladesh supporters, who were on their feet once more when Naim drove Kumara for a boundary which saw him to his second half-century of the tournament.

Mushfiqur kept up the charge following Naim's dismissal, finding gaps behind square on both sides of the wicket, and his half-century arrived with 11 deliveries of the innings remaining.

A typically inventive scoop to the fine-leg fence then provided a fitting conclusion to a sparkling knock as Bangladesh set the Lions 172 to win.

Nasum Ahmed, playing his first match of the tournament, opened the bowling for the Tigers and got his side off to a perfect start by clean bowling Kusal Perera, attempting a slog sweep.

New batter Asalanka succeeded where his teammate had failed, heaving Nasum over deep mid-wicket for the second maximum of a productive third over in a sign of what was to come.

Pathum Nissanka also took a liking to spin, lofting a glorious straight six off Mahedi Hasan as Sri Lanka raced to 54 for one at the end of the powerplay – 13 runs better off than Bangladesh at the same stage.

Enter Shakib, so often the man with-

the golden arm, who removed Nissanka and Avishka Fernando to bring the game firmly back into the balance and move out on his own as the leading wicket-taker in ICC Men's T20 World Cup history with 41, two clear of Shahid Afridi.

The pendulum swung further towards the Tigers when Wanindu Hasaranga sent a Mohammad Saifuddin slower ball straight to Naim at long-on but Rajapaksa's clean hitting quickly brought the Lions right back into contention.

The batter lofted Afif Hossain over extra cover for six and survived a let-off later in the 13th over when Das misjudged a routine catching opportunity at deep square-leg.

Asalanka continued to look in fine fettle at the other end and having matched Mushfiqur in bringing up a half-century in 32 balls, he fired two sixes in one costly Mahmudullah over to keep his side ahead of the required rate.

Das then put down Asalanka at deep extra-cover and the pair cashed in on their good fortune, Rajapaksa blasting consecutive sixes off Saifuddin in a decisive 16th over-

which saw 22 added. The Tigers turned to Shakib but Asalanka deposited him into the stands and Rajapaksa's departure came too late to spark a change in fortunes. Fittingly, it was Asalanka who sealed the deal with a dab to the third-man boundary to spark Sri Lankan celebrations at the end of a captivating contest.

Scores in Brief

Sri Lanka beat Bangladesh at Sharjah Cricket Stadium, Sharjah by five wickets

Bangladesh 171/4 in 20 overs (Mohammad Naim 62, Mushfiqur Rahim 57 not out; Chamika Karunaratne 1/12, Binura Fernando 1/27, Lahiru Kumara 1/29)

Sri Lanka 172/5 in 18.5 overs (Charith Asalanka 80 not out, Bhanuka Rajapaksa 53; Shakib Al Hasan 2/17, Nasum Ahmed 2/29)

Player of the Match: Charith Asalanka (Sri Lanka)

ICC NEWS



Charith Asalanka

Nishanthe Piyasena (Sri Lanka) elected Deputy Secretary General of Asian Modern Pentathlon Federation

Nishanthe Piyasena (President- Modern Pentathlon Federation of Sri Lanka) has been elected as the Deputy Secretary-General - of the Asian Modern Pentathlon Confederation (AMPC) for the second consecutive occasion, at The Asian Modern Pentathlon Confederation Elective Congress 2021 which concluded on 22 October 2021.

Twenty-one countries in Asia got the right to vote at this election and three candidates contested for this position -- Sri Lanka, Singapore and Chinese -Taipei. Out of them, Nishanthe won the majority of votes.

Nishanthe Piyasena is the pioneer of establishing Modern Pentathlon sport in Sri Lanka in 2013. He created a strong platform for local athletes to bring out their pure talents to the global level. Nishanthe, who was lead the country sport administration in many ways in his past.

Asst. Secretary of National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka (2009-2017) Treasurer of Sri Lanka Triathlon (2015-2017) Secretary General (2007-2010) / Vice President (current) of Cycling Federation of Sri Lanka

He offered numerous services to the country holding many volunteer positions.

As the first Secretary-General and a founder member of the Modern Pentathlon Federation of Sri Lanka, Nishanthe, established his remarks as a genuine sports administrator by growing up a culture around the national federation by opening -

avenues for athletes to reach the Olympic level as well as the young community to enter to the sports administration with their creative mindsets.

As a result of his visionary leadership, MPFSL could be able to send two athletes to the Olympic qualifying rounds of the Asia Oceania region in 2019 and also Sri Lanka won many medals in the Laser run, Biathlon and Triathlon segments worldwide.

Currently, nearly five local athletes are within the top ten world ranks in laser run and triathlon segments.

Currently, Nishanthe Piyasena is the president of MPF SL and his vision is to create a strong athlete base that can gain Olympic qualifiers in 2024 and YOG in 2026 to the motherland.

Even though the Modern Pentathlon sport takes a small portion of the country sport, the achievements of the last five years under his -

leadership show that his vision is not just a dream but an achievable target.

New Executive Board of AMPC as follows. (2021-2024)

President (1) :

Hyunjun Kim - Korea

Vice Presidents (4)

Bin, Zhang – China

Yamazaki, Novikov – Japan

Valerii, Novikov – Kyrgyzstan

Choh, Cassandra - Singapore

Secretary General:

Yeo, Sangkeong - Korea

Deputy Secretary General:

Nishanthe, Piyasena – Sri Lanka

Technical Director:

Viktor Maltsev



NOC Sri Lanka's Social Media on the Top 10 during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games



Social Media - Trophy

Instagram: Highest Growth Rate

NOC	Growth Rate	Absolute Growth
1 st India	+1053%	+76.1k
2 nd Malaysia	+869%	+15.0k
3 rd Philippines	+566%	+6.7k
4 th Chinese Taipei	+469%	+94.2k
5 th Sri Lanka	+266%	+2.8k
6 th Uruguay	+240%	+11.3k
7 th Argentina	+236%	+108.6k
8 th Brazil	+226%	+654.4k
9 th Mauritius	+208%	+830
10 th Costa Rica	+200%	+15.6k

Facebook: Highest Growth Rate

NOC	Growth Rate	Absolute Growth
1 st Malaysia	+488%	+44.5k
2 nd Mauritius	+200%	+2.3k
3 rd Namibia	+150%	+5.5k
4 th Uruguay	+146%	+1.8k
5 th South Africa	+136%	+54.0k
6 th Madagascar	+134%	+2.9k
7 th Pakistan	+131%	+18.3k
8 th Tunisia	+117%	+39.9k
9 th Fiji	+89%	+11.4k
10 th Sri Lanka	+86%	+25.9k

Crete, Creten 2021

Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) honoured the NOCs, whose social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter) growth rates were higher during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The statistics were presented by Andres Santi, ANOC Event Manager at the XXV ANOC General Assembly - Crete 2021 on Day - 2 (today).

It's very significant to note that Sri Lanka is in the top ten nations out of 206 NOCs around the globe. NOC Sri Lanka's YouTube is ranked 3rd, Instagram is ranked 5th, and Facebook is ranked 10th.



Social Media - Trophy

Youtube: Highest Growth Rate

NOC	Growth Rate	Absolute Growth
1 st Uganda	+6304%	+3.3k
2 nd Japan	+214%	+17.1k
3 rd Sri Lanka	+90%	+631
4 th Greece	+72%	+730
5 th Puerto Rico	+61%	+2.4k
6 th Morocco	+60%	+890
7 th Australia	+43%	+1.5k
8 th Azerbaijan	+27%	+470
9 th Great Britain	+25%	+4.8k
10 th Austria	+23%	+310

Twitter: Highest Growth Rate

NOC	Growth Rate	Absolute Growth
1 st Kazakhstan	+419%	+2.3k
2 nd Philippines	+306%	+1.5k
3 rd Jamaica	+236%	+1.1k
4 th Portugal	+199%	+4.8k
5 th India	+153%	+74.3k
6 th Kenya	+144%	+6.4k
7 th Malaysia	+116%	+3.3k
8 th Pakistan	+115%	+1.5k
9 th Turkey	+84%	+15.6k
10 th Ireland	+83%	+29.8k

Crete, Creten 2021