



GoodSport



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

EAR TO THE GROUND AND HEAR THE VIBES OF ASIAN GAMES ATHLETICS

The buzz of the Asian Games is now flamboyant; especially the track and field segment that is coming into focus. It's inevitable; when a country boasts of a sprinter who has clocked the 100 metres in under 10secs, it is simple and obvious. Right now, it is about two moons away from the Hangzhou spectacle and everyone expects it to be a trail-blazer.

Coach Madawa Senerath is a person who lives athletics and likes to feel the pulse of the Lankan track and field, thus, personifying the teacher with the ruler who is trying to instil some style and sense unto the present state of affairs. In short, he understands how the machine works and how much oil should be pumped into the cogs to keep it turning without any blaring alarms.

GoodSport was inquisitive to delve into this shelf of knowledge and usurp some knowledge as to how our athletes could make an impact, and to his mind, they may be, taking the Asian Championship contingent as a yardstick and that too coming sans the contributions of short distance ace Yupun Abeykone and high jumper Ushan Thiwanka.

With a wry half-smile, Senerath delved into his explanation. He said, "Both Yupun Abeykoone and Ushan Thiwanka are just coming out of injury, but the chances of high Jumper Thiwanka making it into China is very slim for more reasons than one. On the other hand, Yupun seems to be recovering from his last outing on May 30th where he sustained an injury while he was on the last five metres of the 100m, but he still finished it with a timing of 10.1.

"From what I have learned, he will be back on track sooner than later and definitely be a part of the Asian Games ensemble. We still have more than two months for the games and he has ample time to recover."

"The other event that the Lankan fans should keep a mark on is the women's 800-metre event. Currently, our athletes are in the first two slots in the Asian Games rankings - Tharushi Karunaratne and Gayanthika Abeyratne.

"As far as I am concerned, two athletes could be among the podium rankers during the games.

"However, I am making this statement considering their current form and I hope and pray it will not be a slip between the cup and the lip."

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Senerath explained that there could be stiff opposition from countries like India, where one competitor is doing 2.1 and some others 2.3 and 2.4.

He opines that both Karunaratne and Abeyratne could do better in the present context. Personally, he feels that at least one of them could climb the steps to glory.

“I also have been watching the progress of 400-metre runner Aruna Dharshana. He is improving by the hour and is keen to beat the clock; he is mentally very tough and can perform well under pressure. So, I feel this is another athlete that we keep a close tab on.

“Then, talking of the 4x400 metres relay, we have a very talented squad that is training in preparation for the games.

“Once again, in this quartet, we can expect Aruna Dharshana to take an important role.

“Along with him, there are runners in the calibre of Kalinga Kumara, a very young athlete by the name of Pabasara Niku and Rajitha Rajakaru - in case of an injury.



“If they are a part of the mixed 4x400 metres relay Dharshana, Niku / Kumara along with the two female middle distant runners - Tharushi and Nadeesha Ramanayake, could form the quartet. However, there will be stiff opposition in this event from combinations of Bahrain and India. There is another middle-distance runner in Dilshi Kumarasinghe who is training down the line.

“Down the line, Sarangi Silva the dual purpose (Long Jump and 100metres) is an experienced campaigner and I feel that she is also in the reckoning.

“We also have Nadeesha Lekamge in the Javelin Throw - even though she is now in the region of 59 metres. Nonetheless, there is competition here with some Asian competitors in the reckoning covering 60-65 metres. But, one could never say what the pressure of competition could turn out to be.

“There is also a young triple jumper who has caught the eye - young Randi Cooray. She is currently covering 13:50 and she may be a late inclusion.

“Tokyo Olympian Nimali Liyanaratchchi represented the country in the 800 metres, but, is currently in the injured list.

“Finally, steeplechase runner Nilani Ratnayake is currently shrouded with problems other than injury and may not be a part of the Asian Games in 2023.

“Having said that, Senerath added that even Yupun could be challenged by runners from Japan, China and Qatar. Yet, if Yupun is in prime form, he certainly could be an Asian Games Medal prospect.”



NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT SUPPORTS THE IOC AND THE UNIFYING MISSION OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has welcomed a Declaration by the Non-Aligned Movement, chaired by Azerbaijan, which unites 120 of the 193 UN Member States. The Declaration, which was passed unanimously, emphasises that “the participation of athletes from all 206 National Olympic Committees in Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games would be a strong symbol of unity of humanity.” In this respect it expresses its “support to the efforts and initiatives undertaken by the International Olympic Committee to this end”



This position is fully aligned with the IOC recommendations for International Federations and international sports event organisers on the participation of athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport in international competitions, including qualifiers for the Olympic Games. IOC President Thomas Bach thanked the Non-Aligned Movement for its support with the following statement.

“The IOC warmly welcomes the support by the 120 member states of the Non-Aligned Movement.

“We are greatly encouraged by this strong commitment to the unifying mission of the Olympic Games.

“Thank you to the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, for taking the initiative for this important resolution.”

This declaration follows a statement from the G7 Leaders’ Summit in May, in which the G7 said that they are “fully respecting the autonomy of sporting organisations” and want to ensure that “Russian and Belarusian athletes are in no way appearing as representatives of their states”. This is also fully aligned with the position of the IOC in this respect.

GANGWON 2024 MARKS 200 DAYS TO GO WITH REVEALS OF MEDAL DESIGN, UNIFORMS AND RECYCLING INITIATIVES

With only 200 days to go to the Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) Gangwon 2024, the Organising Committee (YOGOC), under the leadership of its two Co-Presidents, Lee Sang-hwa and Jin Jong-oh, celebrated the milestone in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The event saw the unveiling of the design for the reverse of the medals, along with the introduction of the official volunteer uniforms and the launch of PET bottle recycling initiatives



The workshop provided an inspiring platform for the students to unleash their creativity. In a brainstorming session, they used photographs of sports, winter landscapes and Korean culture to construct unique collages. These served as the foundation for their sketches, which were then transformed into digital renditions. The selected design encapsulates the nature and picturesque environment of Gangwon province. It also features a beam of light, symbolising growth and unity, while connecting with the obverse (front) of the medal.

The obverse design is by Brazilian Dante Akira Uwai, who won the medal design competition for which a record-breaking 3,000 design proposals were submitted. "A Sparkling Future" is a geometric interpretation of the Gangwon 2024 motto, "grow together, shine forever".

"On this milestone of 200 days to go, we take great pride in unveiling both the medal design and the uniforms.

Our excitement grows as we anticipate sharing the Republic of Korea's heritage, K-culture, with the world through the Youth Olympic Games, and we look forward to celebrating these YOG with young people in Korea," said Jin Jong-oh, Co-President of the Organising Committee for the Winter Youth Olympic Games Gangwon 2024.

Design of the reverse of the medal

Gangwon 2024 ambassador and figure skating legend Yuna Kim revealed the design of the reverse of the medal.

The artwork emerged from a collaborative workshop hosted by the Gangwon 2024 YOGOC, in partnership with 19 local art school students from the Gangwon Arts High School and Yanggu Middle School.



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The staff and volunteer’s uniforms

Co-Presidents Lee Sang-hwa and Jin Jong-oh unveiled the Gangwon 2024 official staff and volunteers’ uniform.

They were joined by snowboard commentator and ambassador Park Jae-min, actress Park Sun-young, short-track speed skater Kwak Yoon-Gy, bobsleigh rising star So Jaehwan and youth supporter Yoon Jo.

The uniform draws inspiration from the blend of the colours red and white.

The red symbolises the energy that characterise the Youth Olympic Games, while the white reflects the potential of young people.

The official uniform will consist of a ski jacket, ski trousers, a mid-layer, a beanie hat and gloves.

PET bottle recycling initiative

In an effort to raise awareness around sustainability, the Gangwon 2024 YOGOC joined forces with the PyeongChang 2018 Legacy Foundation and sports associations to launch a PET bottle recycling initiative in schools across the host cities.

Under this programme, designated collection containers will be strategically placed in schools and other prominent locations within the host cities. This will facilitate the collection of PET bottles, encouraging widespread participation in the initiative.

To further promote environmental awareness, the PyeongChang 2018 Legacy Foundation will organise plogging events involving young people. The PET bottles collected will then be recycled and transformed into cheering kits that will be distributed to the spectators attending the Gangwon 2024 Winter YOG.

The Winter YOG Gangwon 2024 will be held between 19 January and 1 February 2024, and will benefit from the legacy of the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 by using some of the same facilities. Some 1,900 athletes from around 81 National Olympic Committees are expected to take part. The previous Winter YOG took place in January 2020 in Lausanne, Switzerland.

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CASTER SEMENYA IS GIVEN HOPE IN HER BATTLE TO OVERTURN ATHLETICS' CONTROVERSIAL TESTOSTERONE RULES AS COURT RULES THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST AFTER BEING BARRED FROM THE TOKYO OLYMPICS



“ I am very disappointed. I refuse to let World Athletics drug me or stop me from being who I am. Excluding female athletes or endangering our health solely because of our natural abilities puts World Athletics on the wrong side of history ”

Semenya after losing her appeal to Switzerland's Federal Supreme Court in 2020

Caster Semenya was discriminated against by rules which forced her to lower her testosterone levels in order to continue competing, according to a judgement from the European Court of Human Rights.

The 32-year-old, a two-time 800 metres Olympic champion, was legally identified as female at birth but has a condition which means her body naturally produces higher levels of testosterone than women without the condition.

She has been unable to compete at her favoured distance since 2019, following the introduction of limits on testosterone levels for female athletes which would have forced her to use medication.

Previous legal challenges to the Court of Arbitration for Sport and the Swiss Federal Supreme Court were rejected, but the ECHR found her human rights had been violated.

A release issued by the court stated the following:

"The Court found in particular that the applicant had not been afforded sufficient institutional and procedural safeguards in Switzerland to allow her to have her complaints examined effectively, especially since her complaints concerned substantiated and credible claims of discrimination as a result of her increased testosterone level caused by differences of sex development (DSD)."

A legal summary of the case said Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which relates to -discrimination, had been violated, along with Article 13 which related to the absence of effective remedies to tackle that discrimination.

The release on the judgement said the ECHR chamber was a majority decision, with four of the seven representatives finding that Semenya's rights under Articles 13 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights had been violated.

The chamber judgement is not final and can be referred to a Grand Chamber of the court for further consideration if a request is made.

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It was not immediately clear if the ruling would force an immediate rollback of the rules and if the 32-year-old Semenya would be allowed to compete at next year's Olympics in Paris.

World Athletics said in a statement: 'World Athletics notes the judgment of the deeply divided Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

'We remain of the view that the DSD regulations are a necessary, reasonable and proportionate means of protecting fair competition in the female category as the Court of Arbitration for Sport and Swiss Federal Tribunal both found, after a detailed and expert assessment of the evidence.

'The case was filed against the state of Switzerland, rather than World Athletics. We will liaise with the Swiss Government on the next steps and, given the strong dissenting views in the decision, we will be encouraging them to seek referral of the case to the ECHR Grand Chamber for a final and definitive decision.

'In the meantime, the current DSD regulations, approved by the World Athletics Council in March 2023, will remain in place.'

It comes after a report in 2017 noting a performance increase in females with high testosterone levels was dubbed as 'misleading' in 2021.

The British Journal of Sports Medicine released a 'correction' to the findings, leading campaigners to argue the rules should be ditched.



Stephane Bermon, director of World Athletics' Health and Science Department, and his predecessor Pierre-Yves Garnier, wrote: 'To be explicit, there is no confirmatory evidence for causality in the observed relationships reported. We acknowledge that our 2017 study was exploratory.

'With this in mind, we recognise that statements in the paper could have been misleading by implying a causal inference. Specifically, 'Female athletes with high fT [testosterone] levels have a significant competitive advantage over those with low fT in 400 m, 400 m hurdles, 800 m, hammer throw, and pole vault.'

'This statement should be amended to: 'High fT levels in female athletes were associated with higher athletic performance over those with low fT in 400 m, 400 m hurdles, 800 m, hammer throw, and pole vault.'

Semenya previously spoke of her disappointment at not being able to compete in Tokyo after losing her appeal to Switzerland's Federal Supreme Court in 2020.

'I am very disappointed. I refuse to let World Athletics drug me or stop me from being who I am,' she said.

'Excluding female athletes or endangering our health solely because of our natural abilities puts World Athletics on the wrong side of history.'

Semenya, who was assigned the female gender at birth and was raised female, is actually believed to be intersex due a genetic condition which means she has both X and Y chromosomes, a trait usually found in men.

The vast majority of women have only X chromosomes.

The condition leads to elevated levels of testosterone - the male sex hormone, which also plays a role in increasing muscle growth.

While the exact effect of excess testosterone on an athlete's performance is unclear, it is thought to provide an advantage in some sports.