



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

19th Asian Games Hangzhou 2022

IT IS NOT THE END OF THE SHOW; IT IS JUST ANOTHER BEGINNING

Sometimes you do come to realize that there is no melting pot of gold at the end of the rainbow and that is only a make-believe.

The age-old fable came true when passing with the 19th Asian Games on the horizon in Hangzhou when the Lankans encountered its first medal debacle with the withdrawal of much-taunted short-distance gazelle Yupun calling himself unavailable at the games.

On the Lankan playing field, there are some others who have the capability and statistics to give hope to the Lankan cause further in Hangzhou, but in reality, Yupun was the sole internationally acclaimed competitor down in the list to challenge wits of the East Asian sprinters.

But now it is history, and now it is up to us to discover another Nethmi Ahinsa who could weave a bronze out of thin air.

With his withdrawal, Yupun apologized to his nation and fans in this manner.

He wrote, "As our team planned earlier this year, I had a strong start to the summer season in 2023, achieving good results.

"However, as many of you already know, I faced an unfortunate injury during a race in Savona, Italy."

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“Since then, I have been dedicated to my recovery and rehabilitation under expert guidance for the past three months.

“I shared updates on my social media accounts because of your continuous support and inquiries about my health.

“Your well-wishes mean a lot to me.

“At the beginning of this year, our team set the ambitious goal of winning the Asian Games, which was scheduled as our year-end competition.

“Despite the injury, we adjusted our plans and worked tirelessly on treatment and training with this goal in mind.

“As the winter tournament season ends, I underwent my final fitness check on September 11, 2023, just 18 days before the 100m event at the Asian Games.

“After carefully evaluating the required timings to secure a medal in the Asian Games, considering past results, personal records, and the current form of competing athletes, along with my current physical condition and the limited time remaining, it is with deep sadness that I must inform you of our decision, following extensive discussions, not to participate in the Asian Games.

“While competitions are undeniably important for winning and gaining experience, there come moments when health takes precedence.

“The Asian Games is a significant competition in our region, but my primary aspiration was not simply to participate but to emerge victorious. I put in every effort possible, but the time needed for a full recovery and the intervals required for ongoing treatment significantly affect training capacity. Those familiar with sports injuries understand the risk of rushing back into intensive training too soon, which could lead to further setbacks.

“Looking ahead, the Paris Olympics next year is a monumental milestone in my sporting journey. Every competition, experience gained, and record achieved has been in preparation for this ultimate goal. Tomorrow, I will commence training and treatment once again. In an event as competitive as the 100m, the stakes are high. While we are accustomed to taking calculated risks each time we compete, this time we have chosen not to risk a potential re-injury, keeping our focus firmly on the Paris Olympics next year.

“I am acutely aware of the high expectations you all have for me. I am fully committed to this endeavor and have dedicated myself with unwavering determination. This commitment has already led to numerous victories, and I strive not only for personal success but also to represent Sri Lanka, South Asia, and Asia to the best of my abilities. I wholeheartedly declare that we will achieve even greater feats in the future.”

In May this year, Abeykoon produced a splendid curtain raiser of 10.04 seconds (+2.7 wind) in the heats of the men’s 100m at the Savona International Meet. But there he had to concede to the second place with his injury.

Yet, once again it must be reiterated that Abeykoon’s 9.96 seconds feat in July 2022 was the fastest time by an Asian that year, pumping aspirations to another major sprint medal for the country and hopes of a medal in Hangzhou were always in the back of our minds.

Abeykoon’s withdrawal yesterday shocked the athletics fraternity. Saman Kumara Gunawardana, the secretary of Sri Lanka Athletics termed it a “loss of hope.”



Abeykoon at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics

NOVAK DJOKOVIC BEATS DANIIL MEDVEDEV TO EQUAL OPEN ERA SLAM SINGLES TITLES RECORD

After matching Margaret Court's tally of 24 Slam singles titles, Djokovic paid tribute to "close friend" Kobe Bryant and wore a T-shirt bearing a photo of the pair



Novak Djokovic defeated Daniil Medvedev in the US Open final on Sunday (10 September) to equal Margaret Court's record 24 Grand Slam singles titles in the Open era.

Djokovic won 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-3 to claim his fourth title at Flushing Meadows and avenge his defeat to the Russian in the 2021 final which denied him the coveted calendar Grand Slam.

However, Djokovic won three Slams in a calendar year for the fourth time having previously done so in 2011, 2015 and 2021.

The 36-year-old Serbian star is now two clear of Rafael Nadal's tally of 22 men's Slam singles titles with Roger Federer two further back on 20.

When asked afterwards what winning 24 Slam titles meant to him, Djokovic thanked his parents and his family for their sacrifices over the years and said, "This is your trophy as much as this is mine. This is your success as much as this is mine. I love you. I never imagined I would be here talking about 24 Slams but the last couple of years I realised I had a shot at history and why not grab it if it's presented."

He then unzipped his jacket to reveal a T-shirt bearing a photo of him and late basketball star Kobe Bryant - who famously wore number 24 - with the message "Mamba Forever".

Djokovic said, "I thought of doing this T-shirt if I won the tournament about seven days ago.

"I didn't share it with anyone up to a few days ago when I asked my people to help me out to make these shirts.

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"Kobe was a close friend.

We chatted a lot about the winner's mentality.

"When I was struggling with an injury and trying to make my comeback to the top of the game...

"He was one of the people that I relied on the most.

"He was always there for any kind of advice or support in a friendly way.

"What happened with him and his daughter passing hurt me deeply.

"I thought 24 is the jersey he wore when he became a legend of Lakers and world basketball, so I felt it could be a nice symbolic thing to acknowledge him for all the things he's done."



This was Djokovic's return to the US Open after missing last year's tournament due to the federal government requiring foreign visitors to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Meanwhile, U.S. teenager Coco Gauff staged a stunning comeback to secure a maiden tennis major victory claiming the US Open -

women's singles title after beating Belarusian ace Aryna Sabalenka 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 in New York on Saturday (9 September).

The 19-year-old Gauff became the first home winner of the US Open women's singles title since Sloane Stephens beat compatriot Madison Keys in the 2017 final.



She is also the first American teenager to win the singles title in New York since Serena Williams in 1999.

Looking to make her breakthrough, Gauff featured in the second Grand Slam of her young career after her defeat to Iga Swiatek in the 2022 French Open. She hit a rich vein of form claiming a first WTA 1000 in Cincinnati last month.

MEMOS GRADUATION BY IOC TO NISHANTHE PIYASENA

The NOC SL celebrates the graduation of Nishanthe Indunil Piyasena, who was inducted as a Memosian earlier this week by the IOC.

The mission of MEMOS – the Executive Masters in Sport Organisations Management, is to help professionals working in national or international sports bodies to develop the knowledge required in order to better manage their organisations. MEMOS is supported by the IOC and the Olympic Solidarity.

Nishanthe is currently appointed as the Chef de Mission for the upcoming 19th Asian Games Hangzhou 2022.

Known for serving the cause of cycling in Sri Lanka for more than a decade, he is also the current President of the Modern Pentathlon Federation of Sri Lanka.

Nishanthe did his research on "How to grow Modern Pentathlon Sport in Sri Lanka with all FIVE disciplines as per the new format introduced by the UIPM - World Pentathlon".



TEAM SRI LANKA FLAG BEARERS UNVEILED

We take pleasure in announcing Anura Rohana - Silver medalist in Golf at Busan 2002 Asian Games and Gayanthika Thushari - multiple medal holder at the Asian regional level in Athletics, as the Flag Bearers of Team Sri Lanka at the upcoming 19th Asian Games Hangzhou 2022.

