



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

ELATION OF VICTORY & WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN



Amid pomp and pageant – the elation of podium occupations with gold, silver and bronze and other frolic, it was a moment of feel good.

In reality, there were more than one moment of elation for the Lankan public just to be proud Lankans and a part of “Team Sri Lanka”.

Yet, at same time, there were also other medal prospects that were caught in a conundrum within the realms of lost opportunities.

Clearly, they had the tenacity and the yearning of being someone to be counted, but their chain of opportunity had to come through different tracks.

Three of those lost opportunities we really noticed at the just concluded Hangzhou Asian Games 2022, or could we just say 2023? – we recognized them after live observations.

The first was Badminton and the talent that was compressed within shoulders young Viren Nettesinghe.

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Now just out of school at the age of twenty, he initially grew within the other legends who took the racket by storm.

But what we noticed is that in a game in the caliber of Badminton, there is more that you need to hold water at the Asian level.

For instance, GoodSport had the opportunity of witnessing the preparation process of the Indian doubles gold medal winners of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy.

They were under the scrutiny of Mathias Boe a former badminton player from Denmark.

He was the gold medalist at the 2015 European Games, two-time European champions winning in 2012 and 2017, and the silver medalist at the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Both Shetty and Rankireddy were bigger than the usual medium sized players in the training area. But, Boe had churned the duo into a nimble footed Hermes like players who could move around the square and pickup and shot from any angle and at any speed.

More than that we saw how Boe drilled in the reality of being aware of what to expect next. Though I could fathom the intensity of the drilling, I would have to print out many more just to explain it.

It was precision work and Shetty and Rankireddy had to understand and maintain them like they were just born to do it. They were at it in the same manner day-in-day-out when the sessions of training were at hand.

On the hand young Nettasinghe was on an isle doing his stretching exercises and a little exercise with a physio.

Then Viren's father Roshan who also acted as his manager had to coax a Nepal player to share some practice shots before the game. Yet, Viren's talent took him past his first opponent from Bhutan and then got past Mongolia with consummate ease.



Viren Nettasinghe at the Hangzhou Asian Games

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Ravindu Laksiri at the Hangzhou Asian Games

But when Viren (World No 81 seed) had to face World No. 13 Chou Tien-chen of Chinese Taipei for a place in the quarter-finals, we at this end were quite sure that the game would end in two sets in under ten.

Yet, he gave the World No. 13 some food for thought when the Viren was leading in both sets initially.

He lost at 16-21 and 10-21 – player on show for the first time in with-in the best 16 singles players at the Asian Games – the powerhouse of Badminton world there is more to think of.

We were just wondering if Viren had a Boe to take him through the paces.

At that level you need something just more than sheer talent and technique to conquer.

Learn ways of out think his opponent and be taken seriously as a player - maybe the result may have been different.

The lost opportunity in Squash was very similar. Ravindu Hashintha Laksiri competed in the Men's Singles category.

First on, he went head on against his Thai challenge - Ravipun Limphaibon and triumphed with ease scoring 11/1, 11/2, 11/4.

Next on was Southeast Asian Games Gold medalist and Hangzhou Games Men's Team Bronze medallist - Malaysian Muhammad Addeen Idrakie Bin Bahtiar.

It is no doubt that Malaysia is a powerhouse of Asian Squash and clinching 3 out of 5 Squash gold medals at Hangzhou as well as winning a medal in all the squash events at Hangzhou, is proof of that.

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Nonetheless, Ravindu managed to get a headstart when he won the first set after a tight fight with a score of 12/10.

However, Addeen managed to take the lead over him in the 2nd and 3rd sets for 11/6 and 11/7.

The 4th set was the decider – Ravindu and Addeen was tied at 11/11, but Addeen inched forward just enough to win by 13/11.

However, Ravindu's efforts and talent certainly did not go unnoticed by the spectators, and especially by the opposing teams.

As the reigning National champion of Sri Lanka Squash, and being the 10-time national champion of Sri Lanka, Ravindu's skills and experience are evidently unparalleled within Sri Lanka and he puts in tremendous effort to get the right exposure for himself.

But it only leaves to our imagination, with the right guidance and support, what a player with skills of that caliber could go on to be...

Then, young wrestler Nethmi Ahinsa has the cake, but does not have the icing to wallop it. She too has to take the international count and prepare for the next journey.

Definitely, Nethmi is medal material, but, how she is hoping to translate them in to reality in tough international competition is another.



Nethmi Ahinsa at the Hangzhou Asian Games