

Official Publication of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka

# GoodSport

September 2018

## GREAT HAUL OF CHINA

More work to be done for Asian powerhouse

## SWEET 16

A day-by-day look at the showpiece

## FLAT OUT IN FORTY

From Bridge to Sambo

## FUTURE IS ROSY

Anyone for the 2030 Asian Games?



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2018 | Jakarta  
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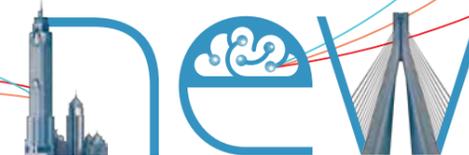


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# FOREWORD SURESH SUBRAMANIAM

President, National Olympic Committee

It has been 81 years since the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka was formed. In these eight decades there have been many proud sporting moments the country has savoured. Of course, most people would straight away point to the 1996 World Cup triumph in cricket as our proudest moment, simply because cricket is widely recognised as the most popular sport in this island.

While giving cricket its due recognition, we must also acknowledge the fact that other sports have also been an important part of our fabric. From Duncan White, the first person to win an Olympic medal for Sri Lanka, to Susanthika Jayasinghe, the first woman to reach the Olympic podium, we have had our moments to cherish. Regrettably, these have been rare flashes of national joy. We have had more success at the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and South Asian Games, all of which come under the umbrella of the National Olympic Committee, but ultimately, winning at the Olympic level is the gold standard.

To consistently perform at the Olympics, a lot of hard work and dedication is needed, not only from the athlete but also the administrator, those officials who run sport, mostly giving his or her time voluntarily.

Since being elected to the position of president of the National Olympic Committee earlier this year, and speaking on behalf of the NOC, I pledge to usher in

an environment which will make it more favourable for athletes to achieve their dreams.

This magazine is a key part of the new executive committee's strategy. It has a twin-pronged goal: to raise the profile of all sports in the country and to call for the support of the corporate community for without them sports will find it hard to make the breakthrough.

Why GOOD SPORT? It is a name which resonates with sportsmanship, the heart and soul of what it is all about. When you call someone a good sport, you are being complimentary. It means being able to face life with a smile on your face.

GOOD SPORT is also about building a brand for Sri Lanka sports. Our athletes must go out and compete proudly. Winning matters, and if you do so, accept your laurels with humility and don't rub the losers face into the dust. Be a good sport. If you lose, accept defeat graciously and not with excuses. Be a good sport.

This will be our mantra going forward. Our athletes must be able to hold their heads up high, whatever the outcome is. If we have given a 100 per cent, training and performance, then we must be proud of our efforts. This will become the template for all athletes representing Sri Lanka. Our first edition is a special one as it focuses solely on the 2018 Asian Games recently concluded in Jakarta and Palembang. We bring stories of our own athletes, yet we have not forgotten the bigger picture. We hope readers browsing

through these pages will be entertained as well as learn about sports which are just not cricket.

We have taken a look at all 40 sports at these Games. We give readers a quick digest of everything from archery to wrestling. Did you know that President Putin's favourite martial art is Sambo, a medal sport at these games, or that jet skis are only not for the Baywatch set?

We hope these pages will be informative and give you an idea of what the Asian Games is all about. Our diary takes a not-too-serious look at the 16 days of these Games. Come with us on a journey through Jakarta.

GOOD SPORT will come out every three months. It will also be updated online in-between publications. The aim is to raise sports, other than cricket, to a new level. In the past eight decades Sri Lanka has produced only two Olympic medalists. Let's hope in the next eight years, we will be able to double that number and raise the profile of sport in this country. The first step has been taken today, right here. It is also the first step since the launch of the Rs. 50 million Prime Minister's Sports Fund. Sports is moving in the right direction.



# FAST FACTS AND NUMBERS



**45** the number of countries (all) at the Asian Games. North Korea and South Korea will compete as a unified team in basketball,

dragon boat racing and rowing. They had marched together before at the Opening Ceremony of Asian Games, but this will be the first time the two Koreas will form a unified team.

**40**

THE NUMBER OF SPORTS AT THE ASIAN GAMES.

But this number is a bit disingenuous for instance martial arts will have ju-jitsu, kurash, wushu and pencak silat all grouped together as one sport. In contrast, the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo will feature 33 sports.

**462**

the number of events in the 40 disciplines, making it the second-largest programme in Asian Games history. Only the 2010 Guangzhou Games was bigger: 476 events in 42 sports.

**11,000**

the number of athletes and officials at the Games.

**11,000**

the number of media including print, television and radio as well as online.

**13,000**

the number of volunteers at the Games. In addition, there will be a 5,000-strong paid workforce on duty.

**US\$40 MILLION**

The amount of money Indonesian organisers of the Asian Games have paid to the Olympic Council of Asia. In return the organising committee assumes full control of marketing and sponsorship rights.

the number of apartment towers that comprise the Athletes Village in Kemayoran, Central Jakarta. There will be a total of 7,424 apartments, each apartment measuring 36 square metres and featuring two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and bathroom. It was built at a cost of US\$267 million.

**10**

**US\$2.4 BILLION**

Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency has stated this amount has been spent on infrastructure development surrounding the Asian Games. This includes a new light rail transit for the city of Palembang (estimated at US\$676 million) as well as the extension of the LRT in Jakarta, and the renovation of the 76,000-capacity main stadium (Gelora Bung Karno) in Jakarta where the opening ceremony and the athletic events will be held. Other new sports facilities will include an equestrian venue and a velodrome.

**80**

the number of venues for competition and training.



**1962**

the last time Jakarta hosted the Asian Games.

**10,000**

the last time Jakarta hosted the Asian Games.

**03**

the animal mascots at the Games. They are Bhin Bhin, the bird of paradise, Kaka, the single-horned Javan rhinoceros, and Atung, the Bawean deer. The first Asian Games to introduce a mascot was 1982 New Delhi, when Appu the elephant was chosen.



**11 MILLION**  
THE POPULATION OF JAKARTA.

**07**

Co-hosts Palembang is the seventh-largest city in Indonesia. It is a 47-minute flight from Jakarta.



**1982**

the beginning of China's dominance in Asia, ending Japan's reign at the top of the medal standings at the eight previous Games. China has since reigned supreme at the last eight editions.

**1951**

the inaugural Asian Games was staged in New Delhi. A total of 489 athletes from 11 countries participated. Japan who had been barred from the 1948 Olympics in London – the aftermath of World War II – topped the medal standings. This is the 18th edition.

**04**

the number of times Bangkok the capital city of Thailand, has hosted the Games: 1966, 1970, 1978 and 1998. The most by any country.

**17,500**

the number of islands that make up Indonesia. It is the world's largest archipelago.

**1,355**

THE NUMBER OF GOLD MEDALS CHINA HAS WON GOING INTO THESE GAMES.

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## Ground zero for Sri Lanka

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC

### China to show the way forward

By Alvin Sallay -----

The heart-wrenching picture of Sri Lanka rugby player Dansha Dayan, candidly caught by our cameraman, with his hands on his head in anguish, superbly sums up our sad campaign at the 18th Asian Games in Jakarta and Palembang.

Yes, Sri Lanka crash-landed. There is no point sugar-coating the performance of our biggest squad of athletes sent to the Asian Games. We took part in 27 of the 40 sports and came up zero.

The closest Sri Lanka got to the champions' podium came in the men's rugby sevens where we lost in the semi-finals to Asian rugby powerhouse Japan, going down 12-10 in a

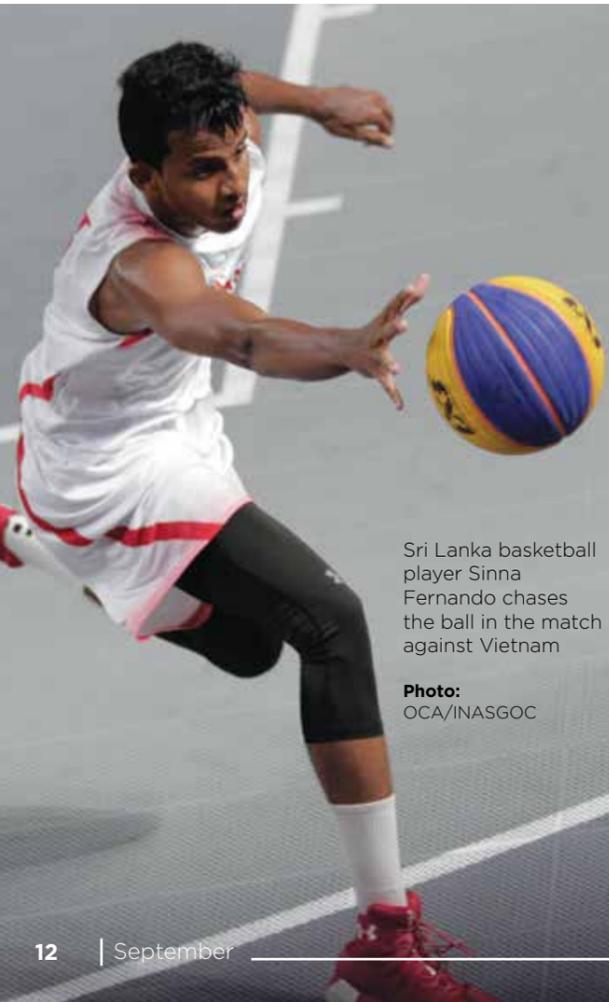
fiercely contested match. It was a game which could have been won if only we hadn't panicked in the final seconds of the match with the try-line in front of us.

It is the same old story. Four years ago, at the Incheon Asian Games, Sri Lanka almost claimed the bronze medal leading South Korea, before turning over possession in the last seconds of the match to allow the Koreans to score and win. This time we should have beaten Japan if we had remained cool and executed the basics well.

A win over Japan would have seen Sri Lanka reach the gold medal final against Hong Kong. Who knows, Sudarshana Muthuthantri and his men would have returned home to



The Sri Lanka contingent at the opening of the Asian Games 2018  
 Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Sri Lanka basketball player Sinna Fernando chases the ball in the match against Vietnam  
 Photo: OCA/INASGOC

Colombo with gold medals around their necks. But it was not to be. Deflated after playing their hearts out against Japan, Sri Lanka went on to lose the bronze medal game against South Korea.

“Should have” and “would have” doesn’t matter in the final equation, although that is the age-old script of local sport. We came close, but no cigar in the end.

While rugby came closest to winning a medal, there were a number of other encouraging signs spread across other sports that showed that with more hard work and better technical and coaching support, Sri Lanka can turn the corner at the Asian Games. This quadrennial event has to be the Holy Grail for our athletes at this point of time. We can talk about the Olympics later. That is unless we unearth another rare gem like Susanthika Jayasinghe.

Susanthika was not a product of the system. She came in spite of it, bringing glory to Sri Lanka by winning an Olympic silver medal in

the women’s 200m at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. She was a one-in-a-million athlete in Sri Lanka.

Can we just sit and hope for another Susie to pop up? That would be foolhardy, and it was with this in mind that the new hierarchy of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chinese Olympic Committee on the sidelines of these Games.

Suresh Subramaniam, who was elected as president of the NOC of Sri Lanka in February this year, has wooed the Chinese and won them over. His counterpart Gou Zhongwen, who is also the minister in charge of sport in China, has promised to help train and develop Sri Lankan athletes across the board, be it in a Summer Olympic sport like athletics or a Winter Olympics sport like figure skating.

This is a massive and unprecedented step of support from China. They will not only train our athletes but also coach our coaches. “We can rely on

China’s help for anything. We have their full backing,” Subramaniam said after he signed the agreement with the powerful Chinese sports official.

It is high time that a system is put in place, one which will help train our best young athletes as they look ahead to the next Asian Games, 2022, Hangzhou, China. And what better way forward than tying up with China. It will be a case of the Haves and the Have Nots getting together.

Sri Lanka has the talent, but without expert help we have not been able to nurture them. Even top Asian nations like China who topped the medal standings with 132 golds and an overall count of 289, and second-placed Japan, 75-205, seek foreign help to develop their athletes into world-beaters. China fielded an 845-strong contingent of athletes at these Games in 38 sports – they didn’t take part in kabaddi and weightlifting – had 38 foreign coaches from 15 countries in 22 sports.

Japan also had a large number of foreign experts in the coaching staff. Their gold medal double men’s and women’s hockey – the first time Japan have won at the Asian Games – was perhaps due to the influence of Dutch head coach Aikman Siegfried.



Suresh Subramaniam, president of the NOC of Sri Lanka (centre), and his Chinese counterpart Gou Zhongwen the Chinese Sports Minister signed the historic MOU which will help facilitate the development of local athletes to the next level. This was held at the Fairmont Hotel in Jakarta during the Asian Games. Also in the picture is NOC Secretary General Maxwell de Silva.

Photo: Thusith Wijedhoru NOC MEDIA

If you want to get better, improve, then why not go learn from the best. China, a sporting superpower in Asia, can undoubtedly help Sri Lanka reach the next level.

It is perhaps due to exposure to foreign coaching and competition that swimmer Matthew Abeysinghe was able to reach a landmark in the pool when he became the first local swimmer to reach the men’s 100m freestyle final at the Asian Games.

Matthew swam 49.28 seconds to finish a creditable sixth.

Depending on how you read this number, Matthew is also the sixth fastest in the most populous continent in the world. A no mean feat. Likewise, Kalinga Kumara, who reached the men’s 400m final in athletics where he finished last with a time of 46.49. Was he last, or did he claim the title of the eighth fastest man in Asia over 400m?



## REPORT CARD

### ARCHERY

Recurve men's individual ranking: 64th Sajeev de Silva 613  
Elimination round – 1/32: Sajeev de Silva beat Roshan Nagarkoto (Nepal) 6-0; 1/16: de Silva lost to Wei Chun-heng (Chinese-Taipei) 2-6.

### ATHLETICS

Men's 400m, round one, heats: Kalinga Kumara, 45.99, PB, Q; Aruna Dharshana, 46.97, Q.  
Semi-finals: Kumara 46.21, Q; Dharshana, 46.53, DNQ  
Final: Kumara, 8th, 46.49.  
Men's Long Jump, qualifying: Janaka Prasad, 11th 7.56m, Q  
Final: Janaka, 7th, 7.86.  
Women's 10000m final: Hiruni Wijayarathne, DNF.  
Women's 800m round 1, heats: Nimali Liyanarachige, 2:06.74; Gayanthika Abeyratna, 2:06.31, Q. Final: Gayanthika, 6th, 2:05.50.  
Women's 3000m steeplechase final: Nilani Ratnayake, 6th, 9:54.65.  
Men's 800m round 1, heats: Indunil Herath 1:47.54, Q; Final: Herath, 8th, 1:51.36.  
Women's 200m round 1, heats: Rumesika Ratnayake, 23.79, Q.  
Semi-final: Rumesika, 6th, 24.05.  
Men's 4x400m relay, round 1: Sri Lanka (Aruna Dharshana, Ajith Premakumara, Lakshan Kodikara, Kalinga Kumara) 3:06.06, Q. Final: Sri Lanka, 4th, 3:02.74.

### AQUATICS – SWIMMING:

Heats  
Men's 200m freestyle: Matthew Abeysinghe, 1:50.97, 12th, DNQ (did not qualify); Haren Nugawela, 1:56.01, 26th, DNQ.  
Men's 200m butterfly: Cherantha de Silva, 13th, 2:05.90, DNQ.  
Men's 50m backstroke: Akalanka Peiris, 17th, 26.57, DNQ.  
Men's 50m freestyle: Matthew Abeysinghe, 12th, 22.88, DNQ; Kyle Abeysinghe, 20th, 23.36, DNQ.  
Men's 4x100m freestyle relay: Sri Lanka (Matthew Abeysinghe, Kyle Abeysinghe, Akalanka Peiris, Cherantha de Silva) DSQ (disqualified).  
Men's 50m butterfly: Akalanka Peiris, 25th, 25.20, DNQ; Cherantha de Silva, 26th, 25.36, DNQ.  
Men's 100m freestyle: Matthew Abeysinghe, 4th, 49.48, Q (qualified)  
Final: Matthew Abeysinghe, 6th, 49.28.

### BADMINTON

Mixed Doubles, rd-of-32: Thilini Pramodika/Sachin Dias lost to Do Tuan Duc/Pham Nhu Thao 21-13, 12-21, 13-21.  
Women's Singles, rd-of-32: Kavidi Ishadika beat Shatha Almutaitri (Saudi Arabia) 21-4, 21-4; Thilini Pramodika lost to Fitriani Fitriani (Indonesia) 6-21, 4-21.  
Round-of-16: Kavidi lost to Nitchaon Jindapol (Thailand) 4-21, 14-21.  
Men's Doubles, rd-of-32: Sachin Dias/Buweneka Goontilleka beat Che Phi-ngai/Pui Pang-fong (Macau) 21-11, 21-8; Dinuka Karunaratna/Niluka Karunaratne lost to Choi Sol-gyu/Kang Min-hyuk (South Korea) 16-21, 17-21.  
Round-of-16: Dias/Goontilleka beat Rizwan Azim/Kashif Ali Suleshi (Pakistan) 21-12, 21-13.  
Quarterfinals: Dias/Goontilleka lost to Li Junhui/Liu Yuchen (China) 12-21, 15-21.  
Women's Doubles, rd-of-32: Thilini Pramodika/Kavidi Ishadika lost to Tang Jinhua/Zheng Yu (China) 13-21, 12-21.  
Men's Singles, rd-of-32: Niluka Karunaratne lost to Khosit Phetpradab

(Thailand) 12-21, 12-21. Dinuka Karunaratna beat Pui Pang-gong (Macau) 21-14, 21-15.  
Round-of-16: Dinuka lost to Ng Ka-long (Hong Kong) 6-21, 14-21.

### BASEBALL

Sri Lanka beat Laos 15-10. Sri Lanka lost to Thailand 3-14. Failed to qualify for next round.

### BASKETBALL

3x3  
Men's round-robin pool competition: Sri Lanka lost to China 14-21; Sri Lanka lost to Thailand 10-20; Sri Lanka beat Vietnam 21-7; Sri Lanka lost to Indonesia 12-18.  
Women's round-robin pool competition: Sri Lanka lost to Indonesia 9-21; Sri Lanka lost to South Korea 8-21; Sri Lanka beat Syria 15-12.

### BOXING

Preliminary round  
Women's featherweight (57kg): Hansika Kasturiarachchi lost to Saniya Sultankyzy (Kazakhstan) 0-5.  
Men's light-flyweight (46-49kg): Thiwanka Ranasinghe lost to Mario Blasius (Indonesia) 0-5.  
Men's light-welterweight (64kg): Dushan Sapramadu lost to Bakhodur Usmonov (Tajikistan) referee stops contest, round two.  
Women's lightweight (60kg): Dulanjani Dharmatilaka lost to Shora Zulkaynarova (Tajikistan) 0-5.  
Men's flyweight (52kg): Ishan Bandara lost to Yuttapong Tongdee (Thailand) referee stops contest, round one.  
Women's flyweight (51kg): Anusha Koddituwakku lost to Madoka Wada (Japan) 1-4.

### CANOEING

Kayak single (K1) 200m, heats: Idunil Wijerathna 45.121, Q. Semi-final: Wijerathna, 8th, 41.821.

### GOLF

Men's Individual competition (par 72): T41 Joseph de Soysa 79-73-76-73 (Total: 301); T47 Patrick Kumara 73-77-79-77 (304); T72 Sachin de Silva 74-82-84-83 (323).  
Men's team: Sri Lanka 15th.

### GYMNASTICS

Rhythmic, Individual All-Around  
Qualification: 24th - Anna-Marie Ondaatjie, 35.600  
Final: Did not participate

### HOCKEY

Preliminary pool: Sri Lanka lost to Japan 0-11; Sri Lanka lost to South Korea 0-8; Sri Lanka beat Hong Kong 4-1; Sri Lanka beat Indonesia 3-1; Sri Lanka lost to India 0-20. Men's placing 7-8th: lost to Oman 2-5.

### JUDO

Men's -73kg elimination round of 32: Nuwan Chamara lost to Bektur Rysmambetov (Kyrgyzstan) by Ippon.  
Men's -81 kg elimination round of 32: Rajitha Kumara lost to Harshdeep Brar Singh (India) by Ippon.

### KABADDI

Men, preliminary round: Lost 28-44 to India; beat Thailand 46-29; Lost 25-29 to Bangladesh; lost 22-33 to South Korea. Did not progress to next round.  
Women, preliminary round: Lost 14-41 to Thailand; beat Indonesia 34-17; beat Japan 22-17; lost 12-38 to India. Did not progress to next round.

### KARATE

Men's Kata, first round: Tharindu Sampaya lost to Park hee-jun (South Korea) 0-5.  
Men's -60kg, first round: Prasanga Weerakoon beat Hazrat Osmani (Afghanistan) 4-2; quarterfinal: Weerakoon lost to Kumar Selvam (Malaysia) 1-3.  
Men's -67kg, first round: Akhiro Lokukaluge beat Hiroto Shinohara (Japan) 6-2; quarterfinals: Lokukaluge lost to Didar Amirau (Kazakhstan) 10-0; repechage Lokukaluge lost to Ahmed Alhadhrami (UAE) 1-5.  
Women's -61kg, first round: Tharika Samanmali lost to Huda Jaber (Jordan) 0-8.  
Men's -84kg, first round: Kavindi Jayakody lost to Ma Zeyan (China) 0-2.  
Women's -50kg, first round: Dinusha Kumari lost to Srunita Sari (Indonesia) 0-8.

### ROLLERSKATING

Men's road 20km final: Lasantha Silva DNF; Kavindu Perera DNF.  
Women's road 20km final: Dasuni Soyza DNF; Samithri Perera DNF.

### ROWING

Men's quadruple sculls, heats: 4th, 1:39.65.  
B final: runners-up to Kazakhstan, 1:38.62.

### RUGBY SEVENS

Men's preliminary pool: Sri Lanka beat United Arab Emirates 68-0; lost to South Korea 26-31; beat Afghanistan 36-0.  
Quarterfinal: Sri Lanka beat China 17-12  
Semi-final: Sri Lanka lost to Japan 10-12  
Bronze medal play-off: Sri Lanka lost to South Korea 14-36

### SAILING

Laser Standard, after 12 races: Roshil Weeratunga 15th.

### SQUASH

Men's Singles, rd-of-32: Shamal Mukhtar lost to Saurav Ghosal (India) 2-11, 2-11, 1-11; Laksiri Ravindu lost to Mohamed Adnan (Malaysia) 8-11, 7-11, 9-11.  
Women's Singles, rd-of-32: Fathima Issadeen lost to Satomi Watanabe (Japan) 7-11, 9-11, 6-11; Mihiliya Methsarani lost to Sivarangari Subramaniam (Malaysia) 6-11, 6-11, 6-11.

### TABLE TENNIS

Mixed doubles, round of 32: Udaya Ranasinghe/Dharshika Madurangi lost to Padasak Tanviriyavechakul (Thailand) 0-3 (1-11, 2-11, 5-11).  
Men's singles round of 64: Udaya Ranasinghe ret'd v Sonpasith Morangsinh (Laos) 1-4 (12-14, 11-8, rest conceded)  
Women's singles, round of 64: Dharshika Madurangi beat Fatima Khan (Pakistan) 3-1 (8-11, 11-2, 11-8, 11-5); round of 32: Madurani lost to Wang Manyu (China) 1-3 (11-8, 5-11, 8-11, 1-11).

### TAEKWONDO

Women's +67kg, round-of-16: Ranuri Wickramasinghe withdrew.  
Men's +80kg, round-of-32: Blesh Fernando lost to Akshay Kumar (India) 8-13.  
Men's -63kg, round-of-32: Chalinda Liyanage beat Masango Homma (Japan) 21-18; round-of-16: Chalinda lost to Sardor Toirov (Uzbekistan) 6-22.  
Women's -49kg, round-of-16: Kumudhu Wijeratna beat Sidra Batool (Pakistan) 28-14; quarterfinals: Kumudhu lost to Miyu Yamada (Japan) 8-32.

### TENNIS

Men's singles, round-of-64: Yasitha de Silva lost to Hady Habib (Lebanon) 2-6, 1-6; Sharmal Dissanayake beat Fazeel Abdulla (Maldives) 6-1, 6-3.  
Round-of-32: Sharmal Dissanayake lost to Yasutaka Uchiyama (Japan) 3-6, 1-6.  
Women's singles, round-of-64: Anika Seneviratne beat Ariun-Erdene Erdenebileg (Mongolia) 6-1, 6-2; round-of-32: Seneviratne lost to Zhang Shuai (China) 1-6, 2-6; Anjali Kurera lost to Miyu Kato (Japan) 0-6, 1-6.  
Mixed doubles, round-of-64: Anika/Yasitha lost to Fatma Al Nabhani/Talib Al Nabhani (Oman) 4-6, 3-6; Sharmal/Anjali lost to Akgul Amanmurdova/Sanjar Fayziev (Uzbekistan) 4-6, 3-6.  
Women's Doubles, round-of-32: Anika/Anjali lost to Han Nalae/Kim Nari (South Korea) 1-6, 0-6.  
Men's Doubles, round-of-32: Sharmal/Yasitha lost to Timur Khabibulin/Aleksandr Nedoyesov (Kazakhstan) 4-6, 2-6.

### TRIATHLON

Men's race: Lakruwan Wijesiri, 24th, 2:11:28 (Swim – 24.55, Bike – 1:03:06, Run – 42.25).

### VOLLEYBALL

Beach Volleyball, men's preliminaries: Sri Lanka lost to Kazakhstan 0-2; Sri Lanka beat South Korea 2-0; Sri Lanka lost to Qatar 0-2.  
Indoor Volleyball, men's preliminaries: Sri Lanka lost to Thailand 1-3; Sri Lanka beat Vietnam 3-0, Sri Lanka lost to China 1-3; Sri Lanka beat Maldives 3-1.  
Classification, 13th-16th: Sri Lanka beat Nepal 3-1 (23-25, 25-16, 26-24, 25-21).  
Play-off for 13th place: Sri Lanka beat Vietnam 3-0 (25-21, 25-21, 25-20)

### WEIGHTLIFTING

Women's 48kg: Dinusha Gomas DNF (did not finish).  
Men's 62kg: Thilanka Kumara DNF.  
Women's 53kg: Chamari Warnakulasuriya 169kg, 10th.  
Men's 69kg: Chaturanga Dissanayake snatch 130kg, clean and jerk failed all three attempts (155-155-160).

### WRESTLING

Men's Freestyle 57kg quarterfinal  
Charles Fernando lost to Roni Saputra (Indonesia) 0-4.

### WUSHU

Women's Sanda -52kg, first round: Maleesha Weerasinghe lost to Chen Wei-ting (Chinese-Taipei) 0-2.  
Men's Sanda -60kg, first round: Nuwan Balawardhana beat Noukhith Latsaphao (Laos) 2-0; quarterfinals: Balawardhana lost to Nghiem van Y (Vietnam) 0-2.

Others with similar achievements were long jumper Janaka Prasad, seventh in the final with a leap of 7.86 metres or Gaynathika Abeyratna who finished sixth in the women's 800m final on the track; Indunil Herath, eighth in the men's 800m final and Nilani Ratnayake, sixth in the women's 3000m steeplechase final. It all depends on your point of view.

The men's 4x400m relay team comprising Aruna Dharshana, Ajith Premakumara, Lakshan Kodikara and Kalinga Kumara, ran superbly to finish fourth in three minutes 02.74 seconds. If not for the African-born Bahraini team which won gold, Sri Lanka would have won the bronze. Some countries don't only get foreign coaches but they also acquire athletes too.

Like rugby, our hockey too fared creditably finishing in the top eight

in Asia with wins over Hong Kong and hosts Indonesia. It is always encouraging when a team sport does well and the future looks bright for men's hockey.

Where to from here? Subramaniam is clear in his vision as he looks ahead to the future.

"We gave all our sports federations the chance to show what they are capable of and now we know where we stand and what needs to be done to get to the next level. The Federations can't come to us and say they were not given the opportunity," says Subramaniam.

Sports Minister Faiszer Musthapha, an interested observer in Jakarta over the last few days at these Games, was heard to comment at the MOU signing ceremony: "We have now tested the water."

That might sound ominous for local federations as they look at sending their athletes to take part at the next big international assignment – the South Asian Games in Kathmandu in March.

The competition will be of a lower standard at this event. We need to look at the Asian Games as the benchmark. And Jakarta and Palembang have given local sports a Ground Zero. The only way ahead is up.

**Alvin Sallay was chief sportswriter for the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong for more than two decades. He has covered four Olympic Games, eight Asian Games, one soccer World Cup, an America's Cup, every Hong Kong Rugby Sevens since 1985, and numerous other international sporting events from cricket to tennis. He is now on a mission to raise the profile of Sri Lanka sport.**



## TOP TEN MEDAL STANDINGS

Rating	Country	Flag	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
01	China		132	92	65	289
02	Japan		75	56	74	205
03	South Korea		49	58	70	177
04	Indonesia		31	24	43	98
05	Uzbekistan		21	24	25	70
06	Iran		20	20	22	62
07	Chinese Taipei		17	19	31	67
08	India		15	24	30	69
09	Kazakhstan		15	17	44	76
10	North Korea		12	12	13	37



Life begins at forty they say. Quite apt, for life at the 18th Asian Games revolved around 40 sports. In reality there were more than 40 sports, some coming under one umbrella like martial arts which had five separate categories, each distinct enough to be labelled a sport in itself. We take a look at all 40 sports, explain to the casual observer what it is all about and also encapsulate how Sri Lanka performed in the 29 sports it took part in. In total 462 medal sets were awarded. Bridge, jet ski, jujitsu, kurash, paragliding, pencak silat, sambo, skateboarding and sport climbing were all making their Asian Games debut. China has been the most dominant country in terms of medals in Asian Games history having won a total of 2976 medals before these Games started – 1355 gold, 928 silver and 693 bronze. China added another 289 medals, 132 of them gold.

The Chinese artistic swimming team

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



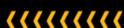
ARTISTIC SWIMMING

ARTISTIC SWIMMING, or previously known as Synchronised Swimming, is often described as ballet on water because of the dance-like movements swimmers make to music. It is a discipline exclusive to women. You need to have your make-up on to impress the judges.



AQUATICS SWIMMING

SWIMMING has been a medal sport since the inaugural Asian Games in 1951. A blue riband sport, it offers a bumper 41 gold medals – 20 for men, 20 for women and one mixed medley relay. The country which rules the pool has a good chance of finishing top of the medal standings. Japan's traditional domination is now challenged by China. It is a hugely physical and demanding sport, with athletes competing over distances from 50m to 1,500m. The four main strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. If this is not demanding enough, and you are a glutton for punishment, then consider the medley which includes all the four strokes, over 200m and 400m.



Indonesian Diver Tri Anggoro Priambodo

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



DIVING

DIVING is not for the faint-hearted. Athletes leap from springboards or platforms elevated to a height of three metres and 10 metres from the pool. During the fall, reaching speeds of 60kph, they do a number of spins, flips and twists before hitting the water and are given a score based on the degree of difficulty and ease displayed by the athletes. China always dazzles in diving. But spare a thought for one athlete, at a past Games who toppled into the pool in the 10m platform in a belly-flop. It might have been vertigo – yes, not for the faint-hearted. All the judges gave him a zero.



Indonesian Water Polo player Yusuf Budiman

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



WATER POLO

WATER POLO is seven-a-side, with six substitutes. One of the cardinal rules is you have to stay afloat. Touch the bottom of the pool and you are cheating. It is also forbidden for players to hold the ball with both hands or to strike it with a fist, except in the case of the goalkeeper. With players swimming up to 1,500m in a match – four quarters of eight minutes each – it is physically draining.

Japanese swimmer Rikako Ikee stole the limelight in the pool when she became the first female athlete in any sport to win six gold medals at a single Asian Games. She was named the Olympic Council of Asia's Most Valuable Player. Japan and China shared the honours in the pool winning 19 golds apiece although the Japanese edged their rivals in the overall tally by 52-50. China also dominated in artistic swimming, winning both golds, and in diving, winning all 10 golds. They won the gold in the women's event in water polo but Kazakhstan took the men's gold.



Indonesian Archer  
Sri Ranti

Photo:  
OCA/INASGOC



ARCHERY

Robin Hood must have been a South Korean for they have dominated the sport. Archery is a sport that depends on calmness and mastery of the bow and arrow. There are two types of bows at the Asian Games – recurve and compound – with archers shooting at a 122cm diameter target from a distance of 70m. Maximum marks is achieved if you hit the bulls-eye – a gold centre-ring – measuring just 12cm.

The Koreans dominated winning four of the eight gold medals, including setting two world records, with Chinese-Taipei finishing next best with two golds. Host nation Indonesia saw their hopes of a first gold medal in the sport blown away in the women’s individual when Diananda Choirunisa lost to China’s Chang Xinyan in the final.



Sri Lankans Sachin  
Dias and Buwaneka  
Goonetilleka in action

Photo:  
Thusith Wijedoru/NOC

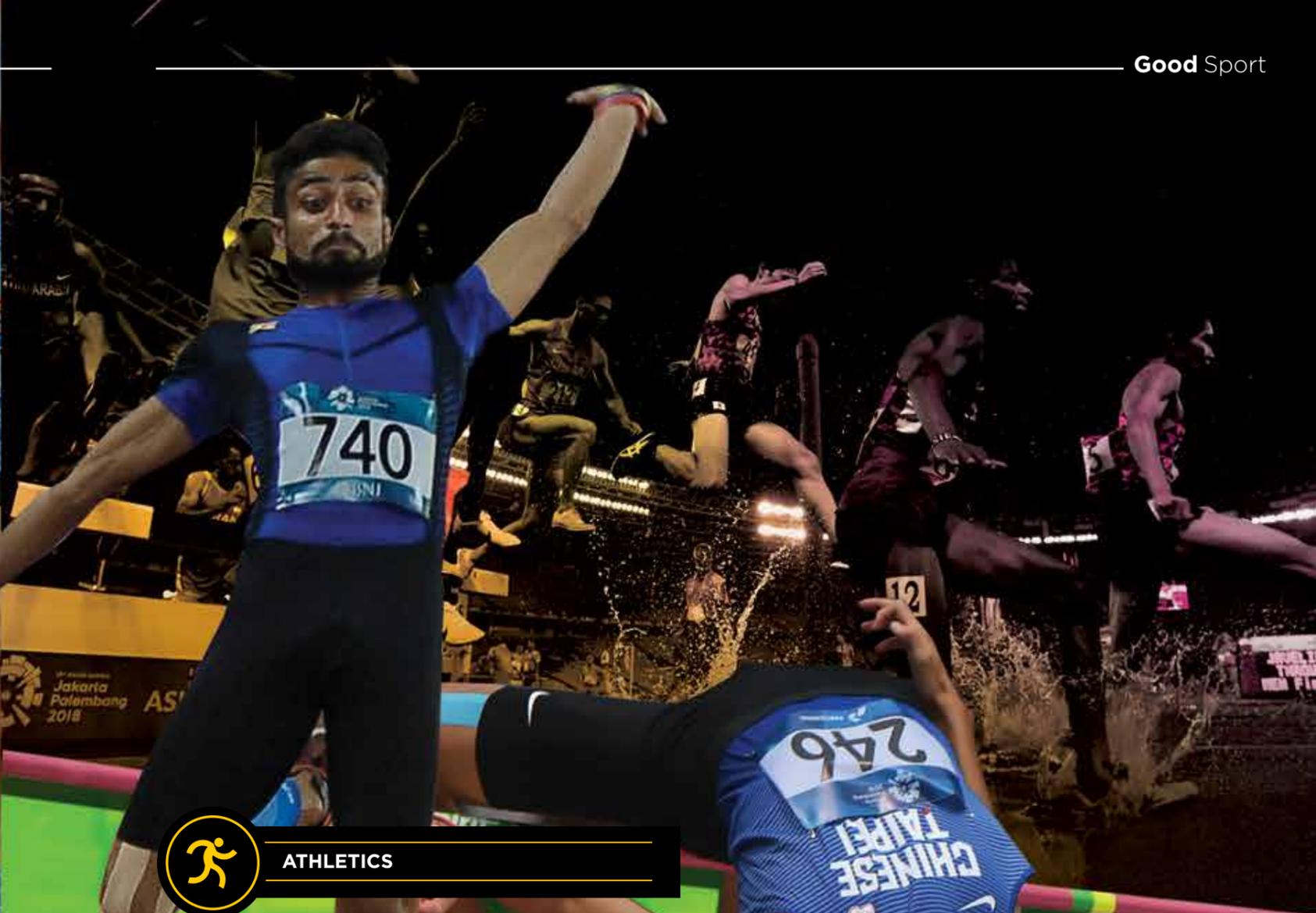


BADMINTON

Imagine a projectile heading your way at 493km/h. This is the record for the fastest smash in badminton which is the world’s fastest racquet sport. Players compete to hit a shuttlecock back and forth over a high net. It became a medal sport at the 1962 Asian Games in Jakarta. The Olympics only took badminton on board 30 years later, at the 1992 Barcelona Games. The magic number of 21 is the victory target in both singles and doubles. Seven gold medals were up for grabs in singles, doubles and team (men and women) as well as mixed doubles. China has been traditional favourites with stiff competition from Indonesia, South Korea and Malaysia.

But China’s stronghold was stormed. They won just three golds – men’s team, women’s doubles and mixed doubles – with Indonesia winning two golds and Chinese-Taipei and Japan one each. Indonesian pin-up Jonatan Christie won the prized men’s singles while world number one Tai Tzu-ying of Chinese-Taipei won the women’s event. Indonesia also won the men’s doubles in an all-Indonesian final proving that home crowd support can lift athletes. Sri Lanka reached a quarterfinal at the Asian Games for the first time with Buwaneka Goonetilleka and Sachin Dias entering the men’s doubles last eight where they lost to China’s Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen.





ATHLETICS

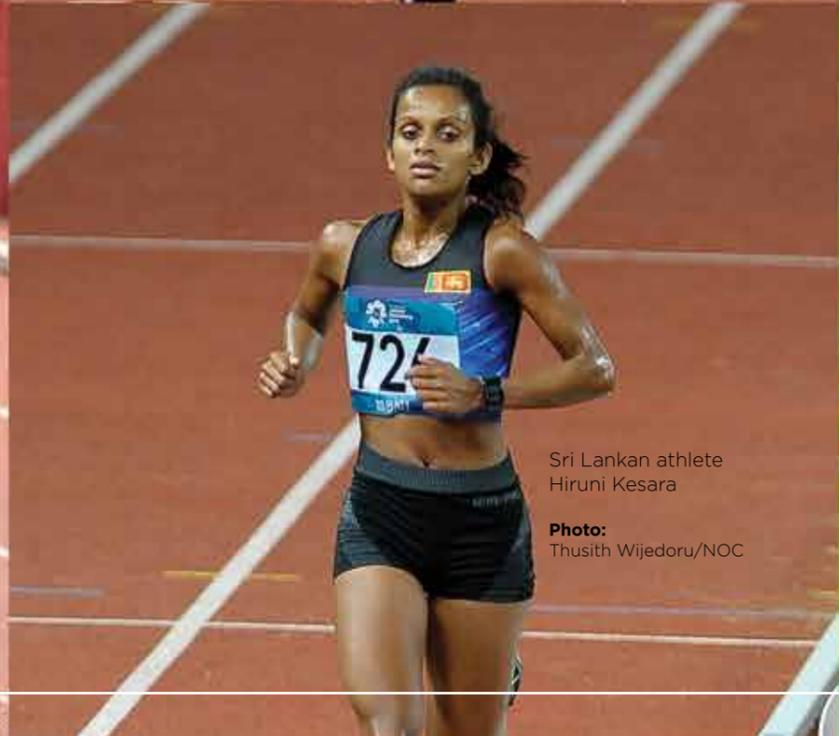
It is the other main attraction at any multi-sports Games, perhaps even more popular than swimming. Athletics is known as the mother of all sports as it involves the basic skills of the human body – run, jump, walk and throw. There are 24 disciplines for men, 23 for women and one mixed (relay) making it crucial for a country bidding to top the medals standings to perform well in track and field. Athletics has always been around since man was bitten by the competitive bug. From the first Olympic Games in 776 BC to the revival of the modern Olympics in 1896, athletics has held centre-stage at all major Games.

Bahrain with their African-born athletes were the surprise package at the Games finishing on level terms with China, both winning 12 gold medals apiece. They also shared the showpiece 100m event – China's Su Bingtian winning the men's race and Edidiong Odiong the women's. India had a strong showing winning seven golds including the men's 800m and 1500m. The closest Sri Lanka came to a medal was finishing 4th in the men's 4x400m relay.



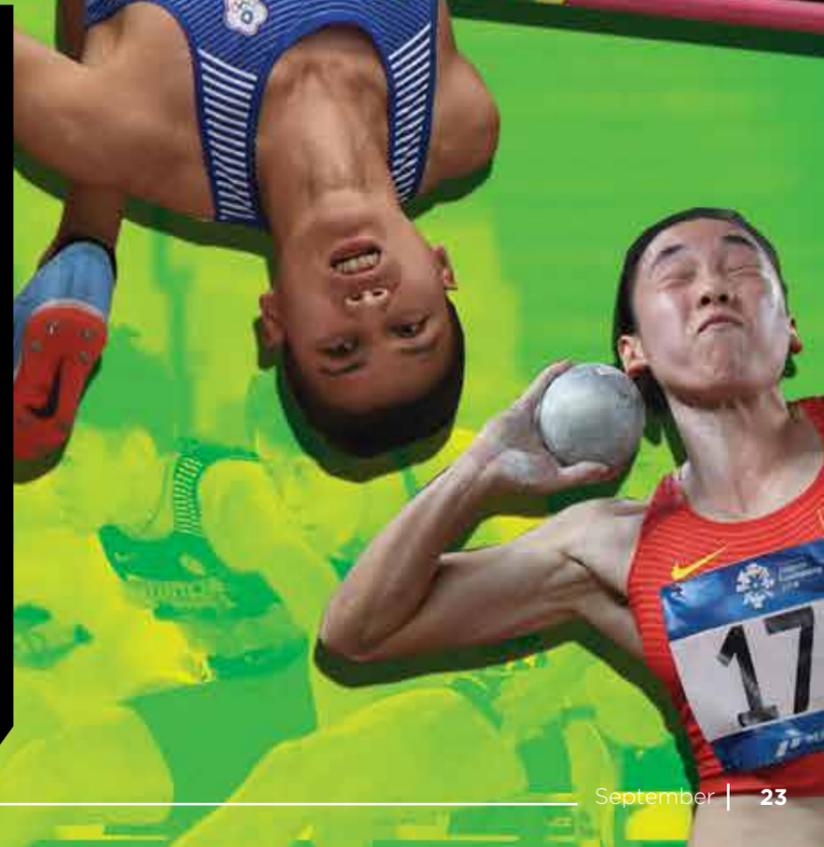
Sri Lankan athlete Kalinga Kumarage

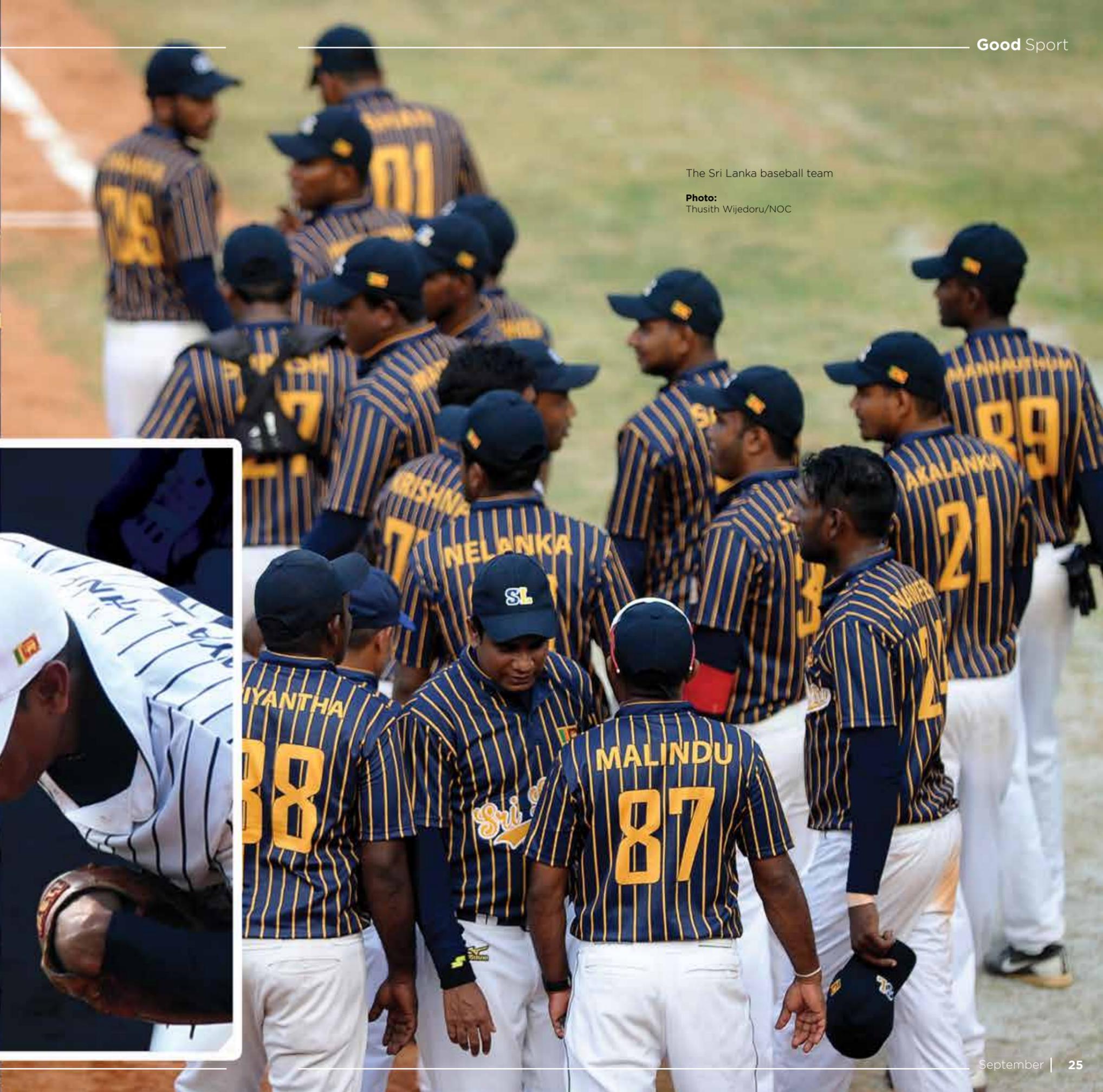
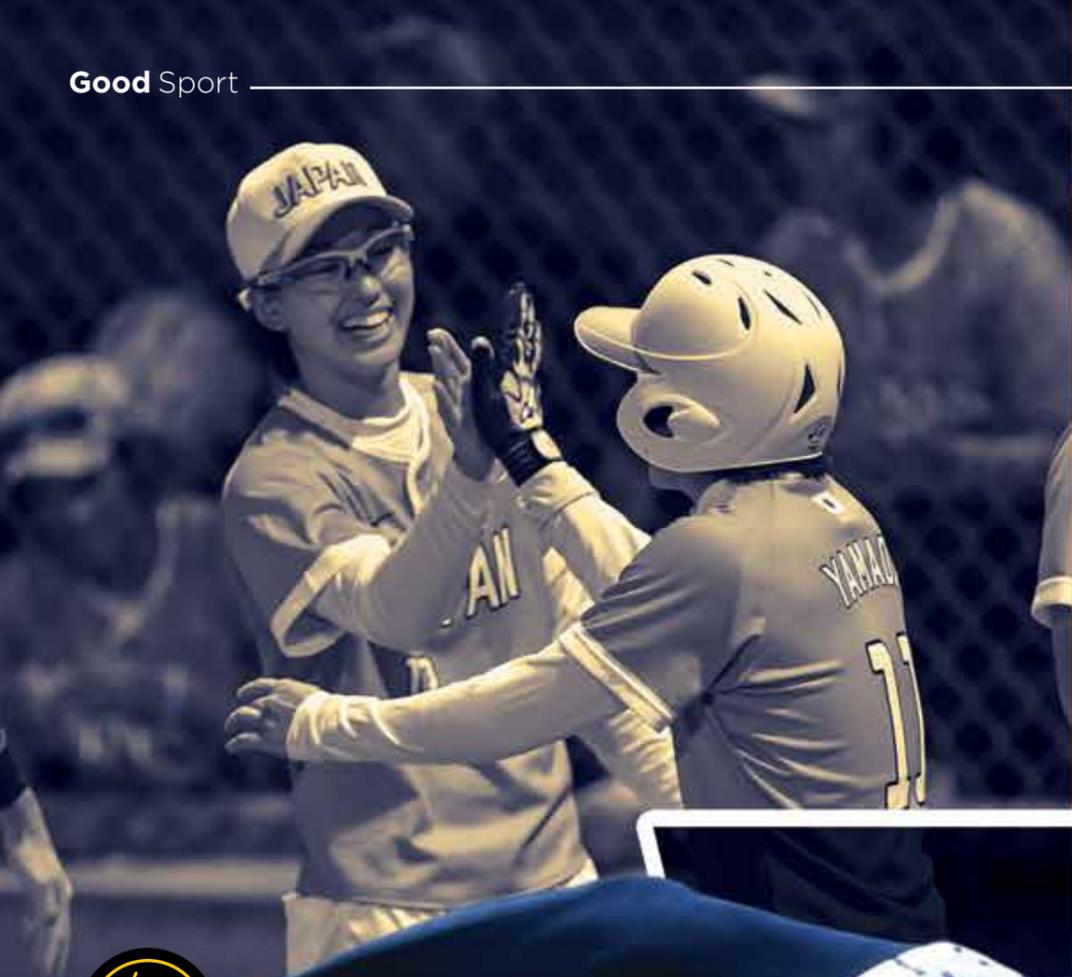
Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



Sri Lankan athlete Hiruni Kesara

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC





The Sri Lanka baseball team

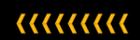
Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



BASEBALL

Baseball and Softball are both played by squads with nine players. At the Asian Games, baseball is for men and softball for women. Softball has been a medal sport since the 1990 Beijing Games while baseball made its debut four years later in Hiroshima. Softball was in the Olympic programme from 1996 to 2008 but was dropped for 2012 and 2016. It will make a comeback, along with baseball, at the 2020 Olympics in Japan. South Korea and Japan are the strongholds of both sports with popularity in Chinese-Taipei also sky-high.

A total of 10 teams including Sri Lanka took part. Sri Lanka had to play in a pre-qualifying round with Thailand and Laos to decide which one would join the other seven in the preliminaries. We beat Laos but lost to Thailand. As expected, the final was between South Korea and Japan, two bastions of baseball in Asia. The Koreans won the gold. In softball, the Japanese women defeated Chinese-Taipei for the gold.



Sri Lankan Baseball Pitcher, Badde Sanjeewa

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

Sri Lankan basketball players Pawan Gamage and Kusal Damsika in action

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



Pawan Gamage making a play

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



## BASKETBALL

Asia's version of the Dream Team came from South Korea at the last Asian Games. They won gold in both the men's and women's competition displacing favourites China. Iran were the runners-up in the men's competition. Basketball is played with five players on each team. With the 2020 Olympics hosting 3-on-3 basketball for the first time, this version of the sport has also been drafted at the Asian Games. Matches will be played in the half court with a 12-second shot clock. A match will last one 10-minute period. The ball will be slightly smaller than that used in the NBA. The first team to reach 21, or whoever is leading at the end of 10 minutes, is the winner.

China reclaimed its top spot at the Asian Games defeating Iran 84-72 in a physical confrontation in the men's gold medal final. Watched by Yao Ming, the Chinese won gold for the first time since the 2010 Games. The Chinese women defeated unified Korea to make it a golden double. China also won both the men's and women's gold in 3-on-3 basketball.





Indonesian bowler Aldila Indrayati

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### BOWLING

A game consists of 10 frames. In each frame, a bowler will have two chances to knock down as many pins as possible. The target is to get a strike – knocking down all 10 pins in one go. If you knock down all 10 pins with your two chances, it is known as a spare. To make the sport more spectator-friendly, for the first time a new scoring system was used called ‘current frame scoring’. This maintains the traditional 10-frame format but awards 30 points for a strike, 10 pins for a spare, plus the pin-fall of the first shot in the frame and the actual pin-fall after two shots in an open frame. The maximum score is still 300 based on the player getting 10 consecutive strikes with no bonus pins being awarded in the 10th frame. Tenpin bowling first made its debut at the 1978 Asian Games in Bangkok and is usually competed in six categories: single, doubles, trios, team 5, all events and masters – for both men and women. But this time the Asian Games will only feature trios, masters and six-person team.

South Korea, Malaysia and Japan won two golds apiece down the alleys. A total of 18 nations participated.



### BRIDGE

Bridge is a card game played by four players (partners sit opposite each other) and made its Asian Games debut. A session of bridge consists of several deals (also called hands or boards). A hand is dealt (13 cards to each player), the bidding (or auction) proceeds to a conclusion and then the hand is played. The aim is to achieve the highest score with given cards. The cards of each suit are ranked from ace (highest) to two (the lowest). The score is affected by two principal factors: the number of trick bids in the auction, and the number of tricks taken during play. In contract, one partnership will say they will take at least a certain number of tricks, with a given suit as trumps, or without trumps.

China are card sharps. They won three of the six golds on offer with Chinese-Taipei, India and Singapore grabbing a gold each. Indonesia’s richest man, clove cigarette tycoon Bambang Hartono, 78, also showed off he has a sharp mind winning a bronze medal in the super mixed competition.



Photo: OCA/INASGOC

Sri Lanka's Hansika Kasturiarachchi in red takes on Kazakhstan's Saniya Sultankyzy

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



Sri Lankan boxer Anusha Kodittuwakku

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



**BOXING**

The ancient Greeks were boxing at the Olympics way back in 688BC. Today the world is still slugging it out. Modern boxing was introduced to the Olympics in 1904 in St. Louis. It made its Asian Games debut in 1954, in Manila. A total of 10 gold medals is up for grabs – seven classes for men, ranging from 48kg (light flyweight) to +91kg (super heavyweight) and three categories for women – 51kg (flyweight), 60kg (lightweight) and 75kg (medium). A fight lasts three rounds of three minutes each.

Uzbekistan ruled the ring winning five golds. China won two with India, Mongolia and South Korea winning one each. Sri Lanka who did well at the Commonwealth Games found the competition a notch higher although Anusha Kodittuwakku fought well in the flyweight category before going down in a 4-1 points defeat to Japan's Madoka Wada. Only the referee from Iran judged she had won the bout.



Korean Bike Race Athlete Soonwoo Kwon rides in the Final Run of the Men's Elite Cross Country event

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



CYCLING

There are four different categories - BMX, Mountain bike, Road and Track. Road cycling is the traditional event which has been in the Olympics since the modern Games began in 1896 – two circuits around the marathon route, measuring 87 kilometres in total. These days the average distance is around 250 kilometres. A total of 20 gold medals will be available in the sport, 10 of them inside the velodrome in track cycling. China dominated cycling at the last Asian Games in Incheon winning five golds.

China and South Korea shared 12 gold medals, each winning six, with Hong Kong and Japan grabbing three apiece, and Indonesia and Kazakhstan winning two each.



Chinese Bicycle Racing Athlete Yuxian Pu celebrates while riding at the Women's Individual Road event

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

Indonesian rider Toni Syarifudin and Chinese rider Yue Sun

Photo: OCA/INASGOC





Alexander Kulikov of Kazakhstan in the slalom event

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



## CANOEING

The quickest way to tell the difference between canoeing and kayaking is that the latter uses a double-bladed paddle while in canoeing it is single-bladed. There are two categories, sprint and slalom. Canoe slalom involves competitors complete timed runs down a white-water course with up to 25 gates some negotiated upstream and others downstream. Canoe sprint consists of direct races across flat-water. There are 13 men's sprints and four for women. In slalom it is three categories for men and two for women. Then there is dragon boating competition too from distances between 200 metres to 1000 metres.

China won 12 of the 21 golds available. But all eyes were on unified Korea who won its first gold at the Asian Games in the 200m event in dragon boat racing.

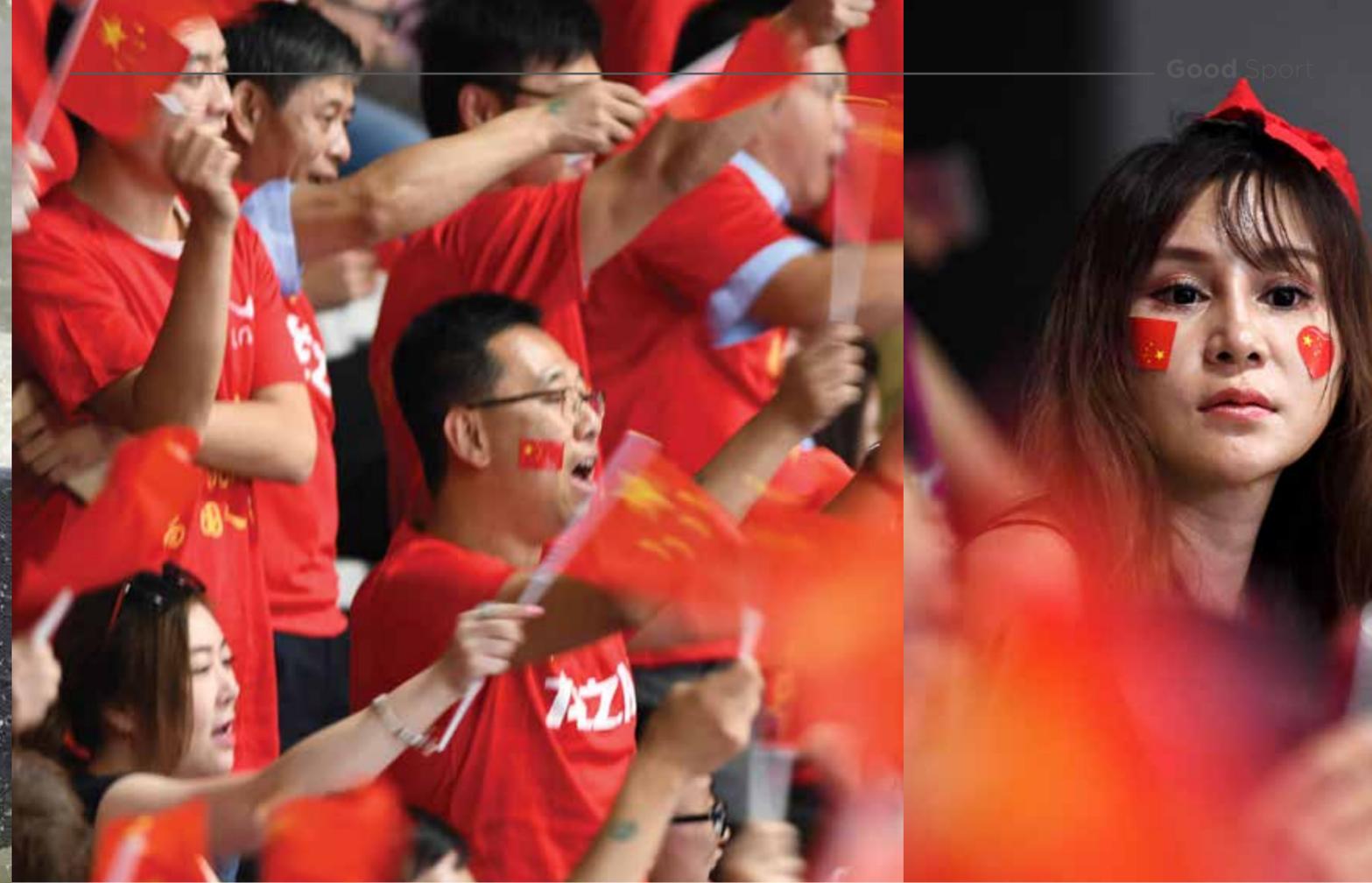


Photo: OCA/INASGOC

# The Great Haul of China

## More work to be done in track and field, and pool

By A Special Correspondent

**F**irst the Asian Games, now the Summer Olympics. For China, their sporting ambitions are as big and bold as their proud nation but their long march to the top has hit a brick wall and will stay that way until they solve their two big problem sports.

Topping the medals table at the Asian Games is no longer a challenge for China. They've conquered that, finishing first overall at the last 10 editions of the region's biggest and diverse multi-sports event, including this year's just-concluded staging in Indonesia.

But the Olympics remains a different story. China have topped the medals'

table just once, when they hosted the Games in Beijing in 2008 but have gone backwards since, finishing second at London in 2012 then third at Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

Their chief rivals, of course, are the United States, which have topped the medals table at every Olympics since 1996, expect Beijing.

For a country with the athletes, finances and desire to be No. 1, China are heading in the wrong direction and things aren't likely to change when the circus rolls into Tokyo in 2020 unless they can start performing better in athletics and swimming. Although China have won gold

medals in 20 different Olympic sports, the bulk of their medals come from six sports they excel in: diving, weightlifting, gymnastics, table tennis, shooting and badminton.

But none of those sports are decisive in deciding the overall medals table. Athletics and swimming are the key sports because they will offer a whopping total of 85 gold medals in Tokyo and China needs to lift its game.

At the last Olympics in Rio, China won just three gold medals in the two big sports while the US won 29 to finish with 46 golds overall to China's 26.



Chinese swimmer Sun Yang bites his gold medal

Photo OCA/INASGOC

It was a similar story at London in 2012. The Americans won 25 medals in swimming and athletics to China's six. On the overall table, the US won 46 to China's 38.

Overall, China was the strongest country in the two big sports at the Asian Games but there was little to suggest that will transfer to a big medal haul at the Olympics.

China won 19 gold medals in swimming at Jakarta, tied with Japan on top of the standings, though both nations adopted different strategies so comparisons are difficult to make.

As hosts of the Pan Pacific swimming championships, held in Tokyo a week before the Asian Games, Japan's best swimmers entered both events, which offered advantages and disadvantages because when they arrived in Indonesia they were race-ready but also prone to fatigue.

China's top swimmers skipped the Pan Pacs to be fresher for the Asian Games but took on heavier than usual programs which saw them win a lot of medals but without setting any great times.

Sun Yang, China's multi Olympic and world champion, won the 200 metres, 400m, 800m and 1,500m freestyle titles as well picking up silver medals in two relays. He remains the benchmark for middle and long distance swimming but will be 28 by the time of the next Olympics.

"It's very difficult to spread across the whole lot but he did that and it's never really been done before," Sun's assistant coach Denis Cotterell said.

"This wasn't about times, it was about see where he's at and the fact he swam all those races and set the fastest time in the world this year for the 400m is pretty good but he knows he has a lot more work to do."

Xu Jiayu, the world champion in 100m backstroke, won gold medals in each of the five events he contested. He won a silver in Rio and will be 24 in Tokyo.

The best Chinese teenager to emerge from the Asian Games was freestyler Wang Jianjiahe. The 16-year-old won the women's 400, 800m and 1,500m

Chinese runner Wang Chunyu celebrates her victory

Photo OCA/INASGOC



titles, as well as a fourth gold in relay, but faces the prospect of having to beat American swimming superstar Katie Ledecky for Olympic gold.

Cotterell, who mainly works just on a part-time basis with Sun, said China still had a long way to go to catch up with the US but he expected the swim team would be stronger by the time the next Olympics roll around.

"I'm not privy to everything that's going on but they definitely need more great juniors coming through, they're relying on proven performers at the moment," he said.

"But countries do fluctuate, America's the only one that seems to sustain the highest level every year-in, year-out, and it's still two years away so a lot can happen in that time but you'd want to see some coming through in the next year."

China finished tied with Bahrain at the top of the medals table in athletics with 12 golds each but on current world rankings, none would have won Olympic gold, although there were some encouraging signs.

Although the Asian Games were held at sea level in high humidity, there were some eye-catching performances but they're still a long way behind the US.



Su Bingtian broke the Asian record in the men's 100m when he took gold in 9.91 seconds, equal fourth fastest in the world in 2018, though he is already 29 and there is little depth in Chinese sprinting.

Long jumper Wang Jianan is highly promising. A former world junior champion, the 22-year-old won the gold with a leap of 8.47m, the third best in the world for 2018.

"You could argue Japan and China are two of the most improved athletics nations over the last six or seven years," the IAAF president Sebastian Coe said when visiting the Asian Games.

"For me it's very clear. They're making very good progress. If we'd been sitting here a decade ago, talking about potential here for a China athlete to run 9.9, you'd have probably taken quite long odds on that."

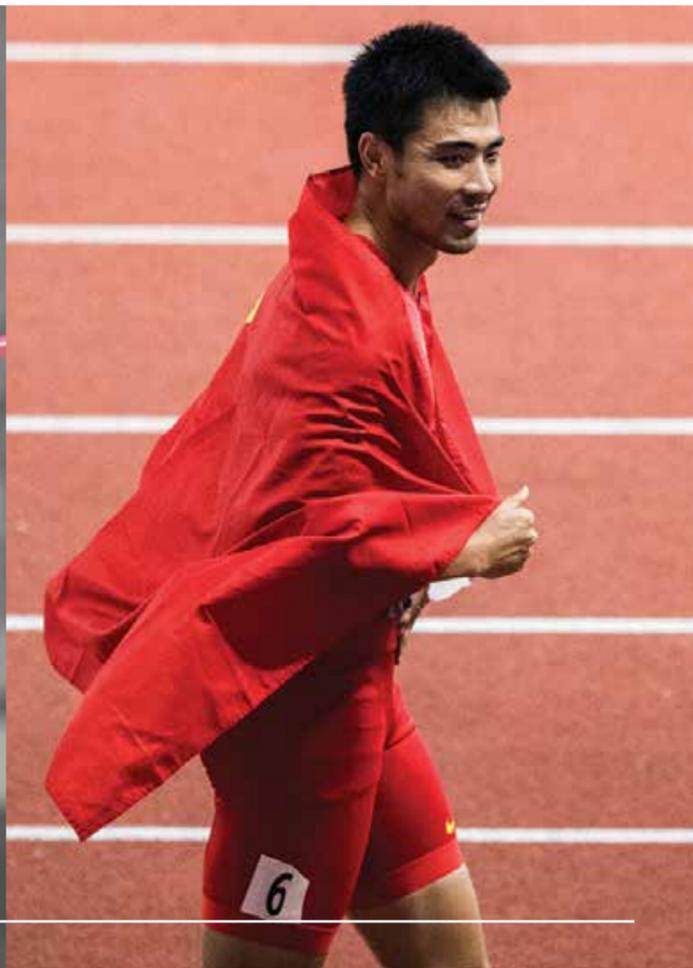
Coe thinks the keys to China's progress in athletics will be patience and better training, which he says they are now doing.

"If you have talented athletes but you don't have the coaching, you need to either do something about bringing the coaches to the athletes, or you have to send the athletes out on outreach programs too where the coaches are.

"If you look at the Chinese federation, they've been quite global. They've recognized there are gaps in their own coaching structures and said hey, let's bring that talent to the table and that's been helpful."

Chinese athlete Ling Li breaks the Asian Games pole vault record to win the gold medal

Photo OCA/INASGOC



Chinese runner Xie Wenjun celebrates his victory in the final of the 110-meters men's hurdles

Photo OCA/INASGOC



# READY STEADY GO.

Only the Olympics is bigger. The Asian Games is the world's second-biggest multi-sports event bringing together more than 11,000 athletes in 40 sports from 45 countries.

It is a far cry from the first Asian Games held in 1951 in New Delhi which only had 491 athletes from 11 countries, including Sri Lanka, and participating in six sports: athletics, aquatics, basketball, cycling, football and weightlifting. At these 18th edition of the Games, hosts Indonesia itself will field 951 athletes, nearly double the size of all who took part in the inaugural Games. Other big contingents come from China (879), Thailand (816), South Korea (807), Japan (784) and India (690). Sri Lanka will be represented by 177 athletes in 27 sports.

Hanoi, Vietnam was originally selected to be the host but pulled out in April, 2014 citing they were not ready due to an economic recession. In July, 2014, the Olympic Council of Asia announced that Jakarta would be the new hosts with Palembang being the supporting hosts. This is the second time that Indonesia will host the Asian Games, previously having staged it in 1962 Jakarta.

These Games lasted 16 days. Our diary will take you on a journey encapsulating all that took place in the sporting arena as well as life outside it. Enjoy.



## 18 August HEROES OF ASIA

"Joko, Joko, Joko" they shouted. These chants were mingled with lusty cries of "Indonesia, Indonesia, Indonesia". The 40,000-strong crowd at the opening ceremony of the 18th Asian Games shouted themselves hoarse. On this evidence, it seems that Indonesian President Joko Widodo is a shoo-in for another term at next year's general elections. He certainly seems to be popular and he did get into the spirit of things. It begins with a televised skit which shows Joko emerging from his Presidential palace and leaving for the opening ceremony in a motorcade. But despite police outriders, the notorious Jakarta traffic halts the parade. Unruffled Joko emerges from his car, gets on to a police bike, borrows a helmet and then whizzes through the traffic to enter the stadium – or is that his stunt double? When he emerges from the lift and walks into the President's box at the stadium the crowd which had been watching it all on the giant screen scream in delight. It is almost like the London 2012 Opening Ceremony where the Queen played a starring role appearing in a pre-recorded footage alongside James Bond / Daniel Craig. Modern technology can make the illusion real and when a smiling Joko walks into the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium – built in 1962 by his predecessor Soekarno when Indonesia first hosted these Games – the crowd goes mad. They continue to cheer Joko when they see him on the giant screen moving to the music of Indonesian songbird Via Vallen who is singing the catchy Games anthem on a giant stage weighing 600 tons. The 11,000 athletes at these Games might be the "true heroes of Asia" as described by Erick Thohir, president of the Indonesia Asian Games Organising Committee, in his opening address but as far as the public matters, there is only one hero of the hour – Joko.

Sri Lanka too has its own heroes – the Education Ministry. Yes, this government department needs to be lauded for taking an out-of-the-box approach to the problem posed by schoolboy Akalanka Peiris. A national record-holder in the pool, Peterite Akalanka was in a deep quandary with his A-Levels clashing with his dreams of taking part at the Asian Games. His parents approached the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka which asked the Education Ministry's Director General Col. Manjula Kariyawasam if special permission could be granted for Akalanka to sit his exams in Jakarta. The answer was yes, as long as he was supervised and sat the exams at the same time as schoolchildren in Sri Lanka. The NOC paid for the flights of two officials from the Education Ministry who acted as invigilators. The first of three A-Level papers, was on the opening day of the Asian Games. Akalanka was able to eat the cake and have it to. Thanks to the positive thinking of government officials.



The Gelora Bung Karno main stadium on opening night

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



China's Sun Peiyuan on his way to winning the first gold medal in Wushu

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

**19 August**  
**SHEIKH, ROCK AND ROLL**

The Grand Ballroom at the Hotel Mulia Senayan is packed to the rafters. Delegates from all 45 Asian National Olympic Committees are present for the 37th Olympic Council of Asia General Assembly. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, the president is holding fort. He is pleased as punch. Naturally, for the Asian movement is in a healthy state. Just look at what is coming up: Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province in East China, will host the next edition of these Asian Games, in 2022. Four years down the line, Aichi-Nagoya in Japan will host the 2026 Asian Games. No wonder the Sheikh is smiling. The second-biggest sporting event in the world is in safe hands with China, and then Japan in charge. He knows both countries will do a good job. "We are in a good position with our sports calendar. Everything is stable," says Sheikh Fahad. He is also pleased with the organisers of these Games, paying them a rich tribute for taking on board hosting the 18th edition at short notice. It was only, in 2014 that Indonesia agreed to step in and host the Games after original hosts Hanoi, Vietnam pulled out. The coffers of the Vietnamese government were empty and they felt holding the Games would not significantly increase tourism for the country – one of the main reasons why they had bid for it in the first place. Things looked bleak for the OCA until Indonesia stepped in and saved the day. And they have done a wonderful job in getting

the Games on the road as Sheikh Fahad acknowledged at the General Assembly at the outset. For Indonesia these Games are the perfect time to address rebranding the country's image as a sporting nation. It is hoped that 2018 will inspire a whole new generation of athletes in Indonesia. With sporting and economic powers China and Japan hosting the next two Asian Games, the Sheikh can sleep easy. Asia is truly the centre of the sporting universe over the next few years. Next year the Rugby World Cup will come to Asia for the first time when Japan hosts the popular tournament. Then in 2020 Tokyo will host the Olympics. In 2022, Qatar will host the soccer World Cup. Yes, Asia rocks.

Also rocking and rolling was China's Sun Peiyuan, winner of the first gold medal at the 18th Asian Games. The 29-year-old clinched the men's changquan gold in wushu with 9.75 points after impressing judges with his acrobatic moves at the Jakarta International Expo. Wushu, an ancient Chinese martial art, has been dominated by China who have won 12 of 15 world titles. Four years ago, at the Incheon Asian Games, China won 10 gold medals in wushu. They know their moves. Defia Rosmaniar won Indonesia its first gold medal of the Games, edging out Iran's Marjan Salahshouri in taekwondo. Everyone was happy to see the hosts win.



Defia Rosmaniar won host nation Indonesia its first gold medal in Taekwondo

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Sri Lanka flagbearer at the Opening Ceremony Dinusha Gomas is left crestfallen

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



### 20 August THE HUNGER GAMES

It is lunch time at the Athletes' Village in Kemayoran, Central Jakarta. The cavernous dining hall is starting to get full as athletes from all 45 countries trickle in. You can almost hear their tummies rumbling. Executive chef Dewa Putu Rai and his 180-strong team of cooks have been busy for hours, preparing to feed the hungry athletes. For today's wide-ranging lunch buffet, they needed 500 kilos of beef, 200 kilos of fish, 350 kilos of chicken and 500 kilos of rice. Then there are cauldrons of soup, plates of pasta, a mountain of salad. Fruit, everything from bananas, apples, pears and mangosteens weigh in 1,500 kilos. By the time the Games is over, the kitchen at the Athletes' Village will have cooked more than 400,000 meals. It might sound a lot but then again there are 14,000 athletes and officials housed here. If you take in the 3,000 athletes and officials at Palembang, then nearly half-a-million meals will have been eaten. These are the hunger games. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah is making his customary visit to the Athletes' Village. He is greeted like a pop star. Everyone wants to take a selfie with him. The Middle Eastern nations want more. They kiss the Kuwaiti, President of the Olympic Council of Asia, three times on his cheek. And he is very obliging greeting them all in the same way. The Iranian women's kabaddi team gather around him for a group shot.

Sheikh Ahmad has himself eaten at the village. The most favourite food station is the carvery while kimchi is also popular. Everything from Indian curries to Indonesian rendang is on the menu. The Sheikh, however, just goes for a small slice of pizza, smoked beef with tomato sauce. He doesn't need to carbo-load like the athletes. But in a show of solidarity he sits with the athletes and eats the food they eat. Yes, the Asian Games certainly marches on its stomach. It needs copious amounts of water too – three million bottles from a sponsor, half of it given to the Athletes' Village. The athletes need to be well fed for they are all hungry for success.

Sadly, that is not the case for Sri Lankan weightlifter Dinusha Hansani Gomas. The proud flagbearer at the opening ceremony had the dreaded DNF (did not finish) against her name at the end of the women's 48kg event. A winner of a bronze medal at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games earlier this year, Gomas was expected to acquit herself creditably. But she couldn't lift herself up. North Korea's Ri Song-gum won the gold with a combined lift of 199kg. Way above the 155kg that Gomas lifted on her way to winning the bronze at the Commonwealth Games. The top 10 women in this competition all lifted more than 155kg. Standards in Asia are high.





**21 August**  
**HAVE COACH, WILL TRAVEL**

Outspoken former Australia cricket captain Ian Chappell had the best take on coaches. He once famously said: "An international coach is something the Australian team travels in". That is the extreme end of the spectrum. Chappell hated someone telling him what to do. He always felt the best person to bring out the best in a team sport was the captain. This thought flitted through my mind while watching Iranian Saeid Rajabi take on Uzbekistan's Dmitry Shokin in the gold medal bout in the men's +80kg category in taekwondo. Unlike cricket, this is an individual sport. There is no one to fall back on when the going gets tough and that was certainly the case as Rajabi trailed Shokin by one point with the clock ticking down. The 22-year-old from Miyane in Azerbaijan Province stayed cool and won the bout with a spectacular body kick which earned him two points. He won 3-2. It was the first time Iran had won a heavyweight gold medal in taekwondo at the Asian Games. Standing on the sidelines were two men. One an ascetic south Korean with a long white beard and in a flowing robe – think Karate Kid's coach and you get the picture – while the other was a slightly balding Iranian. The latter was Rajabi's coach and the one in the robe was his coach when he used to be an athlete. The mentor and the student were both calm – unlike the two coaches we have pictured – and that calmness seems to have been instilled in Rajabi. The Korean was taekwondo grandmaster Kang Shin-chul, the man who brought the ancient Korean martial art of taekwondo to Iran. Fittingly he is known as the "father of Iran taekwondo". His pupil was Askari Fariborz, himself a gold medalist in taekwondo at the Asian Games – 1994 in Hiroshima – although in a lower weight category. We bring this case up to show that while Chappell might have his reasons, it is perhaps best to get expert help even from outside your country. Looking around the countries taking part at these Asian Games, and you find so many countries have employed foreign coaches. Talent is one thing but without the expert technical help, even the top athlete is going to struggle. Take our neighbours India for instance, they have around 30 foreign coaches and experts accompanying the large squad as compared to 50 or so Indian coaches. The Indian athletics team has six foreign coaches, shooting four, badminton three, boxing two and hockey both men and women will have six foreign experts helping them. India has realised that to be able to match Asia's best they have to employ the technical knowhow lacking at home. China and Japan have been doing it for a long time. As do other countries with deep pockets and big aspirations like Singapore and Hong Kong. It is time Sri Lanka also went down this road. Investing in foreign coaching will always help. Rugby sevens has benefited from this. More sports should follow this path. It will need money but that is an investment which is worthwhile.



Chinese men's basketball coach Li Nan unhappy as he urges his team on against the Philippines. China won, just, 82-80

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC



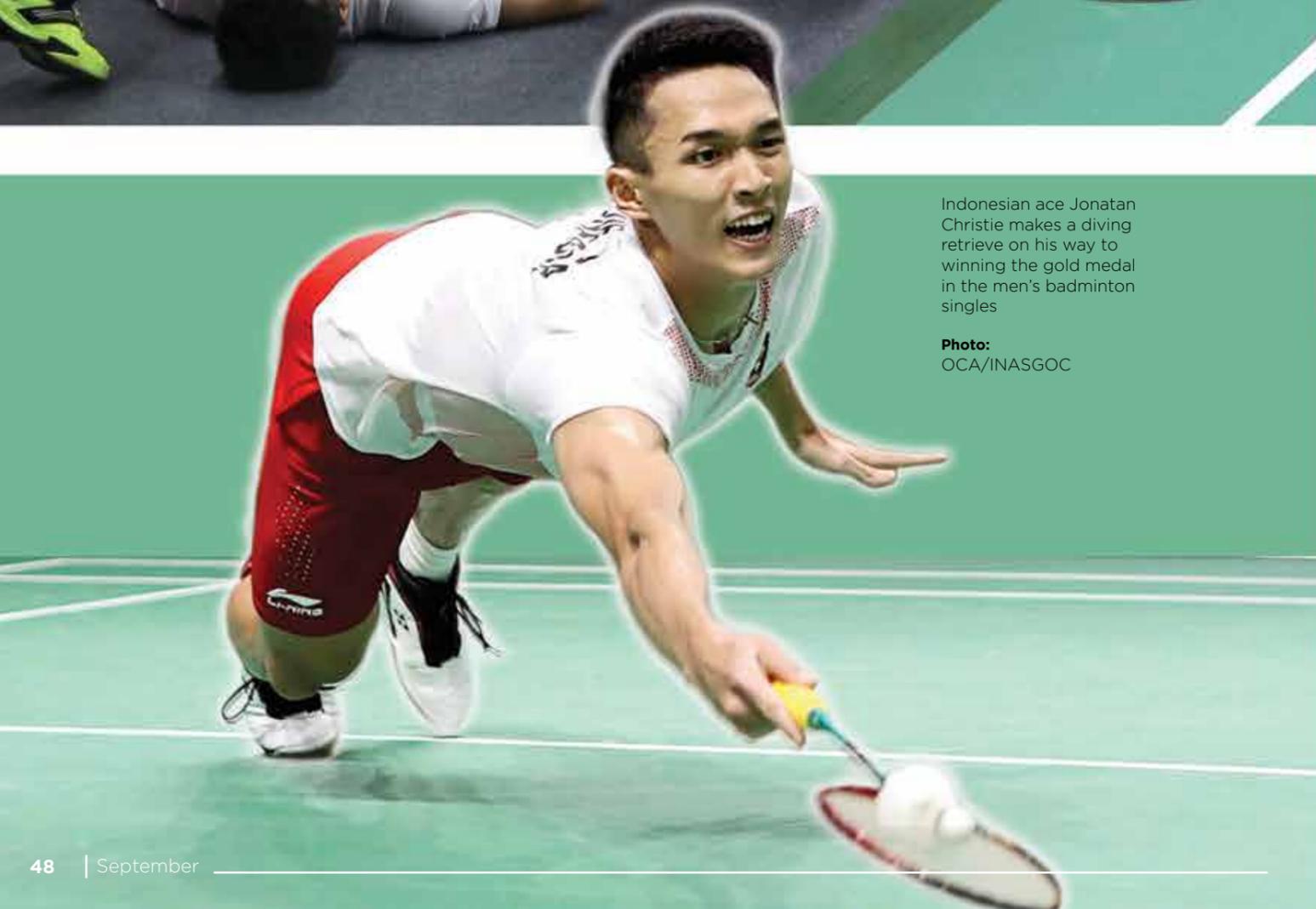
Kyrgyzstan's wrestling coach wants more

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC



China's Shi Yuqi consoles his Indonesian opponent Anthony Ginting who suffered cramps in the third and deciding set in the men's team badminton event. China won.

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Indonesian ace Jonatan Christie makes a diving retrieve on his way to winning the gold medal in the men's badminton singles

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



**22 August  
TOGETHER IN HARMONY**

It's an amazing sight - more than 200,000 people inside the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, the largest in Southeast Asia. It is Eid Ul Adha, the festival of Sacrifice marking the end of the Hajj pilgrimage. Muslims all over Indonesia are celebrating. So are all the Muslim athletes at the Asian Games. Hundreds of them line up inside the Athletes' Village for the early morning prayers. We are with a few officials from the Olympic Council of Asia who have been taken through the VIP section right up to the front row at this grand mosque in downtown Jakarta. Four floors of worshippers look down on us. It is an amazing sight. President Joko Widodo is elsewhere, at an outdoor prayer congregation. He says afterwards that he will be going to watch the badminton at the Games later in the day. Indonesia are in the men's team final against China. As we are being driven for Eid prayers, what catches my eye is that right next to the Istiqlal Mosque in Merdeka Square is the lovely Jakarta cathedral. Side by side, virtually, this is a true sign of harmony. Indonesia might be the country with the largest Muslim population but constitutionally it is a secular state which guarantees freedom of religion. Hinduism and Buddhism have long roots in the country. The world's largest Buddhist mon-

ument is Borobudur, a 9th Century Mahayana temple. Hindu-Javanese civilization was at its peak in the 14th Century. Hinduism is practiced by most people in Bali. The Portuguese introduced Catholicism and the Dutch brought Protestantism. Sounds so similar to Ceylon. Despite 209 million of its 260 million population being Muslims, all communities in Indonesia live harmoniously. A smile is never far away from the faces of Indonesians. But later in the night, the smiles are stretched. China are beating them in badminton. If there is any medal the Indonesians would love to win, then it must certainly be the team events in badminton. Unfortunately, that won't be the case. Even the presence of Joko in the stands is not enough to lift the men's team who fall to a 3-1 defeat. The president is looking relaxed - it's a holiday after all - with his shirt untucked and sleeves three-quarter folded. He joins the raucous crowd at the Istora Stadium as they do the Mexican Wave. He pumps his fists in the air when Indonesia win a point. But all to no avail. The Chinese are just TOO good as they storm to gold medal victory. A pity. It would have been a nice way for Indonesia to celebrate Eid Ul Adha with a gold medal win in their favourite sport. But China gatecrashed the party.



**23 August  
TROUBLE BREWING OVER COFFEE**

Woke up this morning to find an alarming message from the Australian government in my inbox. It reads: Indonesia – Australian government issues alert over possible terror attacks nationwide. Troubling. The normally delectable dumplings at the breakfast buffet taste like sawdust thanks to the warning that militant groups may be planning attacks in Jakarta, Bali and Surabaya targeting government buildings, diplomatic infrastructure and other locations frequented by foreign nationals. There are more than 17,000 foreign athletes and officials from 44 countries at these Games. Terrorists thrive on publicity, that is the only game for them. What better way to gain the attention of the world than to attack a major sporting event. It has happened in the past, remember the 1972 Munich Olympics where 11 Israeli athletes were taken hostage and killed by the Palestinian Black September terrorist group.

Of course, one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. We don't want to go down that road, for that is a debate no one will win. What matters is that people use extreme force to get their message across and that is monstrous whatever the cause. Since Munich, Games organisers have been forced to spend millions of dollars on providing security. It is the same here too. Indonesia has had issues with separatism as well as having to deal with violent Islamist groups. Bali has twice succumbed to these acts of madness – in 2002 an attack killed 202 people in the tourist district of Kuta. In 2005 a series of car bombs and attacks killed 23 people. The Indonesian government is not taking any chances. At these Asian Games, some 50,000 troops and police have been deployed in Jakarta and Palembang. Another 10,000 police officers are on standby in Jakarta – you can't miss them for they are everywhere

- while hundreds of CCTV cameras have been installed around the sporting venues and the Athletes' Villages. National Police spokesman Yusri Yunus was quoted in the newspapers as saying: "We are ready to safeguard the Asian Games". I pray he is right. Indonesia suffered its most deadly terror attack since the 2005 Bali bombings in May when suicide bombers from an extremist group killed 14 people in the nation's second-biggest city Surabaya. Just weeks before the Games began, the Jakarta Post, an English daily, reported that 221 alleged terrorists were nabbed and another 21 shot dead. It quoted National Police chief General Tito Karnavian as saying: "No need to be too scared". Then is it okay to be a little scared? We can only hope the Australian government's warning is way off second base. The omelette doesn't taste as good as it usually is this morning and the coffee is bitter. I have lost my appetite.





Matthew Abeyesinghe of Sri Lanka in the final of the men's 100m freestyle. He finished sixth in 49.28 seconds.

**Photo:** Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



DAY 7



Matthew Abeyesinghe looks at the TV screen after the men's 100m freestyle while Sachin Dias makes a smash in the men's badminton singles

**Photos:** Thusith Wijedoru/NOC

**24 August  
TIME AFTER TIME**

They spend four, sometimes eight years or even more, training and preparing for these Games. And it is over in a flash, a couple of minutes or even seconds like in the 100m dash in athletics. This is the fate of athletes. A thousand hours is spent getting ready for the big day and when it arrives, it flashes by faster than the time it takes you to read this far. And to capture the moment for posterity are the official timekeepers at the Asian Games, Swiss watchmakers Tissot. In partnership with timing systems manufacturers Swiss Timing, they are providing fully electronic services such as scorekeeping, time and distance measurements. All 40 sports will depend in some way on the hands of the clock. To cater for such accuracy Tissot have brought in 350 tons of equipment, 380 timekeepers and 130 kilometres of cabling. The timekeeping team was put in place months before the Games began so that they could test out any kinks in the system and be ready for any malfunctions, if it were to happen. The wide-ranging needs of a multi-sports event presents a huge challenge. For instance, basketball requires scorekeeping and timing systems while track and field events are all about timing end positions. At the athletics, Tissot is providing multiple high-speed cameras that can capture up to ten thousand frames per second to ensure accuracy and precision in events with an extremely close finish, something which would be impossible with the naked eye. Inside the velodrome for cycling, the watch company has embedded tracks with sensors and equipped bicycles with transponders that work in

tandem during a race. In the pool it is not so much the accuracy of the timing system that count, it's the accuracy of the pool length. Concrete expands and contracts, so pools are only accurate within 3 centimetres. All lanes are not equal and this has to be accounted for when setting timing precision. At the 2016 Rio Olympics, there was a three-way tie for the silver medal in the 100m butterfly – Michael Phelps, Chad le Clos and Laszlo Cseh all on 51.14 seconds. So why doesn't FINA, the governing body of swimming, increase its timing precision by adding thousandths of seconds? It is because a thousandth-of-a-second constitutes 2.39 millimetres of travel. Could you time swimmers to a thousandth-of-a-second? Sure, but you couldn't guarantee the winning swimmer didn't have a thousandth-of-a-second shorter course, or 2.39 millimetres, to swim. While timing systems can measure to a thousandth-of-a-second, it is safer to be prudent as you cannot ensure all swimmers swim the same length, even if it a few millimetres.

Last night, Sri Lanka's ace swimmer Matt Abeyesinghe could only manage 49.28 seconds in his pet event, the 100m freestyle. It was well below his personal best of 49.11 at the Commonwealth Games earlier this year. Yet, entering the men's final was an achievement. No other Sri Lankan swimmer has done this at an Asian Games. The day before, the men's 4x100m freestyle relay team was disqualified due to an illegal changeover - Matt's younger brother Kyle diving into the pool before Matt who swam the first leg had touched the pad. It's all about the timing.



## 25 August ON THE BUSES

It is the halfway mark of the Asian Games, Saturday, and the traffic is sparse. Thankfully for the athletics programme which gets underway just after the crack of dawn with the men's marathon. Games organisers have chosen the weekend to stage the showpiece for obvious reasons – Jakarta's infamous traffic. A recent survey showed that the Indonesian capital was ranked as having the 12th worst traffic in the world. I can vouch for that personally. Next time I sit stuck in traffic in Colombo, I will count my blessings. It is estimated that Jakartans spend an average 63 hours sitting in traffic per year. In 2017 that figure was 55 hours. Things are getting rough for the 11 million residents of Jakarta. Just imagine losing more than two days of your life every year to traffic congestion? Thankfully the people of this wonderful city are so easy-going. You hardly hear an irate horn. Everyone is patient. They are right to brand the country as Wonderful Indonesia. And talking of branding, the Indonesian Tourism Ministry have cleverly used 100 buses to carry the message of 'Wonderful Indonesia' as well as the 'Asian Games' during these two weeks. The 100 buses are a tool to promote Indonesia as a travel destination as well as raise the profile of the Asian Games. Seven destinations in Indonesia are being promoted among

them Bali, South Sumatra and Komodo Island. Iconic images of Indonesia adorn these buses: Komodo dragons, the Borobudur temple, the night view of the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle in Jakarta are a few of these stunning backdrops. The 'Asian Games' buses carry images of the sport. Very stunning visually. This campaign has not been limited to Jakarta only. Last year 'Wonderful Indonesia' buses were spotted in world capitals like London, Paris and Moscow. It is working. It is estimated that this year there will be 17 million international visitors to Indonesia. The government wants tourism to generate 8 per cent of GDP by 2019 with tourist numbers to rise to 20 million. Last year GDP growth was 5.1 per cent and the country's GDP crossed the US\$1 trillion mark for the first time. It is truly Wonderful Indonesia. As a brand, it is way ahead of Amazing Thailand and Truly Asia (Malaysia), the other two top destinations in the Southeast Asian region. Sri Lanka must learn a lesson here. Not how to snarl up your traffic, but how to sell our country abroad. Two hours 18 minutes and 22 seconds after he started, Japan's Hiroto Inoue runs into the main stadium with Bahrain's Elhassan Elabbassi at his heels. After 42 kilometres, the marathon is decided in a sprint to the finish. The Japanese wins the gold in a photo-finish. Athletics is up-and-running.





The Chinese winner Su is in red while the silver medalist is on the left and the Japanese bronze winner is on the right

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



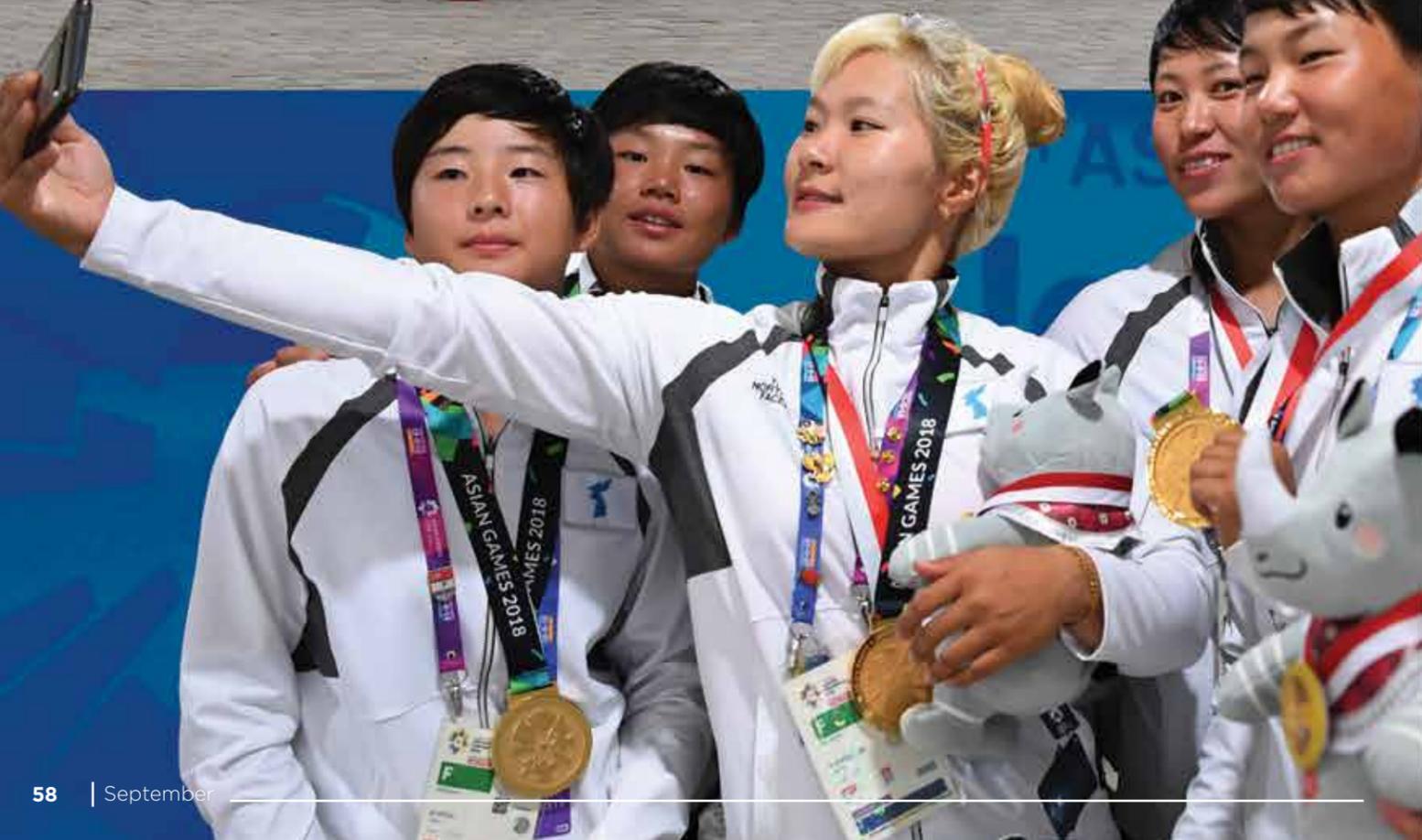
**26 August**  
**MARATHON OR A SPRINT?**

For some life is a marathon. For others it is a sprint. For Dwi Susilarto it is the former, for as Indonesia's largest English language daily, The Jakarta Post, reported today, Dwi has divorced his wife who also sued him for financially neglecting her for nine years. Tough. And the religious court agreed with her, ordering Dwi, a civil servant to pay her alimony of Rupiah 178 million. That sounds a lot, but it is only around US\$12,200. The Indonesian currency leaves the senses numbed for first time visitors. The other day, I was walking around with seven million bucks in my pocket. Wish it was US dollars. Getting back to Dwi, he coughed up and paid Rp155 million of the alimony in coins. He needed two friends to assist him in carrying 14 sacks of coins using a cart into the courtroom. The sacks weighed 890 kilograms. This provoked an argument between the two sides as neither wanted to count the coins. Dwi told the court: "I'm only a low-ranking employee, how could I get Rp 178 million? My friends decided to help me by donating the money,

even though most of them are coins". They must have all broken their piggy banks. Dwi's ex-wife Hermi was upset. She cried: "This is such an embarrassment because he considers me to be a beggar". But she accepted the coins. It proves that life is a struggle, a marathon for many. The word marathon itself has its roots founded in death and drama. The first marathon commemorated the run of the soldier Pheidippides from a battlefield near the coastal town of Marathon to Athens in 490 BC. According to legend Pheidippides ran some 25 miles to bring the news to anxious Athenians that the Persians had been defeated. He delivered the message "Niki" (Victory) and then promptly keeled over and died. Yes, life can be tough. It is day two in athletics, which along with swimming, are the two blue riband sports at any Games. While the men's marathon was decided in a photo-finish, Bahrain's Rose Chelimo makes it a one-horse race in the women's marathon this morning. Chelimo, formerly from Kenya, took the race by the scruff of the neck at the 25-kilometre mark and broke away from the rest of the field. She won easily by a two-minute margin. Later at night, the stadium is hoping for an epic battle between China's Su Bingtian and Bahrain's Tosin Ogunode in the men's 100m sprint. Su prevails in a new Asian Games record time on 9.92 second to be crowned fastest man in Asia. The fastest woman is Nigerian-born Bahraini Edidiong Odiong who wins in 11.30. Life is a breeze for Su and Odiong, unlike for Dwi and Hermi. After years of being married they decided to call it quits. Tough.

The fastest man in Asia, Su Bingtian of China, and the fastest woman, Nigerian-born Edidiong Odiong of Bahrain. Su won the men's 100m in 9.92 secs while Odiong celebrates with a jig after recording 11.30 secs

Photos: OCA/INASGOC



**27 August  
HAND IN HAND**

The Unified Korea women's dragon boat racing team wins a historic gold medal and celebrate. North Korea and South Korea came together in three sports, women's basketball, rowing and dragon boat which is a discipline in canoeing

Photos: OCA/INASGOC

They say sports and politics does not mix. Tell it to the marines. There is always an element, or more, of politics in sports. Usually it is to the detriment of sport but sometimes it can do good as Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi pointed out when she said the Asian Games can promote world peace. "Aside from being a sports competition event in Asia, Indonesia can be congratulated as the Asian Games have also contributed to the strengthening of the bond between South Korea and North Korea," she said. She is right on the money. For the Unified Korea team have been drawing rave reviews ever since they first appeared hand-in-hand in the women's basketball competition. The National Olympic Committee of North Korea and South Korea agreed to field a unified team in three sports at the 18th Asian Games: women's basketball, rowing and dragon boat, which is a discipline of canoeing. And dragon boat won a historic first-ever Asian Games gold medal for Team Unified Korea. It was a victory for unification, proving that North and South can work together to achieve sporting success by setting aside long-held grievances. Taking part under the symbol "COR" and the unification flag of the blue outline of the Koran peninsula on a white background, the joint-team has been popular and welcomed by Indonesian fans. Indonesia

have a long history of promoting peace in the world. It was one of the original members – Sri Lanka too - of the Non-Aligned Movement which was established in 1961. It has struggled to find relevance since the Cold War ended but Indonesia has been committed to the goals of achieving world peace and strengthening partnerships between countries. It was the first gold at a major Games for a Unified Korea team, and came nearly three decades after their last title together, in the women's team event at the 1991 world table tennis championships. The two Koreas also competed together in women's ice hockey at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in February. The reconciliation process was jump-started by sport. At moments like these, results actually don't matter. What is important is that the world watches the process of going forward. Of course, winning a gold will just add momentum to this process. Every event with a unification team brings the two Koreas closer to peace. Sport can be the guinea pig to test how a unification between these two nations will work out. The athletes from both countries in these three sports have been getting on famously. What is taking place at these Asian Games, as far as the two Koreas are concerned, is something more than just sport.

ASIAN GAMES 2018

Jakarta Palembang

Thailand's Somchai Baisamut in a reflective mood in the bridge competition

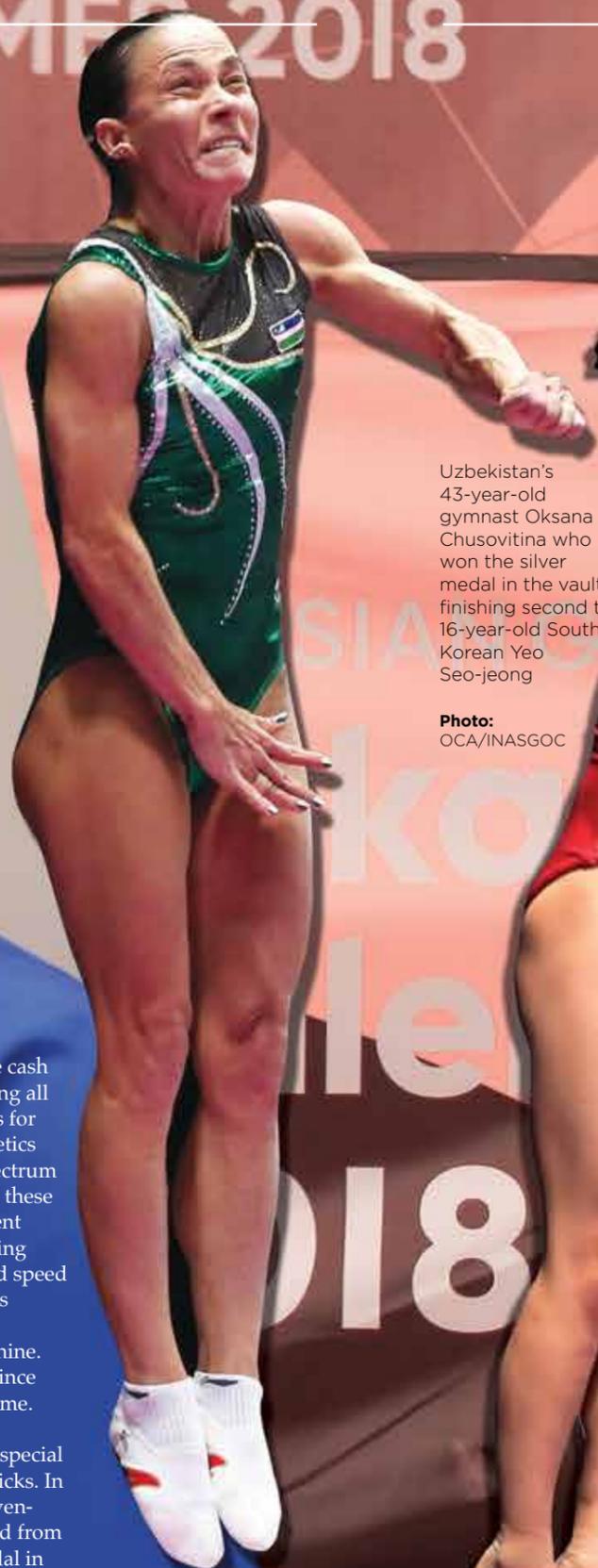
Photo: OCA/INASGOC



28 August  
YOUNG AND OLD

You don't have to be young to take part at these Asian Games, especially if you are a bridge player. Age is just a number as far as people like Filipino Yang Kong-te who at 85 is the oldest competitor in Jakarta. He is in good company. The field includes 82-year-old Ng Lai-chun of Singapore and 81-year-old Lee Hung Fung from Malaysia. They have to thank another participant, 78-year-old Bambang Hartono for being here in Jakarta. Bambang is Indonesia's richest man. The owner of multinational tobacco company Djarum, who makes a popular clove cigarette, tops Forbes' Indonesia rich list with a net worth of US\$11.6 billion. When he speaks, he commands respect. It is reported that it was at his bidding that Games' organisers decided to include bridge as one of the 40 sports at this edition. Bambang is a bridge fan. He began playing the card game at the age of 6 after watching an uncle play. Today, he believes bridge has helped him build a business empire. "I play bridge to keep my memory sharp," he is quoted in the local newspapers. "Bridge is a game of decision-making, just like business. You gather information, analyse it and make a decision." Part of the supermixed team, Bambang is paired with 64-year-old Bert Polli who says: "It is harder to find a bridge partner than it is to find a life partner. In bridge we have to think and feel in common. We're an aggressive pair". Their aggression gave Indonesia a bronze medal behind gold medalists China and Hong Kong who took silver. Bambang missed out on a

payout of US\$105,000 had he won gold – the cash incentive the Indonesian government is giving all its athletes who win gold. Not that it matters for Bambang who described bridge as the "athletics of the mind". At the other end of the age spectrum is skateboarding, another sport appearing at these Games for the first time. More than 60 per cent of the participants are under 20. Not surprising when you need dexterity, agility, balance and speed to perform. In bridge you need these features mentally. Indonesia's Aliqqa Novverry is the youngest athlete at these Games. She is just nine. Her parents had a tough time trying to convince their daughter to stick to a training programme. For Aliqqa skateboarding is just fun, yet she buckled down and underwent a one-month special training in the United States learning new tricks. In gymnastics, there is both young and old. Seven-time Olympian Oksana Chusovitina is 43 and from Uzbekistan. She finished with the silver medal in the vault, one-tenth of a point behind 16-year-old South Korean Yeo Seo-jeong. The Korean was born 10 years after Chusovitina made her Olympic debut for the Soviet Union. Chusovitina is now targeting the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. She will be 45 then. Each to his own. But as far as I'm concerned, where are those cards? It's time to follow Bambang's advice.



Uzbekistan's 43-year-old gymnast Oksana Chusovitina who won the silver medal in the vault finishing second to 16-year-old South Korean Yeo Seo-jeong

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Indonesian nine-year-old skateboarder Aliqqa Novverry

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



**29 August  
FAN CLUB**

The gold medal for fans, if there was one, at these Games would of course be won hands down by Indonesia. The home-crowd has been nothing but brilliant as they have cheered on their stars. And the country's number one fan is of course its president, Joko Widodo. If he was to hold elections next week after the Games ended, he would win hands down. His popularity is at a peak right now. Being an astute politician, Joko has not been shy to play the role of chief cheerleader. He is seen at every event where Indonesia has a good chance of winning a gold medal. And he gets into the spirit of it all pumping his fists when a point is won on the badminton court or giving the thumbs up as Indonesia swept the floor, winning 14 of the 16 gold medals in the traditional Indonesian martial art of Pencak Silat. It was included in the Games on a request made by the hosts. Of course, sometimes things don't go according to the script. The other day Joko turned up at archery expecting Diananda Choirunsia to win the gold medal in the recurve women's individual event. A Chinese athlete hadn't read the script and poor Diana finished with the silver. But by and large, his appearances coincide with Indonesia winning. And there was nothing better than watching shuttler Jonatan Christie win the men's singles ending a 12-year drought for Indonesia which last won this coveted title at the Asian Games back in 2006 Doha when Taufik Hidayat ruled supreme. Badminton is Indonesia's

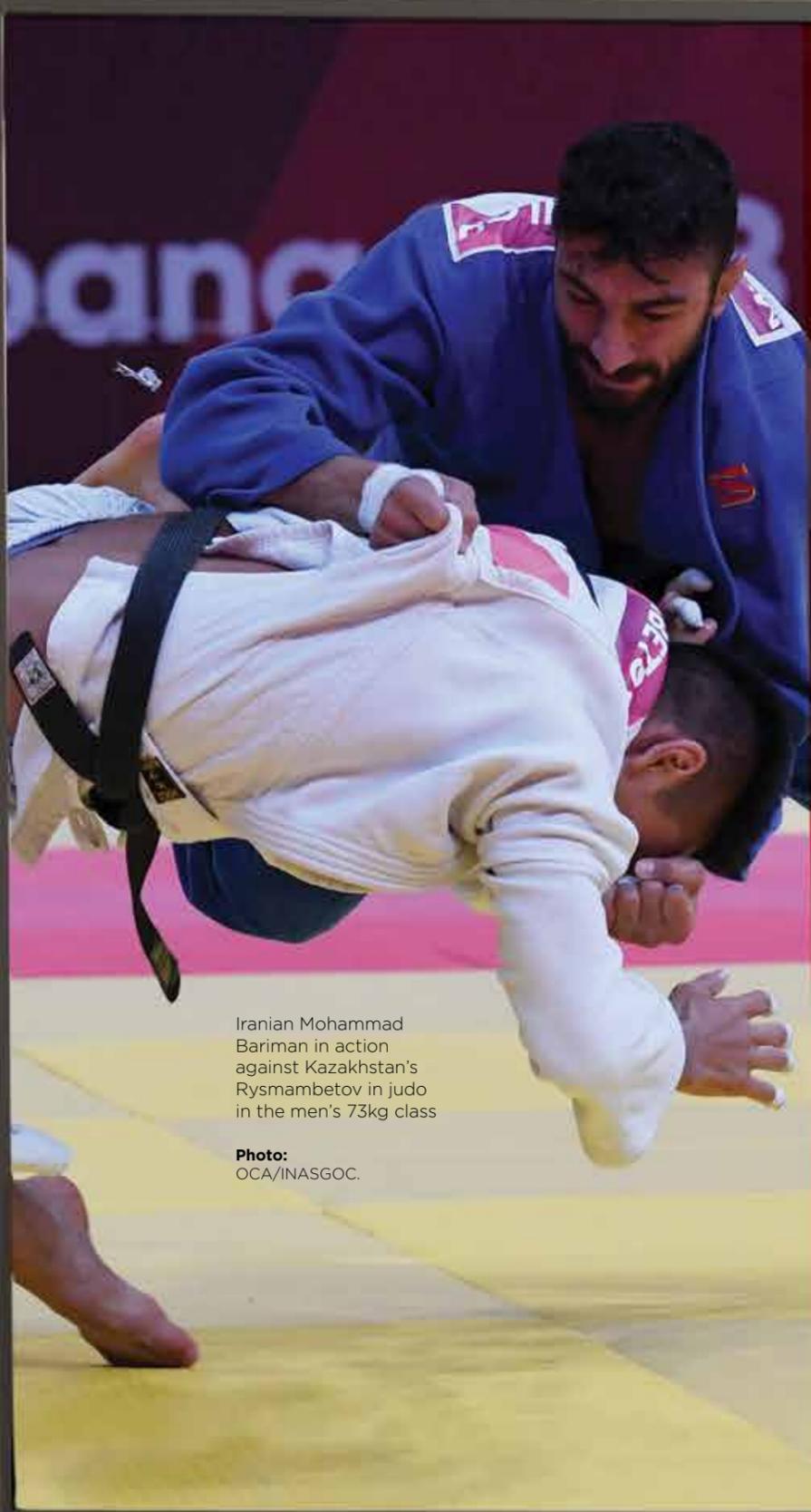
most popular sport. The feel-good factor in Indonesia is at a high. Joko should bring forward the general elections set for April, next year. Another big fan is Sebastian Coe. The president of the International Association of Athletics Federations has been an interested observer of the athletics events over the last few days. He is a big fan of China and star sprinter Su Bingtian. Soon after the Chinese won the men's 100 metres, Coe, a middle-distance runner who won four Olympic golds for Great Britain in the early 80s, was full of praise for China and its system. He said: "For me it's very clear they are making very good progress. If we had been sitting here a decade ago, talking about potential here for a China athlete to run 9.8, you would have probably taken quite long odds on that." Coe pointed out the reason for China's progress in athletics was its willingness to embrace overseas coaches. Su is coached by American Randy Huntington. In swimming, Sun Yang's partnership with Australian Denis Cotterell has helped turn him into a world-beater. "China has recognised there are gaps in their own coaching structures and said 'hey, let's bring talent to the table'. It's a pragmatic approach," says Coe, clearly impressed with the progress being made by the Middle Kingdom. He is a big fan.





**30 August**  
**TV THE NAME OF THE GAME**

It's 5.30am in the morning and she has a crimson red lipstick on. I cringe but CCTV's sports anchor reporting from the ground in Jakarta is in her element as she prepares to do a broadcast which will be shown later to millions of her countrymen as they tuck into their morning congee. China has got a good chance of winning gold in the men's and women's 20-kilometre walk and the lady in the red lipstick is ready to relay the good news to breakfast tables around the Middle Kingdom. And she has got the second prime spot on the road where the race will take place. The top spot has gone to the host broadcaster, the International Games Broadcast Services (IGBS). The rest of the world's media have to take second-place to TV who get first pick at everything, from the prime spots for coverage to being the first to interview the athletes after the events. You can't blame organisers for giving preference to television for it is the biggest player around. They bring the big bucks. The Olympic Council of Asia penned a marketing deal with Indonesian Games organisers who paid the OCA US\$40million to gain full control of the sponsorship and marketing rights for these Games. The Indonesians will keep all profits generated. This is how it has worked at previous Asian Games too, where IGBS were involved, in 2006 Doha, 2010 Guangzhou and 2014 Incheon. The OCA prefers getting a lump sum and not having to worry about the headaches of seeking sponsors, selling TV rights and so on. A portion of this US\$40



Iranian Mohammad Bariman in action against Kazakhstan's Rysmambetov in judo in the men's 73kg class

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC.



China's Zhang Jiaqi in the final of the women's 10m platform event in diving

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC

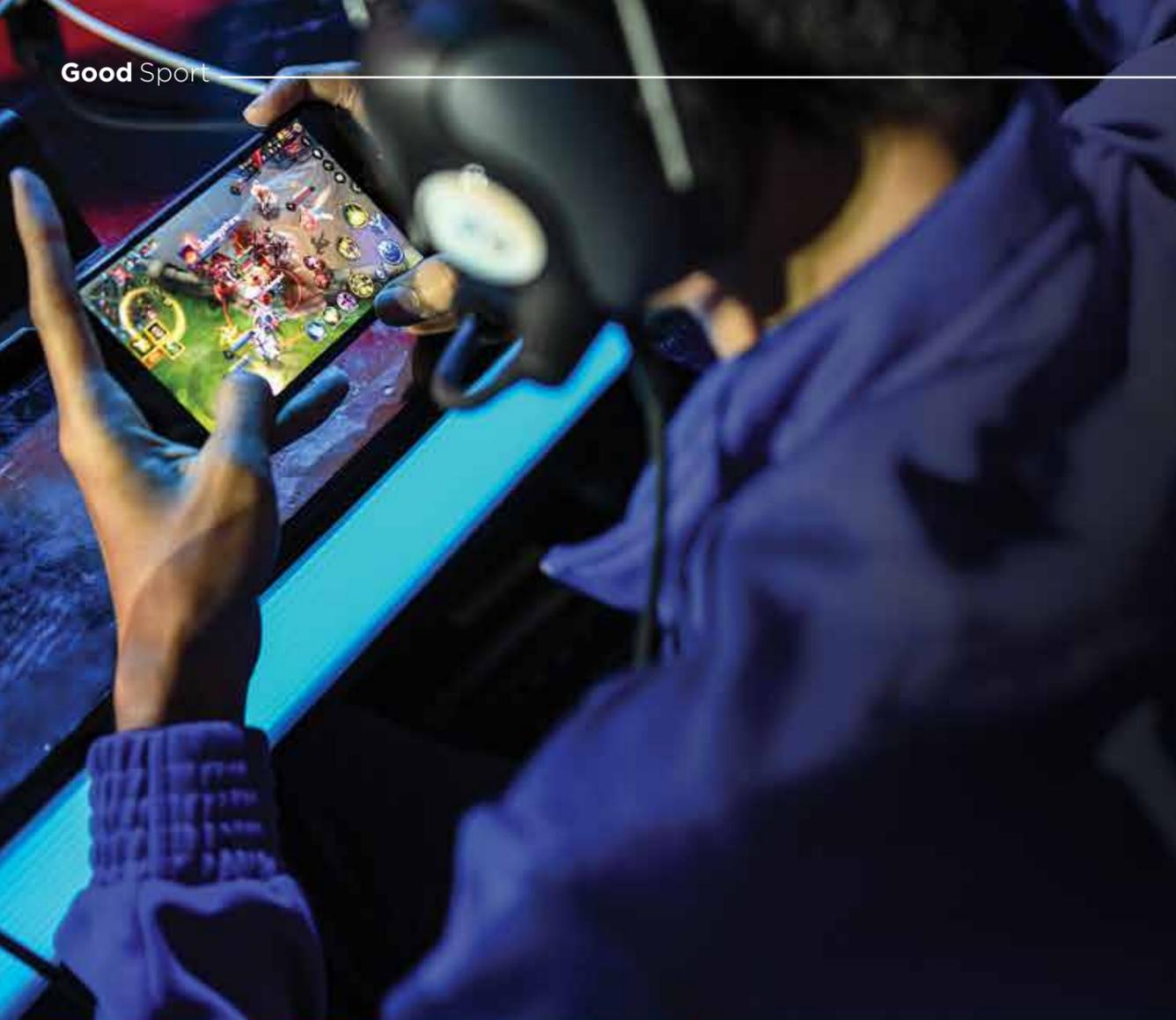


The Qatar men's 4x400m relay team after winning the gold medal in a new Games record of three minutes 0.56 seconds

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC

million is given to the 45-member countries of the OCA. Everyone is happy. Television makes the sporting world go around. Take a look at the Olympics. The International Olympic Council awarded the Olympic Games broadcast rights to NBC Universal for a 12-year period for all Games after Tokyo 2020, for a staggering US\$7.65 billion. As such, the IOC does not have to worry about all its Summer and Winter Olympic Games between 2021 and 2032 ensuring the long-term financial security of the Olympic movement. In Asia they have to do it Games by Games, not so at Olympic level. The IOC distributes more than 90 per cent of the revenue it generates to support the International Sports Federations, the 204 National Olympic Committees and their Olympic teams and the organising committees of each Olympic Games. They also get

top-class sports broadcasting from NBC which became a partner in 2011. But if you think the Olympics is a big deal, think again. NFL (American football) signed a nine-year deal from 2014 to 2022 with four US networks (CBS, FOX, NBC and ESPN) for US\$39.6 billion. The NBA extended their partnership with ESPN and TNT from 2016 to 2025 for US\$24 billion. The English Premier League's existing three-year deal with domestic TV in the UK which ends next year is worth US\$7 billion. Major league baseball in the United States inked a US\$12.4 billion deal from 2014 to 2022 with three US networks. Closer to home, the IPL renegotiated a new 10-year TV rights deal in India with Sony Network for US\$1.6 billion. Yes, television is the only game in town. Where is my red lipstick?

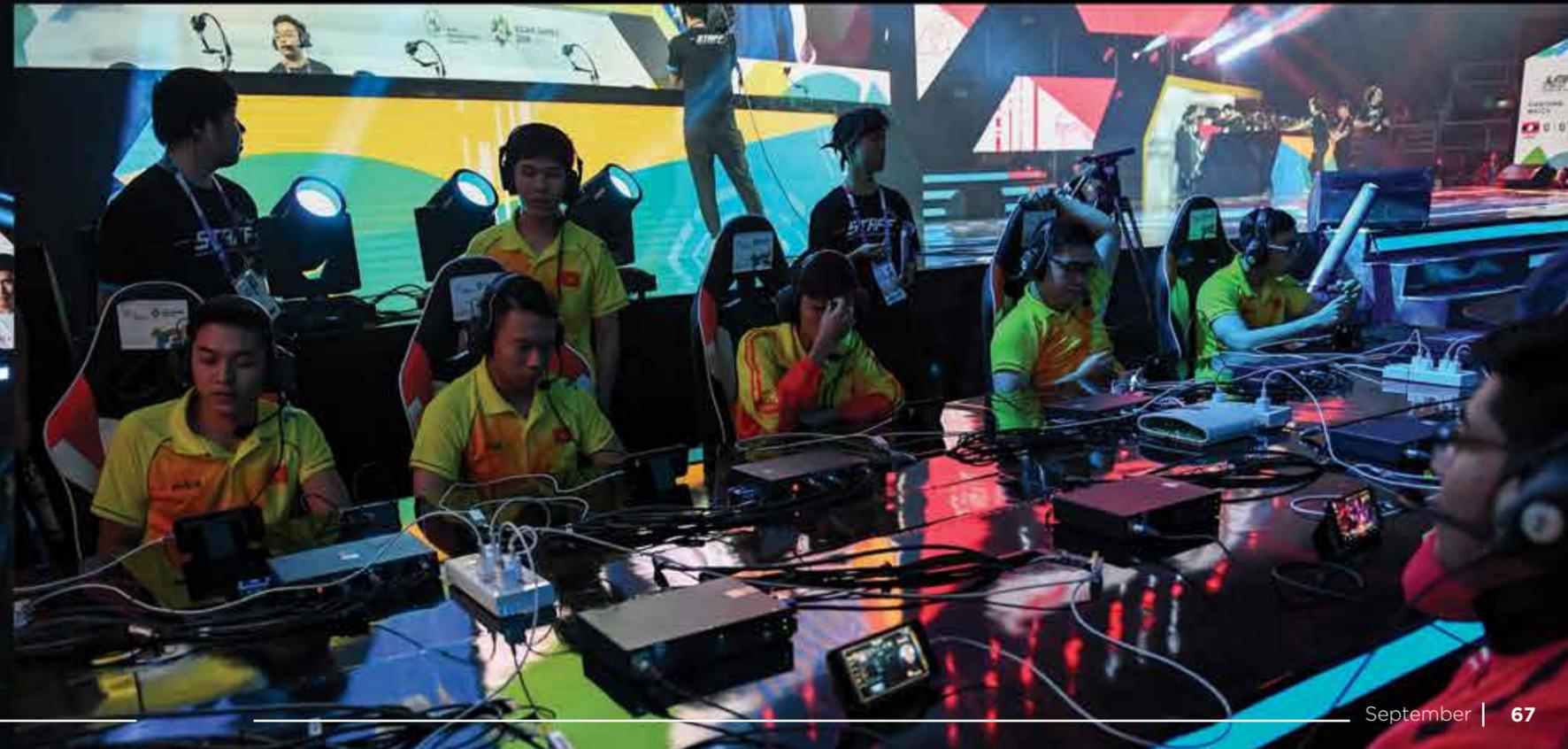


**31 August**  
**SIT DOWN AND WIN GOLD**

At the 2000 Sydney Olympics, the Australian media joked that Britain could only win in sports where you have to sit down – they were right for the British won 11 golds mainly in cycling, rowing, sailing, equestrian and canoeing. The joke no longer holds water for at the 2016 Rio Olympics, Britain finished second behind the United States with 27 golds across 15 sports. I bring this up because soon, there might be another ‘sitting down’ sport which might help increase this total at the Olympics – e-sports. Electronic sports are a form of competition using video games. Labelling video games as sports is debatable. In my mind, sport is something that needs

physical exertion. Yet, it is pragmatic to recognise trends and e-sports is definitely more than a trend, it is here to stay. The Olympic Council of Asia has already realised that and included e-sports in its medals roster at the next Asian Games, 2022 Hangzhou, China. At these Games, e-sports is an exhibition sport with 18 countries, including Sri Lanka, participating. There is also talk that the International Olympic Committee is looking at including e-sports into the Olympics in Paris 2024. In July, the IOC held a forum on e-sports at its headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland. Asia, meanwhile are a step ahead as has been the case on many occasions – for instance rugby was introduced at the 1998 Bangkok Games, both 15s and sevens (from 2006 Doha, only sevens was retained). The Olympics only brought in rugby sevens at the Rio Games. Kenneth Fok, president of the Asian Electronic Sports Federation, and son of Hong Kong Olympic Committee president Timothy Fok has also stated that the agenda of his body is “to push for the Olympics” adding that the inclusion of e-sports as an exhibition sports in Jakarta was a good first step. The Asian Games has always been open to new ideas. Why else would

they include bridge, or chess and ballroom dancing, the last two which were at the 2010 Guangzhou Games. But these pastimes were included more due to the fact that the host nation wanted them. It is different with e-sports for everyone realises it could be a gravy train, one they have to hop on aboard quickly. At the Olympic forum, an American video games developer had told IOC president Thomas Bach that there are two billion people worldwide playing electronic games, with 380 million watching e-sports. Viewer numbers are projected to rise to 600 million in two years. It is estimated the global e-sports economy will grow to US\$900 million by the end of this year. With such figures floating around, no wonder the IOC is salivating. Any sport with large number of viewers translates into dollars signs through sponsorship and advertising. And what more, it also attracts a young fan base – something the Olympics craves for. The IOC has already included skateboarding, surfing and sports climbing as medal sports at the 2020 Tokyo Games. This is the way the world of sport is shaping up. No longer will a couch potato be frowned upon.





Indonesia's new pin-up Jonatan Christie rips off his shirt and celebrates after winning the men's badminton singles gold medal

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



**01 September  
JUST REWARDS**

Indonesia's latest heart-throb is badminton star Jonatan Christie, winner of the men's singles gold medal. The pin-up has a fondness for ripping off his top after winning matches. The ladies love it. One went as far as taking him and the rest of his badminton mates to the exclusive Louis Vuitton designer brand store and 'treated' them to shopping for whatever they had wanted. The rich socialite was over the moon that Indonesia had won gold medals – singles and men's doubles – in the nation's favourite sport and in a show of gratitude had spent hundreds of millions of rupiah to express her feelings. This was a bonus for Christie and company. The Indonesian government is rewarding all medal winners, and their coaches, with rewards ranging from cash bonuses to promotions or jobs at government offices. A total of US\$12 million has been set aside to pay cash incentives for the athletes. Each gold medalist is set to receive US\$105,000. Indonesia are not alone in rewarding its champions. Our neighbours India, who have had a stellar Games finishing in the top 10 countries in the medal rankings, are also doling out riches through the State governments. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee announced a cash prize of US\$140,000 and a government job for Swapna Barman, the 12-toed India's first-ever Asian Games gold medalist in heptathlon. Not to be outdone, his Odisha counterpart revealed sprinter Dutee Chand, who won silver medals in the women's

100m and 200m, will get a total of US\$420,000. Apart from A US\$140,000 from the Gujarat government, Sarita Gaekwad, a member of the women's 4x100 relay squad will also benefit from the joy of a local legislator with the Congress Party who decided to forfeit his monthly salary so as to financially reward Sarita. All Indian medalists will take home more than a few bucks. The money gets bigger in rich city-states like Singapore and Hong Kong. Singapore will generously dole out US\$235,000 for its gold winners. At the Rio Olympics, 100m butterfly gold medalist Joseph Schooling earned him a cash bonanza of US\$740,000. Other Asian countries that offer six-figure payouts for winning Olympic gold are Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. But it is not only about the money. Sometimes it is more than that. Just ask the South Korean men's footballers, including Tottenham star Son Heung-min, who went into the gold medal match against Japan knowing if they won they would be exempt from the two years military service all South Korean men have to do before the age of 28. In the case of the 26-year-old Son the stakes were even higher as a gold medal would allow him to see out a new five-year contract with Spurs which pays him something like 100,000 pounds sterling a week. South Korea won gold, beating Japan 2-1 in extra-time, and Son was relieved. As for Sri Lanka, we didn't have to worry about such things.



OCA President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah and Jack Ma, Alibaba Chief Executive at the closing ceremony

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

**02 September**  
**TERIMA KASIH JAKARTA**

Terima Kasih, Jakarta. Thank you, Indonesia. Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah won the Gelora Bung Karno stadium crowd over at the closing ceremony of the 18th Asian Games with those simple but warm words. They went into more raptures when the President of the Olympic Council of Asia said “we are very sad today that we are leaving your beautiful country”. His thank you was heartfelt. It struck a chord inside the stadium and the capacity crowd was appreciative of their visitor. They were even more grateful when he mentioned “Jakarta has the capability to host any major international Games”. It was a nod of goodwill to Indonesian President Joko Widodo who the day before had met Thomas Bach, president of the International Olympic Committee who was the chief guest at the closing ceremony. Joko told Bach that Indonesia had dreams of hosting the 2032 Olympic Games. As such Sheikh Ahmad’s public reminder was a subtle way of letting the Olympic chief know that Asia endorsed Indonesia as a potential candidate city when bidding for the 2032 Games comes up. Having put on a good show hosting these Asian Games, and this despite being given short notice after Hanoi, Vietnam pulled out as host city of these Games in 2014, Indonesia have earned the support and gratitude of the OCA in a big way. Now they want to return the favour and hence the

show of support by Sheikh Ahmad at the closing ceremony. The Indonesian president is a master tactician. He has been seen at a number of sporting events where Indonesia have had a good chance of winning a gold medal. And the hosts won 31 to finish fourth in the standings. “It is an exceptional achievement and one that has surpassed all our expectations,” Joko said speaking from Lombok, another brilliant move from Joko who will go before the electorate next year in the presidential elections. He spent the closing ceremony watching it on TV in the company of victims affected by the recent earthquake. As a PR coup, it was priceless, the country’s president watching the closing ceremony on TV rather than rubbing shoulders with IOC president Thomas Bach and other dignitaries. In a recorded message, Joko told the crowd inside the stadium and 260 million other Indonesians to spare a thought for Lombok. He asked everyone to “send your thoughts and prayers as it will help the people of Lombok bounce back”. Superb stuff, tailor-made for the local audience who will decide his fate next year. If I had a vote, I would clearly give it to him. The feel-good factor was almost palpable on closing night. Indonesia had had its most successful Games. They had staged a Games which was described as “an historical success”. They had created countless memories. Terima Kasih, Jakarta.



The Chinese flag being raised at the closing ceremony of the 18th Asian Games. The next Asian Games will be held in 2022 in Hangzhou

Photo:  
OCA/INASGOC



Photo  
OCA/INASGOC

## Anyone for the 2030 Asian Games?

The enduring appeal of the Olympic Council of Asia's premier sports event.

By Jeremy Walker

There is a lot of uncertainty in the Olympic movement these days regarding the hosting of Olympic Games and Olympic Winter Games.

The cost of building new sports stadiums, together with the necessary infrastructure such as highways, railways and Olympic villages, and the increasingly important issues of legacy and sustainability have all combined to make potential host cities much more wary and cautious.

So much so, in fact, that the International Olympic Committee

President, Thomas Bach, has made the candidature process much more flexible in favour of potential bidders as a key part of his Olympic Agenda 2020 reforms.

In this climate, therefore, the enthusiasm and willingness within Asia for hosting the Olympic Council of Asia's showpiece event, the Asian Games, cannot be overstated.

To put it simply, the next slot available for the Asian Games is 2030 – 12 years away – as the host cities for the next two editions have already been signed and sealed.

After the historic co-hosting of the 18th Asian Games by Jakarta and Palembang - a first for the OCA - the 19th Asian Games will be held in Hangzhou, China, in 2022 and the 20th edition in Nagoya/Aichi Prefecture, Japan, in 2026.

The OCA President, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, describes this period as the "Golden Age" for the Olympic sports movement in Asia due to the following calendar:

"This is a very satisfactory and stable environment for the sports movement in Asia," says Sheikh Ahmad.

2018

Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea

2018

18th Asian Games in Jakarta-Palembang, Indonesia

2020

Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan

2022

Olympic Winter Games in Beijing, China

2022

19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China

2026

20th Asian Games in Nagoya/Aichi Prefecture, Japan.

“The calendar is fixed and clear for the next decade. This is good for our National Olympic Committees, good for our administrators and good for our athletes because they can set short-term targets, mid-term targets and even long-term targets regarding their preparation and training.”

The Asian Games, indeed, is an incredible force of unity and solidarity that unites the five zones of the OCA, from West Asia through to Central Asia, South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia.

The Asian Games was first held in New Delhi in 1951 and since then has enjoyed an unbroken sequence right through to the 18th edition in Indonesia. This is truly a remarkable achievement considering the wars that have raged in various parts of the continent, and still do to this day, and political stand-offs, notably on the Korean Peninsula.

The Asian Games have survived all these conflicts and crises and is growing all the time – a record 17,000 athletes and officials from the 45 National Olympic Committees at Jakarta-Palembang, including 11,200 athletes in 40 sports, 67 disciplines and 465 gold medal events.

Another record was the 11,000 media in attendance, comprised of 6,000 broadcasting staff, including 22 rights-holding TV stations and organisations, and 5,000 press and photographers.

So what makes the Asian Games so appealing and so enduring?

One of the main reasons is the high level of competition. With China, Japan and South Korea as the three Asian super powers, the other countries have the opportunity to compete against these East Asian giants and see their level of progress.

If athletes can challenge China, Japan and South Korea at the Asian Games, then they are not far away from medal chances at the Olympic Games.

As a result, the performance level of all countries is improving and providing the perfect preparation for the Olympic Games – and in world-class venues and a truly Olympic environment.

Another reason is the friendly atmosphere of the Asian Games. Despite the differences in culture, language, religion and politics there is a feeling of togetherness at the Asian Games.

Chinese dancers at the closing ceremony capped by fireworks

Photo OCA/INASGOC



Photo OCA/INASGOC

This can be felt in the Athletes’ Village at both Jakarta and Palembang during the 18th Asian Games, especially in the evening’s cultural events and music performances as well as the traditional Olympic pastime of pin badge-swapping. The village is the heart of any multi-sport games, and in both Jakarta and Palembang there has been an air of calm and camaraderie, of relaxation and respect, as the athletes go about their daily business.

Another reason for the popularity of the Asian Games is the determination of the OCA to introduce and promote traditional sports from the five zones, such as kabaddi from South Asia, sepaktakraw from South East Asia, wushu from East Asia and the martial arts of sambo and kurash from Central Asia.

Take kabaddi, for example. It joined the Asian Games at Beijing 1990 as a sport virtually unknown outside its roots in rural India.

Slowly but surely the interest in kabaddi has grown around the continent, with the likes of Japan, Thailand and notably Iran all assembling competitive teams.

Now, 28 years on from its debut in 1990, news that India’s men’s team

and women’s team both failed to win the gold medal made an impact around the world. This is the power of the Asian Games to project sports from all corners of the continent and propel them into the everyday sports vocabulary.

The OCA is also responsible in awarding the Asian Games. It does not like two countries bidding aggressively against each other, spending too much money and possibly even falling out, thereby producing conflicts within the establishment.

It would prefer a quiet, low-key approach whereby an interested party can put forward a proposal and receive OCA inspection teams to check on the support at government level and on the infrastructure already in place.

This system does not prevent any NOC from showing an interest in any of the OCA’s five major events – Asian Games, Asian Winter Games, Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, Asian Beach Games and Asian Youth Games – but it does prevent rifts from forming and money being wasted on expensive bidding races and unnecessary construction of venues.

One closing example of the OCA’s policy involves the new Athletes’ Village at Kemayoran, Jakarta. Funded by the government’s Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the seven tower blocks have been built for low-income people and the apartments are, therefore, quite small and basic.

The OCA fully supported this initiative by the central government and, instead of demanding five-star quality for the athletes and officials, quietly asked the NOCs to understand this situation and to think of the big picture regarding future inhabitants of the flats they now occupied.

This issue was a long way from the fiercely-fought competitions inside the Asian Games stadiums, but nevertheless once again displayed the unity and solidarity of the Olympic movement in Asia.

Jeremy Walker is Editor, Sporting Asia, Official Magazine of the Olympic Council of Asia and content provider, [www.ocado.org](http://www.ocado.org), the official website of the OCA





EQUESTRIAN

The equestrian disciplines - Dressage, Eventing, Showjumping - are unique in that men and women compete on equal terms. Six medals with each discipline split into individual and team. Jumping was the first equestrian event introduced at the Olympics, Paris 1900, with dressage and eventing joining by 1912. Equestrian has been at the Asian Games since New Delhi 1982. Showjumping takes place inside an arena with around 15 fences. A rider is penalised for knocking down a fence or finishing outside a time limit. The rider and horse with the fewest faults is the winner. In dressage, horse and rider perform a test of movements - circles, serpentines, piaffe, passage and pirouettes - to music and the three basic paces of walk, trot and canter. The movements are judged on quality, precision and submission. It has been compared to ballet. Eventing is a combination of dressage, jumping and cross-country tests.

Japan won the team golds in dressage and eventing while Saudi Arabia won in jumping. Kuwait's Ali al-Khorafi riding Cheril won the individual jumping event. Yoshiaki Oiwa gave Japan a third gold winning the individual eventing while Hong Kong's Jacqueline Siu took gold in individual dressage.



Qatari equestrian athlete Hassan Alnaimi competes in the eventing and individual dressage class

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

South Korea's horse riding athlete Kim Seok passes an obstacle when competing in the team and individual cross country eventing number

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



HANDBALL

It is seven-a-side with six attackers and one goalkeeper. A match lasts an hour, two halves of 30-minutes each. The sport originally began in the Olympics as a 11-a-side outdoor sport but moved to seven-a-side indoor format at the 1972 Munich Olympics. The women's event was introduced four years later at Montreal. It made its Asian Games debut in New Delhi 1982. South Korea dominates in both men's and women's competition but four years ago Qatar pulled off a shock gold medal victory in the men's event.

Qatar defended that gold medal beating Bahrain in the final. In the women's event South Korea defeated China.



Bahraini player Hasan Alfardan

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

Bahrain's male handball player Ali Merza Ali (7) tussles with Iranian male player Salaman Barbat (14)

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

Malaysia's Farah Ann Hadi on the all-round beam in artistic gymnastics

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



# 18<sup>th</sup> ASIA GAMES 2018



## GYMNASTICS

There are three categories at the Asian Games - Artistic, Rhythmic and Trampoline. Artistic and trampoline are for men and women but rhythmic is solely for women. In artistic gymnastics, men participate in six apparatus: floor exercises, pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bar. Women participate in four apparatus: vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercises. In trampoline, gymnasts perform a series or routines which includes 10 bounces and are judged on difficulty, execution and flight time. Rhythmic gymnastics is exclusively for women and is a combination of gymnastics and dance. The gymnasts perform choreographed movements to music using hand apparatus like rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. Gymnastics is one of the oldest Olympic sports. They were doing it in ancient times too. It made its Asian Games debut in Teheran 1974.

China dominated as always winning 10 of the 18 gold medals on offer. Sri Lanka's Anna-Marie Ondaatjie qualified for the final of the rhythmic individual all-round but couldn't make any further impressions.



Japanese gymnast Shiho Nakaji doing her routine

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



South Korean Jet Skier Lee Daesoo

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

Indonesian jet skier Aqsa Sutan Aswar celebrates his victory in the Final Endurance Runabout Open class

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### JET SKI

Move over Baywatch. Jet skis is no longer just a movie prop or a recreational vehicle. Having made its first appearance at the Asian Beach Games, Jet ski made its debut at the Asian Games. Similar to powerboat racing, riders will use jet skis wearing helmets, full body suits and other protective gear. There are different classes depending on engine capacity of the jet ski. The course used for racing are created with buoys and are usually oval in shape. There will be four gold medals up for grabs.

Thailand, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates and Cambodia won a gold each.



### JUDO

It means 'gentle way'. Hardly the case when you are thrown flat on your back. The objective of this sport which originated in Japan is to throw your opponent to the ground, immobilize or otherwise subdue your opponent with a pin, or force an opponent to submit with an arm lock or by applying a choke. Is there a gentle way to do all this? Judo made its Asian Games debut in Seoul 1986. A total of 15 gold medals was on offer in both men's and women's competition.

Japan, as expected, won the lion's share winning eight with South Korea taking four.



Japan's Shohei Ono (below) competes against South Korea's An Changrim (top)

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

Japanese Fencing athlete Aoki Chika (left) against South Korean athlete Choi Sooy in the women's Sabre semifinal match

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



FENCING

One of only four sports which has been featured in every modern Olympic Games. It has been in the Asian Games since Teheran 1974. A total of 12 gold medals, six for men and six for women. The three types of weapons used are foil, a light thrusting weapon where the target is restricted to the torso; the epee, a heavy thrusting weapon with the entire body being the target; and sabre, which uses a light cutting and thrusting weapon with the target being everything above the waist. There are both individual and team events with each weapon. China and South Korea are traditionally the strongest in Asia.

The Koreans won half of the dozen gold medals available with China taking three. Dmitriy Alexanin won the men's individual epee denying South Korea another gold.





FIELD HOCKEY

One of the great rivalries in sport takes place in Hockey when Pakistan meet India. The two sub-continent rivals have met nine times in the gold medal match at the Asian Games with Pakistan holding a 7-2 record. But four years ago, it was India who prevailed defeating Pakistan 4-2 on penalties after the score had been deadlocked at 1-1 at the end of fulltime. Hockey is played in four 15-minute quarters. It made its Olympic debut in 1908 (Great Britain winning the gold) and its first Asian Games appearance in Tokyo 1958. Both men's and women's competition with a team comprising 11 players.

Japan won a historic double with both its men's and women's team winning an Asian Game gold medal for the first time. The men staged a remarkable comeback, trailing 2-5 with 10 minutes to go, before leveling the score at 6-6 in the last 20 seconds of regulation time. They won the penalty shootout 3-1. India and Pakistan were ousted in the semis. Sri Lanka's men team performed commendably beating Hong Kong and Indonesia to reach the 7th place play-off against Oman made up largely of expatriate Pakistanis. They lost 2-5 to finish in the top eight.



Sri Lanka in action against hosts Indonesia in the preliminary round. Sri Lanka beat Indonesia 3-1

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



**FOOTBALL**

Another 11-a-side sport, it is the world's most popular sport. Men's football has been at the Asian Games since the inaugural edition in 1951. Women's football since Beijing 1990. The age limit for men is under-23 plus up to three over-aged players. The two Koreas met in the men's final four year ago with the South prevailing in extra-time. In the women's competition North Korea won gold defeating Japan 3-1.

South Korea won once again in extra-time, this time beating Japan, in the men's final. As a reward the players, including Tottenham Hotspurs forward Son Heung-min who captained the side, have been excused from the mandatory two years of military service. Japan beat China in the battle for gold in the women's event.



Japanese female footballer Ariyoshi Saori (right) scrambles for the ball with Chinese female footballer Gu Yasha (left)

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC



**GOLF**

This sport is a good example of how progressive and far-thinking the Asian Games is. Golf made its medal debut at the Asian Games in New Delhi 1982. In contrast, the Olympics only reintroduced golf at the 2016 Rio Games after a 116-year absence. Both men and women participate in a 72-hole individual stroke play tournament with the lowest score over four rounds deciding the gold medalist. In case of a tie for first, second or third place, a play-off will follow. Both individual and team events are featured.

Keita Nakajima won the men's individual gold as well as leading Japan to the team gold. It was a similar story in the women's competition with Yuka Saso of the Philippines winning the individual title as well as playing a part in the team gold effort. Sri Lanka had to make a wholesale change in their squad after organisers decided at the last-minute not to allow professional to play. It meant Mithun Perera, Anura Rohana and company couldn't play. Sri Lanka finished 15th with the best individual performance coming from Joseph de Silva who finished tied 41st.



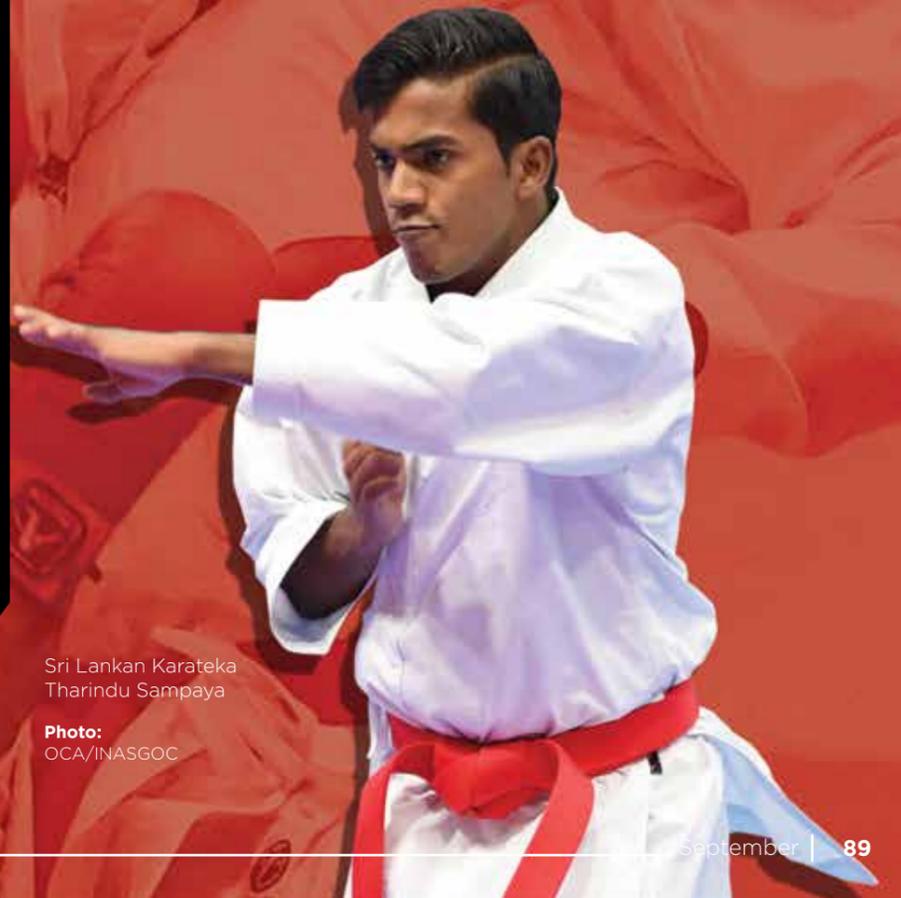
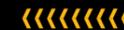
Chinese golfer, Mohan Du

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC



**KARATE**

The World Karate Federation says there are 100 million karatekas around the world. No wonder then that the sport will make its Olympic debut at the Tokyo Games in 2020. It is fitting because the sport originated in Japan. It made its Asian Games debut back in 1984 when Hiroshima hosted the showpiece. Once again, the Japanese connection. There are two types (practices) at the Games, Kata which is a formalized sequence of events representing various offensive and defensive postures, and Kumite ('meeting of hands' in Japanese) which is sparring. There is no class division in Kata but Kumite is divided into weight categories. A total of 12 gold medals was on offer. Japan won four golds with Iran and Chinese-Taipei taking two each.



Sri Lankan Karateka Tharindu Sampaya

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC

Sri Lankan karateka Akihiro Lokukaluge (left) in action against Japan

**Photo:**  
Thusith Wijedoru/  
NOC



### KABADDI

A traditional Indian sport which is very physical. There is a difference in the size of the field: men's 10m x 13m while for women it is smaller, 8m x 12m. The sport made its Asian Games debut in Beijing 1990. India has always dominated in both men's and women's competition. It is played by two teams of seven players each over a period of 15 or 20 minutes with a five-minute break. The aim is to score points by raiding into the opponent's court, tag out as many players as possible without getting caught and then return to his half without being tackled by the defenders. And all of this has to be done while holding his breath – the raider must loudly chant 'kabaddi' to confirm to the referees that the raid is done on a single breath. Points are scored for each player tagged by the raider while the opposing teams earn a point for stopping the raider. Players are taken out of the game if they are tagged or tackled but can be reinstated for each point scored by their team from a tag or tackle. The name, sometimes chanted during a game, derives from the Hindi meaning for "holding of breath."

In one of the biggest shocks at the Asian Games, India returned home for the first time since the sport was introduced to the Asian Games, in 1990, without a gold medal. Iran was the big stumbling block. The Indian men lost in the semi-finals to Iran while the women were beaten in the gold medal final, also by Iran. Sri Lanka's women's team won two and lost two in the preliminaries failing to reach the next round. The men had a 1-2, win-loss record.



The Sri Lankan Kabaddi team in their match against India

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



South Korean female athlete Kim Sunwoo

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### MODERN PENTATHLON

It is an Olympic sport that combines five different disciplines: fencing (one-touch epee), freestyle swimming (200m), equestrian showjumping (15 jumps), and a final combined event of pistol shooting and cross country running (3200m). Athletes are tested on their rounded skillset. The name pentathlon derives from the Greek word pente, or five. The roots of the sport can be traced back to the ancient pentathlon, which included discus throw, javelin, long jump, the stadium-length race and wrestling. It was incorporated into the ancient Olympic Games in 708 BC. A modern Olympic sport since 1912, it was originally staged over four or five days. But since the 1996 Atlanta Games, a one-day format was adopted in an effort to make it more viewer-friendly. Made its Asian Games debut in Hiroshima 1994 but has since been held only in 2002, 2010 and 2014 editions.

South Korea and China dominated. South Korea won the gold and silver in the men's event while China won the women's gold with silver and bronze going to South Korean athletes.



South Korean footballer Hee Chan Hwang (right) heads the ball while playing against Japan

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



# Asia lagging behind in The Beautiful Game

### Games silver medalists Japan leading the way but more to be done

By Michael Church

**I**n the depths of the Rostov Arena, with the pain and frustration of Japan's agonising World Cup elimination still sinking in, Maya Yoshida succinctly summed up where the cream of Asian football stands relative to the rest of the world.

"Before the game we were the only Asian country that went through to the next round," the Southampton central defender said after his country's late capitulation to Belgium in one of the most dramatic matches of the summer's World Cup finals in Russia.

"As I said before the match, we are carrying many hopes from the Asian people and if we lose every time in the group stage we will lose a spot and that's a huge difference for Asian countries.

"We need to go through to the next round constantly, more teams. Iran was very close and Korea beat Germany so not only Japan but Asian countries have to improve a lot."

The circumstances of Japan's exit from the summer's World Cup added some much needed gloss on the reputation of the game in the region; Akira Nishino's side took a two-goal lead over one of the favourites for the tournament before slipping to a 3-2 loss.

Japan's entertaining, gallant performance in defeat against Roberto Martinez's star-studded team deservedly earned plaudits. As the Belgians moved into the last eight, they did so not only at the expense of Japan: they moved into a phase of the competition devoid of Asian involvement.



Japanese footballer Kou Itakura (left) receives a yellow card from referee Azis Asimovi

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

That, though, is an age old occurrence. On only two occasions since the Dutch East Indies became the first nation from the continent to qualify for the World Cup finals in 1938 has a country from Asia advanced to the quarter-finals or further.

DPR Korea famously saw off Italy before giving a Portugal side led by the legendary Eusebio an almighty fright in the last eight of the 1966 finals in England. Thirty-six years later their southern neighbours went one step further on home soil, losing to Germany in the semi-finals.

For a continent that boasts almost two-thirds of the world's population, such a return is scant reward for the work being done by the 46 member federations that make up the Asian

Football Confederation. For many in Asia, the gap to the upper tier of the game is unbridgeable while for even the most progressive associations the challenge remains significant.

Of the five countries representing Asia in Russia over the summer, four – Australia, South Korea, Japan and Iran – have qualified for the last two tournaments.

Indeed, Australia have qualified for every World Cup since 2006 while Japan have been ever-present since 1998 and Korea have appeared at nine tournaments in a row, with an unbroken qualification record that stretches back to 1986.

Yet for all of their regular trips to the game's greatest event, their

individual and collective records are disappointing. Australia reached the Round of 16 before losing to eventual champions Italy in 2006 and have exited at the group phase on their subsequent three appearances.

Japan have qualified for the Round of 16 on three occasions – 2002, 2010 and 2018 – but have been unable to progress while the Koreans have played in the knockout rounds just once, losing out to Uruguay in the Round of 16 in 2010 having advanced to the semi-finals in 2002.

Only one other Asian nation – Saudi Arabia on their World Cup debut in 1994 – have qualified for the knockout rounds.

There were encouraging signs in Russia from the Asian teams as many of the continent's participants put aside difficulties in the build-up to dispel fears of a series of performances as poor as those delivered in Brazil in 2014. Then, none of Asia's four representatives could muster a win between them.

Iran, cannily coached by Carlos Queiroz, claimed their first win since 1998 when they edged Morocco before losing narrowly to Spain and drawing with Portugal as they narrowly missed out on a place in the knockout phase. Queiroz's young team showed promise and left Russia with hope for the future.

The Koreans ended on the high of defeating defending champions Germany - with Asian Games gold medal winner Son Heung-min on the scoresheet – after disappointing performances against Sweden and Mexico. Australia showed promise against eventual champions France in their opener, only to fizzle out against Denmark and Peru.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, redeemed themselves with a closing win over Egypt after an opening day thrashing at the hands of Russia and a narrow loss against Uruguay.

For all of their differing issues and outcomes over the summer, the qualified quintet will remain at the forefront of the continent's game for the foreseeable future, with only a small group of nations likely to challenge for supremacy.

South Korea beat Japan 2-1 in the gold medal final at the Asian Games in Jakarta, underlining the depth of talent held in both nations, although the performances of Vietnam, Malaysia and Uzbekistan offered encouragement.

For the second time in 2018, the Vietnamese reached at least the semi-finals of an Asia-wide competition, finishing fourth at the Asian Games eight months after losing to Uzbekistan in the final of the AFC U23 Championship in China.

Malaysia, while still some way short of the very best in Asia, have shown their current crop of young players have the potential to end that nation's lengthy absence from the upper tier of the continent's game.

Advances are being made at varying levels within Asian football, but too few are proving capable of closing the gap with the very best of the global game. China, despite growing

attempts to boost the game both professionally and at developmental level, continues to lag well behind the best in the region.

For Asian football to challenge the very best, though, requires a greater, across-the-board improvement that will ensure the difference between Asian competition and the very highest level is as small as possible.

"It's important for Japanese football to help China because when the Japan national team is playing international 'A' level matches, more than half are against Asian teams and we must play strong teams if we are to improve," says two-time World Cup coach Takeshi Okada.

"OK, Japan is number one in Asia but for European and South American teams the level is still going up, so the level in Asia must go up. We need China and the other teams in Asia to be strong."

Back in Rostov, Yoshida highlighted one of the most important aspects. For Asian players and teams to match and surpass the game's best, they need to live and play among them, facing them week in, week out.

"I think we need many players to go to Europe and have the experience to play against these kind of players and we have to get used to playing against them," he said.

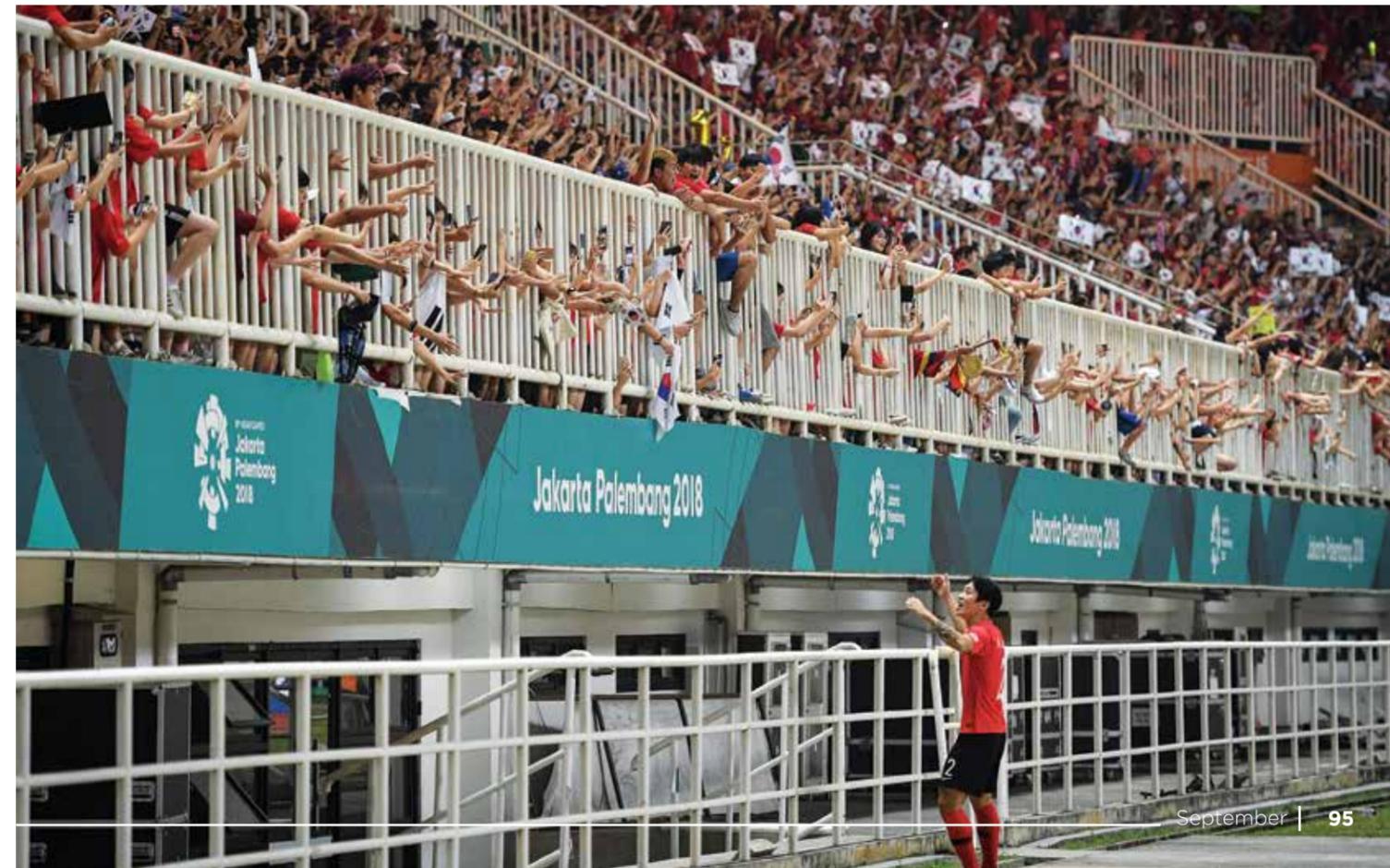
"In terms of our football development, we need to go through the Round of 16 and the quarter-finals more consistently. That means we can build up our experience, we can build up our confidence to be a bigger and bigger country."

**Hong Kong-based Michael Church has spent more than two decades covering sport throughout Asia, with football his primary focus. He has covered the FIFA World Cup tournaments, Olympic Games and the Asian Games.**



South Korean footballer Hyunsoo Hwang greets his supporters

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Afghan jujitsu athlete Hussain Bakhsh Safari (left) locks on Mongolian jujitsu athlete Erdene Narangerel (right)

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Indonesian sambo athlete Maria Magdalena Ince (above) locks Kyrgyzstan sambo athlete Kyzu Anara Zhumali (bottom)

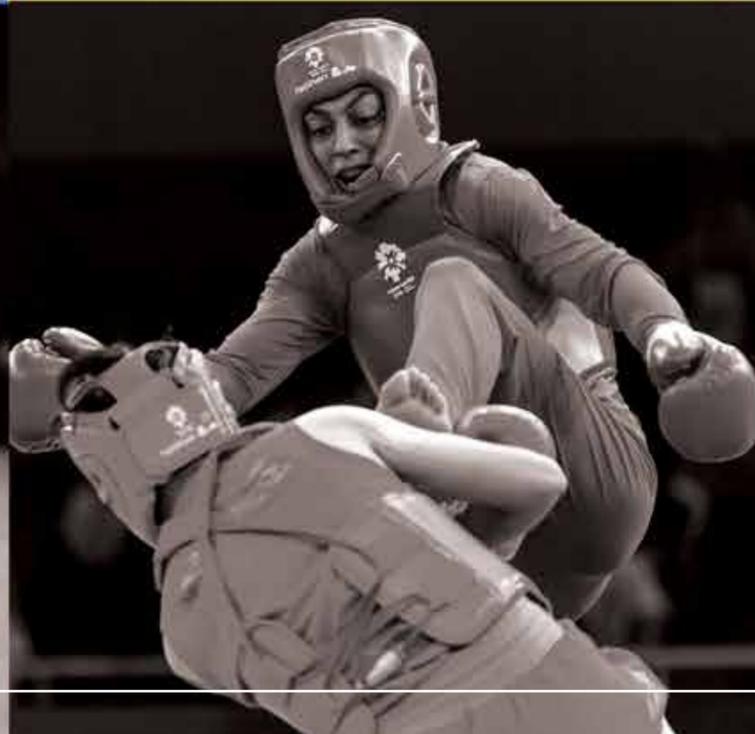
Photo: OCA/INASGOC



MARTIAL ARTS

There are five different versions: Jujitsu, Kurash, Pencak Silat, Sambo and Wushu. Jujitsu is a Japanese martial art similar to judo, the difference being in jujitsu you use punches and kicks, even weapons. The principle of jujitsu is harnessing the opponent to defeat him. Kurash is a traditional martial art from Uzbekistan that resembles wrestling. Opponents wear jackets, one green and one blue. The objective is to try and throw your opponent to the ground. If thrown on your back, victory is declared. If thrown on your side, points are awarded. Sambo is a martial art that originated in Russia - President Putin is a big fan of the sport which combines wrestling, judo, jujitsu, boxing, savate, and several other martial arts. Sambo is an acronym for SAMozashchita Bez Oruzhiya which translates into "self-defence without weapons". It was developed by the Soviet Red Army to improve their hand-to-hand combat abilities. Pencak Silat is a traditional Indonesian martial art. It is full-body fighting incorporating strikes, grappling and throwing in addition to weaponry. Every part of the body is used and subject to attack. Wushu is a traditional Chinese martial art. Unlike the rest which are making is Asian Games debut, Wushu became a medal sport at the 1990 Beijing Games and has continued since. Wushu is divided into two categories: taolu (art) and sanda (fight). Taolu is a combination of gymnastics and martial arts and competitors are judged and given points on their movements which include stance, kicks, punches, balances, jumps, sweeps and throws. There is a time limit, from one minute 20 seconds to as much as five minutes. Sanda is a modern fighting method and sport much like kickboxing or Muay Thai, but includes many more grappling techniques. A total of 54 gold medals on offer in martial arts making it a key sport.

Indonesia has to thank pencak silat for finishing in the top four in the medal standings as 14 of its 31 golds came from their traditional sport. UAE and Kazakhstan won two golds apiece in ju-jitsu. Uzbekistan dominated kurash winning six of the eight golds available while Kazakhstan grabbed two of the four in sambo. China won 10 of the 14 golds in wushu.





Japanese female paragliding athlete Atsuko Yamashita (front) and Mongolian male athlete Bold Purevdelger

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### PARAGLIDING

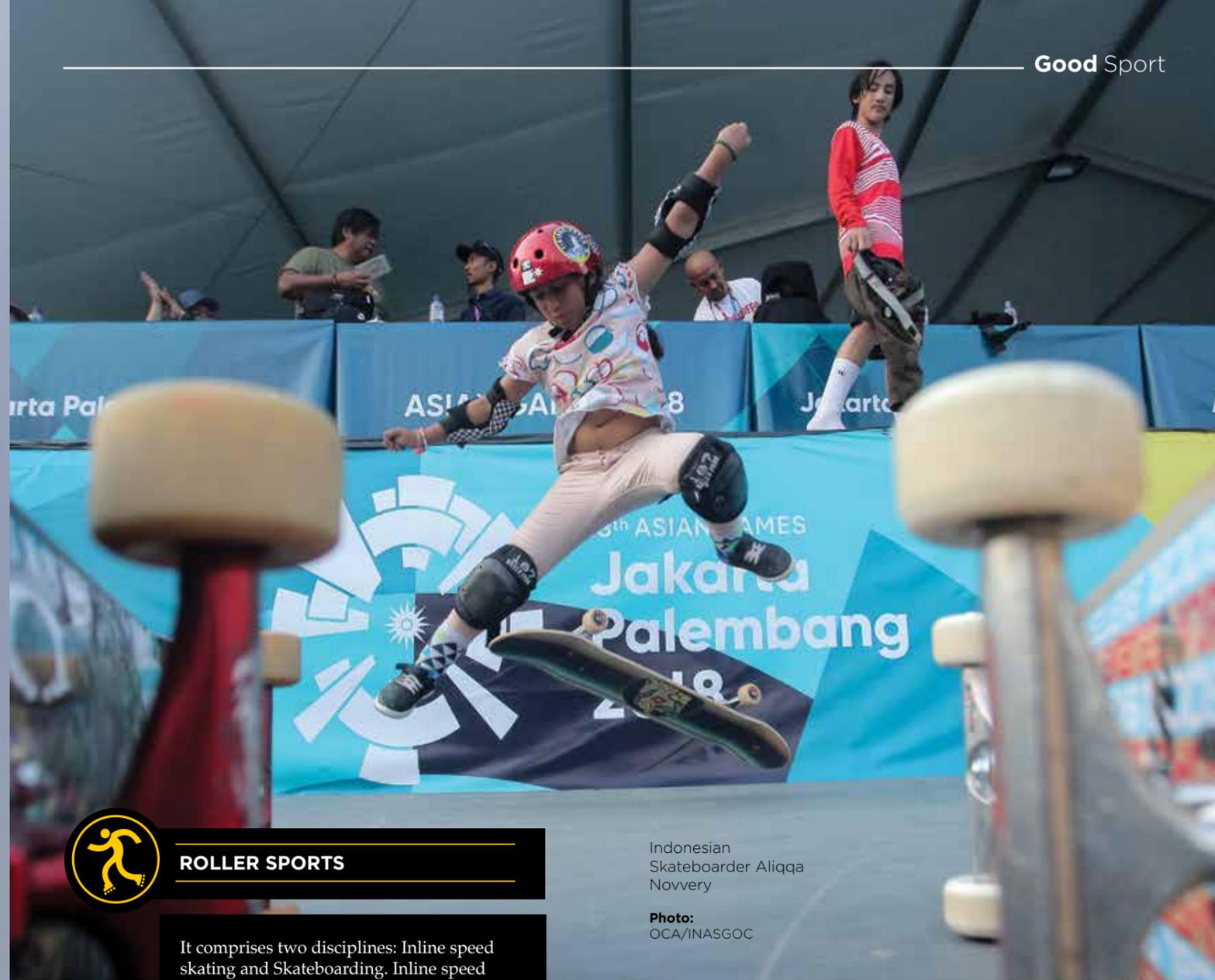
A recreational and adventure sport, it relies heavily on the skill to control a parachute to fly. Competitors have to start from a height to be able to fly with a parachute. Two types of races will be held: cross-country and accuracy. It is making its debut.

Hosts Indonesia won the individual and team accuracy gold medals while Thailand did likewise in the individual and team cross-country.



Indonesian male paragliding athlete Hening Paradigma

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### ROLLER SPORTS

Indonesian Skateboarder Aliqqa Novvery

Photo: OCA/INASGOC

It comprises two disciplines: Inline speed skating and Skateboarding. Inline speed skating is the roller sport of racing on inline skates (wheels all in a line). Although it evolved from racing on rollerblades, the sport is similar enough to ice speed skating that many competitors switch between inline and ice speed skating according to the season. Skateboarding demands dexterity, agility, balance and speed of the athlete to perform various tricks on a skateboard. The sport is very popular among the urban youth and is making its Asian Games debut unlike inline speed skating which was included at the 2010 Guangzhou Games.

Margielyn Didal, 19, of the Philippines prevented Japan from making a clean sweep at skateboarding winning the women's street event. Japan won the other three golds with Chinese-Taipei winning both golds in inline speed skating.



Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



The Indonesian men's paddle team

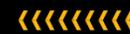
Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### ROWING

A sport where you win by rowing using one or two paddles and sitting backwards in a boat. It is a demanding sport as you have to row 2000 metres in a straight lane. The oars are held in place by the oarlocks to propel the boat forward. There are many different types of rowing: a rower uses one oar held with both hands. This can be done in pairs, fours or eights. Or sculling where each rower has two oars, one in each hand. Sculling is usually done in singles, doubles or quads. Rowing made its Asian Games debut in 1982. It goes further back at the Olympics – men's event being held since 1900 while women's events were first included at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. As a competitive sport, rowing goes back to the early 18th Century in England (1716). In 1829, the famous rowing regatta between the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford was established marking the beginning of the sport's rapid development.

China won nine of the 15 golds. Sri Lanka failed to qualify for the main finals in quadruple sculls finishing fourth in the heats.



Sri Lanka's men's rowing team

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Hong Kong's Cheung Ka Ho and Tse Siu Kit screen pairs spurring their sailboats

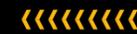
Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### SAILING

Marco Polo or Christopher Columbus would never have got anywhere if they hadn't been intrepid sailors. From ancient times, sailing has been a mode of transport as well as a way to embark on a voyage of discovery. Empires were built on sailing, from the Dutch to the British. The latter are also credited with turning sailing into a sport – after the restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660, King Charles II is said to have given his regal assent to the ancient craft becoming a sport. No wonder then that the British are good at sailing – no country has won more Olympic sailing gold medals than Britain. It was from the 1908 London Olympic Games that sailing began its unbroken run as an Olympic sport. Sailing made its Asian Games debut at the 1970 Bangkok Games. It missed out four years later in Teheran but since then has been on the medal roster. A total of 10 gold medals on offer at these Games in both men's and women's competition. There will be four different classes: Laser Standard, 470, 49er and RS:X (windsurfing). The skill of the athletes using a boat, sails, wind and water are tested.

Japan won four golds and China took three.





**RUGBY SEVENS**

Fiji won the inaugural rugby sevens gold medal at the Rio Olympics in 2016. The islanders have been dominating the sport forever, especially at the world-famous Hong Kong Sevens. As the name suggests, only seven players in each team unlike the traditional format which is played 15-a-side. Each half is also abbreviated into seven minutes (the final is 10 minutes each half) and with fewer numbers on the field, the game is fast and furious. The 15-a-side version featured in four Olympic Games (1900, 1908, 1920 and 1924). At the Asian Games, rugby sevens as well as 15s was first played at the 1998 Bangkok Games. 15-a-side was dropped from the 2006 Doha Asian Games but sevens has continued at every edition. Women competed at rugby sevens for a medal for the first time at Guangzhou 2010. Rugby has been played in Sri Lanka since 1879, just eight years after the English RFU was formed. The Ceylon Rugby Union was born in 1908.

Hong Kong won the gold medal in the men's event defeating Japan. Sri Lanka came within a whisker of beating Japan in the semi-finals, losing 10-12, thanks to a poor finish in the last move of the game with the try-line beckoning. In the bronze medal play-off against South Korea, Sri Lanka looked flat losing 14-36. Japan also won gold in the women's event beating favourites China.



**Photo:**  
Thusith Wijedoru/NOC

Sri Lanka's rugby team captain Sudharshana Muthuthanthri runs with the ball

**Photo:**  
Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



### SEPAK TAKRAW

A traditional sport in Southeast Asia, Sepak Takraw is commonly known as kick volleyball. While one can only use the hand in volleyball, Sepak Takraw is played with feet, knee, chest and head. Basically, they have taken a sport which is hard as it is and made it harder. The ball is made of woven strips of rattan or plastic and each team is made up of three players. The court is 13.4 metres x 6.1 metres and separated by a net which is about five feet off the ground for men and slightly shorter for women. There are four types of games: circle, double regu, regu and team. In 1960 representatives from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Lao and Thailand met to standardise rules and regulations for the game. Played as a medal sport at the Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) for a long time, it made its Asian Games debut at the 1990 Beijing Games. Doubles or regu match is won by best of three sets with each set being played up to 21 points. A team event is three regu matches played back-to-back using different players for each regu. Powerhouse Thailand won four of the six golds available with Indonesia and Malaysia winning the other two.



Japanese female sepak takraw player Yumumi Kawamata (right) blocks the kick of Myanmar player Khin Hnin Wai (left)

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### SPORT CLIMBING

The Cambridge English Dictionary might have a different meaning for climbing the walls – to feel frustrated, helpless, and trapped – but in sport, climbing has been given respectability. Wall climbing is a combination of strength, endurance, and flexibility, a far cry from feeling frustrated. It needs accurate calculations to decide what action to take, and decisions have to be made in split-seconds. One mistake could result in a fall. There is no second chance to repeat. The length of the wall translates into two categories: speed climbing and bouldering. This App-Generation sport is making its Asian Games debut. Six gold medals on offer. Go climb a wall quickly. It is an Olympic medal sport in 2020 Tokyo Games.

Reza Alipour of Iran is Asia's spiderman. He won gold in the men's speed climbing. China won three golds to prove that they are quick learners of any sport in the Olympics.



A Kazakhstan athlete in action

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Thai shooter Yangpaiboon Naphaswan aims his gun in the qualifying round

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC



**SHOOTING**

Being the fastest on the draw might have worked back in the days of the Wild West but in competition, apart from pistol, you also need to be accurate with shotgun and rifle, the two other categories that are part of a sport that draw heavily on skill, concentration and mental strength. It made its Asian Games debut at the 1954 Manila Games. China has traditionally dominated shooting. At these Games, organisers dropped all team events from the schedule reducing the number of gold medals on offer from 44 to 20.

China won eight golds but it was Yang Kun-pi of Chinese-Taipei who stole the limelight on the range when he equaled the world record in men's trap shooting with a score of 48 target hits (out of 50).





SQUASH

The sport's birthplace was Harrow School around 1830 and is descendant from the game of 'rackets' where instead of hitting over a net as in tennis, players hit a squeezable ball against walls. Two or four players (doubles) compete inside a court surrounded by four walls with a half-metre high 'tin' (the bottom line) on the front wall. If the ball strikes the tin or below it, it is declared out. A match consists of a best-of-five sets with each set decided by the player who reaches 11 first. A point is given per rally. The key strategy in Squash is to dominate the 'T' (the intersection of the red lines near the centre of the court) where the player is best-positioned to retrieve the opponent's next shot. Squash has made three failed bids to enter the Olympic Games even though it has genuine global appeal with more than 20 million players worldwide. Its last bid was in 2015 when the IOC excluded it from the 2020 Tokyo Olympics where climbing, surfing and skateboarding will debut. Four medals on offer at these Games.

Malaysian legend Nicol David celebrated her 35th birthday winning the women's individual gold medal, her fifth Asian Games gold. Malaysia also won the men's team gold. Hong Kong won the men's individual gold and the women's team gold.



Hong Kong Squash Player Au Chun Ming

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Sri Lanka's Anika Seneviratne returns a double-fisted backhand in second round action against top seed Zhang Shuai of China

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



TENNIS

The game's beginnings go back to Medieval times in France when it was played in a monastery courtyard using the walls and sloping roof as part of the court. There was no racket, with the palm being used to hit the ball. The modern game was born in England. By the late 19th Century, the popularity of lawn tennis had overtaken croquet. The All England Croquet Club embraced the sport and designated certain croquet lawns to be used for tennis. In 1913, lawn tennis was becoming increasingly popular around the world. A dozen existing national tennis associations banded together in Paris and formed the International Lawn Tennis Federation. Tennis was included in the Olympics from 1896 to 1924. It did not return as a medal sport until the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Professionals are now welcome to compete. Tennis made its Asian Games debut in 1958. Tennis was introduced to Sri Lanka by the British in 1915. The Open Nationals and the Colombo Championships have continuously been held for 103 years. Sri Lanka Tennis is the oldest Asian tennis federation. In soft tennis, also included at these Games, the racket is smaller and lighter. The field is the same as the regular tennis court. The most prominent difference is the use of rubber balls, lighter than a normal hard tennis ball and has a very high speed when hit. The game is not as physically demanding as tennis.

Denis Istomin of Uzbekistan won the men's singles while in an all-China women's singles final Wang Qiang defeated top seed Zhang Shuai to win gold. Zhang had defeated Sri Lanka's Anika Seneviratne in the round-of-32. Sharmal Dissanayake also made it this far in the men's singles before losing to Yasutaka Uchiyama of Japan. Japan and South Korea won two golds apiece in soft tennis.



Sri Lanka's Sharmal Dissanayake in action

Photo: Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



**TABLE TENNIS**

It is believed that upper-class Victorians around 1880 in England invented Table Tennis as a genteel after-dinner alternative to lawn tennis. They didn't want to get messy and sweaty, especially after a hearty meal. And they were quite inventive using the rounded top of a champagne cork as a ball, cigar box lids as rackets and a line of books as a net. In 1926, meetings were held in Berlin and London that led to the formation of the International Table Tennis Federation, but the sport had to wait a long time before it was given its Olympic debut at the 1988 Seoul Games – probably the ping-pong diplomacy where the exchange of players between the United States and China in the early 1970s that paved the way to a visit to Beijing by President Richard Nixon (although today, Trump didn't need any sporting diplomacy to meet Kim or Putin). The sport has progressed enormously since it was invented. Players use specially-developed rubber coated wooden and carbon-fibre rackets and a lightweight, hollow celluloid ball. Thanks to these high-tech rackets, smashes can exceed 150 kilometres per hour. It is estimated that there are 40 million competitive table tennis players and countless millions playing recreationally making it the sport with the most participants according to the IOC. It is no coincidence that China is the dominant force in the sport.

They made a clean sweep winning all five gold medals.



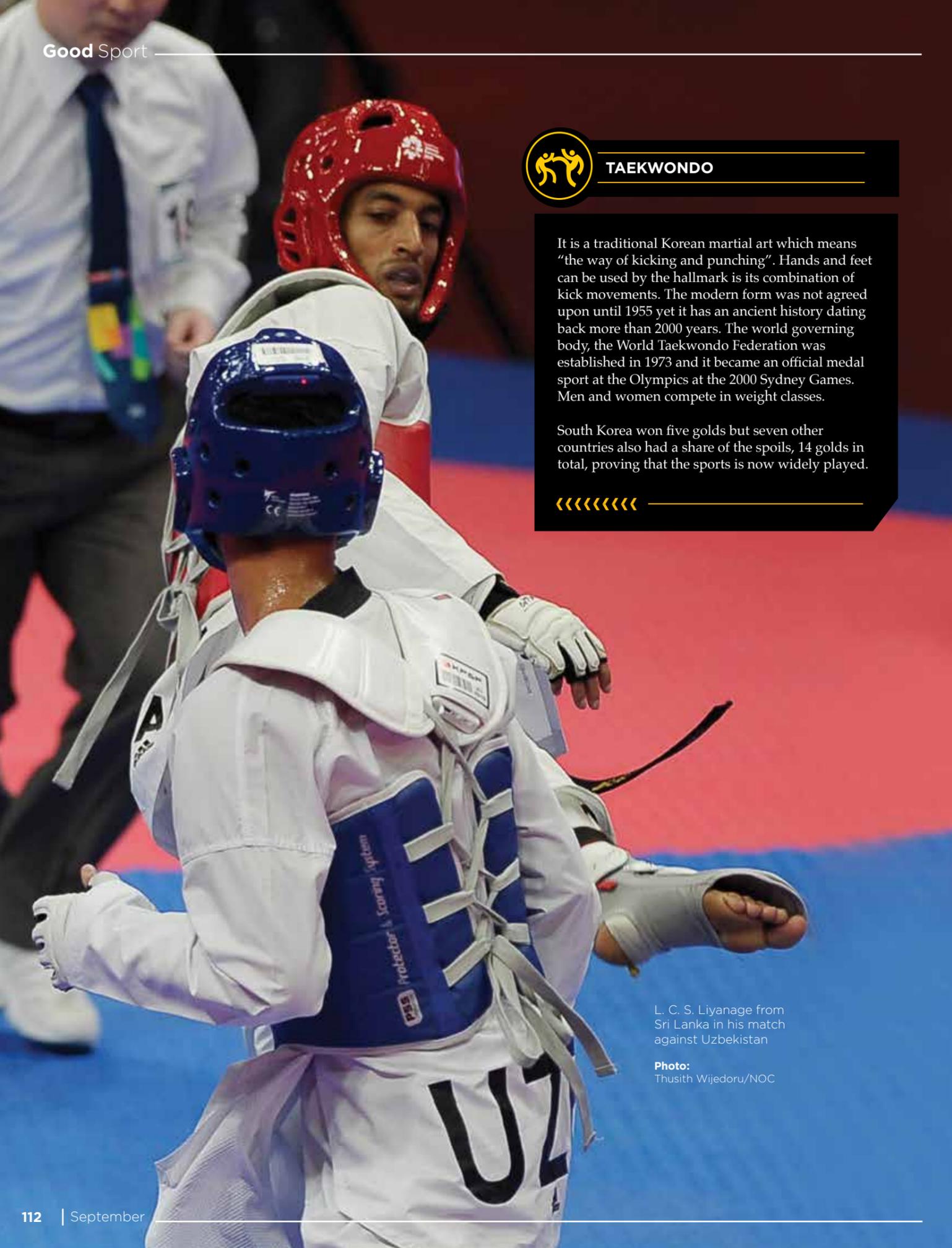
Chinese table tennis player  
Chen Meng

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC



Sri Lanka's Madurangi  
Darshika

**Photo:**  
Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



**TAEKWONDO**

It is a traditional Korean martial art which means “the way of kicking and punching”. Hands and feet can be used by the hallmark is its combination of kick movements. The modern form was not agreed upon until 1955 yet it has an ancient history dating back more than 2000 years. The world governing body, the World Taekwondo Federation was established in 1973 and it became an official medal sport at the Olympics at the 2000 Sydney Games. Men and women compete in weight classes.

South Korea won five golds but seven other countries also had a share of the spoils, 14 golds in total, proving that the sports is now widely played.



L. C. S. Liyanage from Sri Lanka in his match against Uzbekistan

**Photo:**  
Thusith Wijedoru/NOC



Athletes push their bikes during the Triathlon Women's race

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC



**TRIATHLON**

Wanting an alternative workout to the rigours of track training, the San Diego Track Club invented triathlon in the early 1970s pushing athletes to the limits in three different sports, swimming, cycling and running. Over the next decade, triathlon's popularity continued to build, and it soon gained worldwide recognition. In 1989, the International Triathlon Union was founded in Avignon, France and the first official World Championships were held. Two years later, an annual world circuit was launched – 12 races in nine different countries. Triathlon made its Olympic debut at the 2000 Sydney Games – the Olympic distance is 1,500m swim, 40km cycling, and 10km run. Gaining Olympic recognition has made the sport even more popular. There are now 120 affiliated national federations around the world. It made its Asian Games debut in 2006 Doha. Japan won all three gold medals, in men's, women's and mixed relay.

Indonesian Triathlete Andi Ameera Sayaka Cakravastia

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC





Indonesian beach volleyball player Putu Dini Jasita Utami tries to return the ball

**Photo:**  
OCA/INASGOC

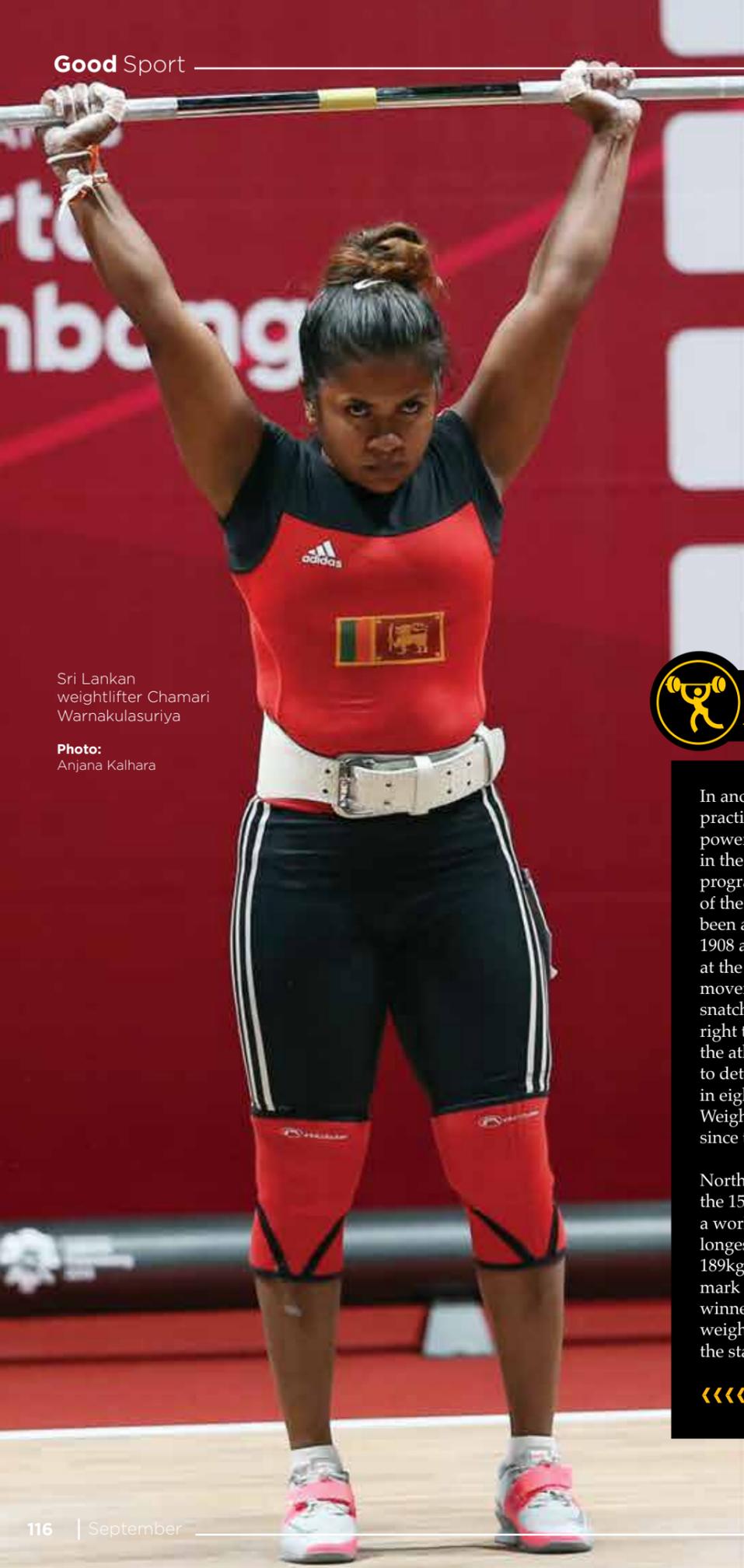


**VOLLEYBALL**

The traditional six-a-side indoor version is one of two volleyball disciplines on the Olympic programme alongside its beach-based cousin (which has two players in a team). Both follow the same lines: one team serves and the tries to win the rally, with a pattern of dig, set and spike within the permitted three touches. The International Volleyball Federation was founded in 1946, 10 years before the sport was recognised by the International Olympic Committee. It became an Olympic sport for both men and women, at the 1964 Tokyo Games. The Asian Games ushered in volleyball earlier – it was a medal sport for men at the 1958 Tokyo Asian Games and four years later women were also included.

Iran won the men’s gold while China took the women’s gold in volleyball. Sri Lanka, who defeated Vietnam and the Maldives in the preliminary group stage, finished 13th overall after victories over Nepal and Vietnam in the classification rounds. In beach volleyball, Qatar took the men’s gold while China dominated the women’s event.





Sri Lankan weightlifter Chamari Warnakulasuriya

Photo: Anjana Kalhara



Sri Lankanlifter Indika Chathuranga Dissanayake completes a "snatch"

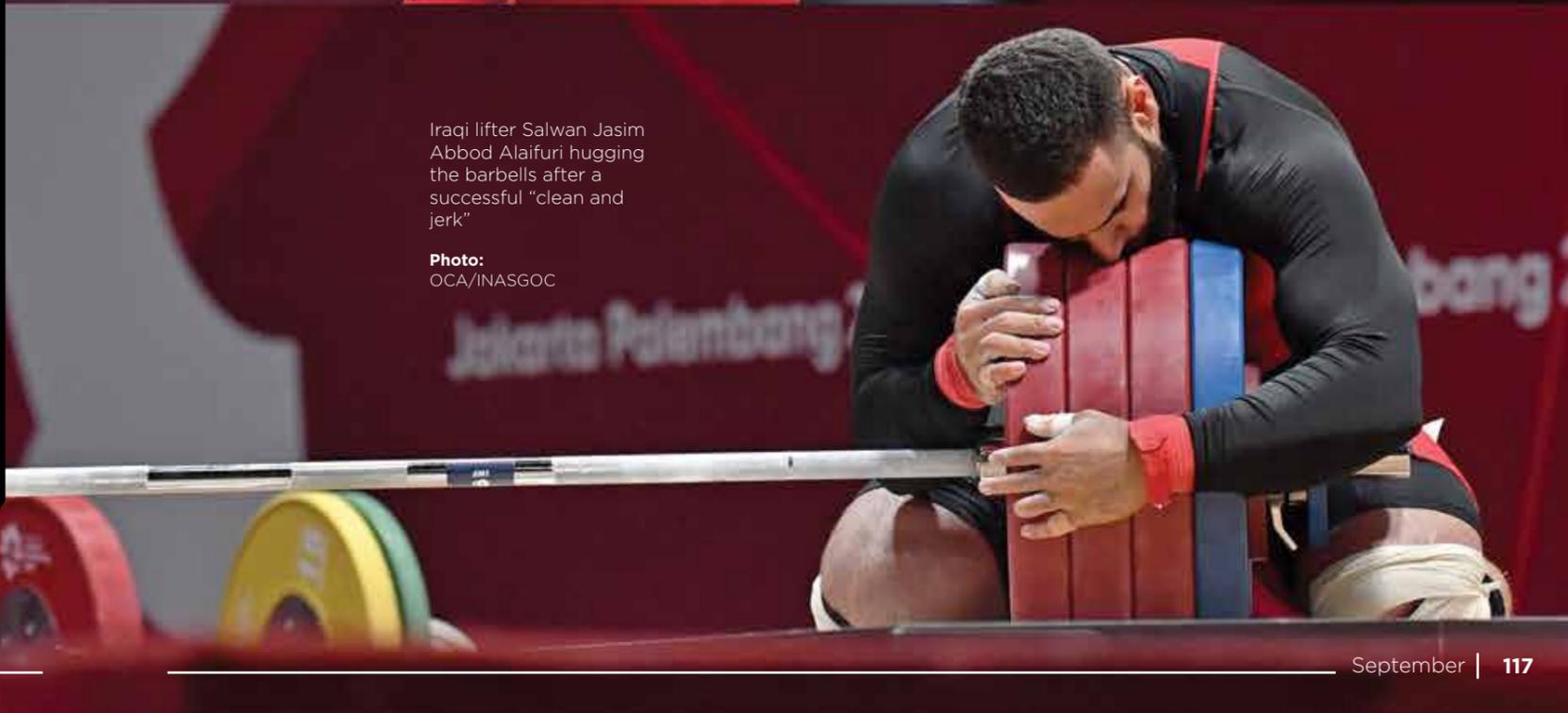
Photo: OCA/INASGOC



### WEIGHTLIFTING

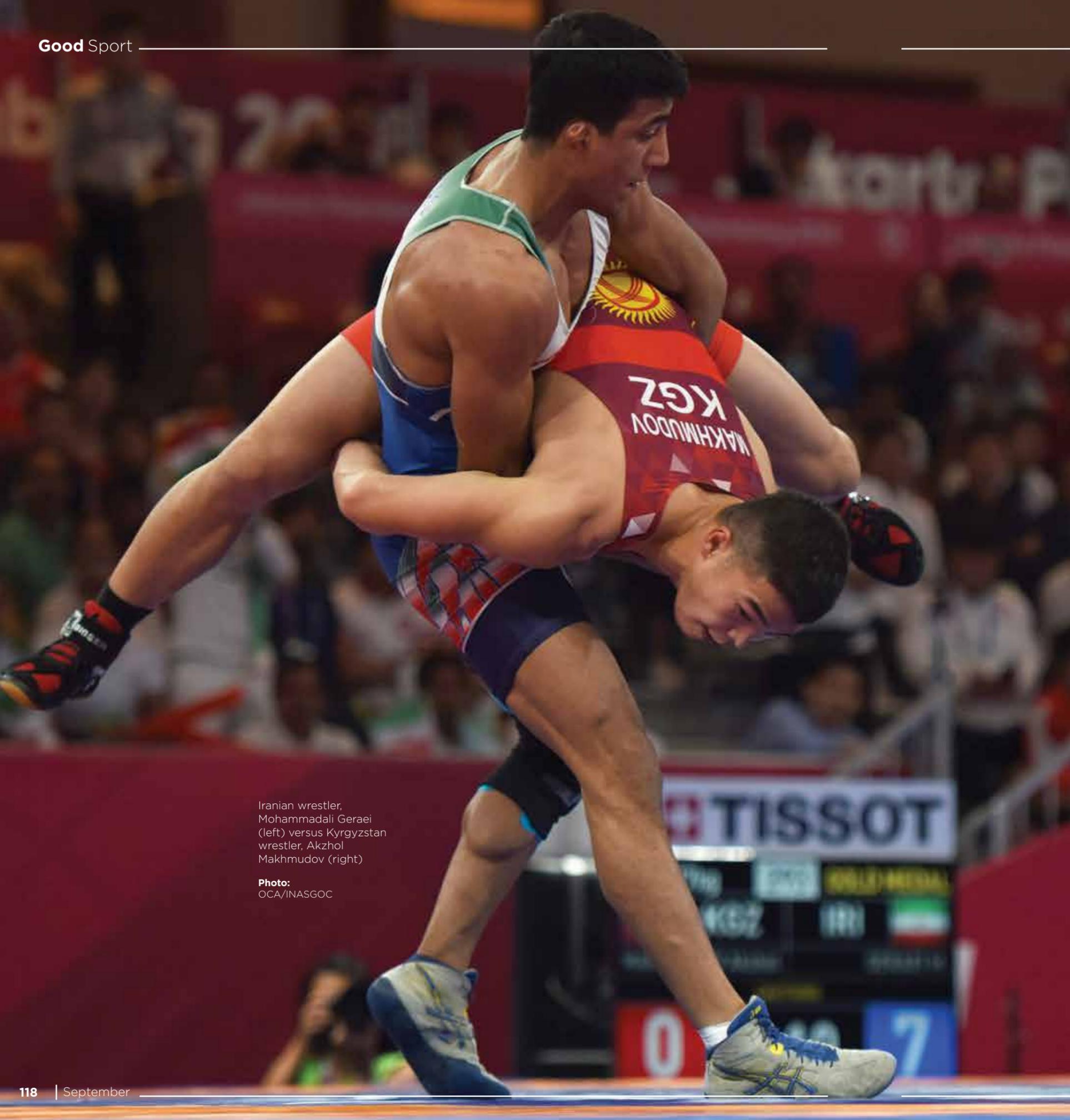
In ancient Greece and Egypt, weightlifting was practiced as a means to measure strength and power. It developed as an international sport in the 19th Century and was part of the medal programme at the 1896 Athens Games, the start of the modern Olympics. Although men have been at the Olympics since – apart from 1900, 1908 and 1912 – women started to participate only at the 2000 Games. Weightlifting consists of two movements executed in a standard order: first the snatch and then the clean jerk. Each athlete has the right to three attempts for each movement, with the athlete's best performance in both put together to determine the final placement. Men compete in eight weight categories and women in seven. Weightlifting has been part of the Asian Games since the inception – 1951 New Delhi.

North Korea dominated the sport winning eight of the 15 golds. Iran won two golds, including setting a world record. Sohrab Moradi broke the world's longest-standing world record when he snatched 189kg in the men's 94kg class to erase the old mark of 188kg. Five other countries climbing the winners' podium. Sri Lanka who won medals in weightlifting at the Commonwealth Games found the standards much higher.



Iraqi lifter Salwan Jasim Abbod Alaifuri hugging the barbells after a successful "clean and jerk"

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



Iranian wrestler, Mohammadali Gerai (left) versus Kyrgyzstan wrestler, Akzhol Makhmudov (right)

Photo: OCA/INASGOC



WRESTLING

With the possible exception of athletics, wrestling is recognised as the world's oldest competitive sport. Cave drawings of wrestlers have been found dating as far back as 3000 B.C. Wrestling was one of the original sports in the programme of the ancient Olympic Games in Greece in 776 B.C. While Greco-Roman was the original style, freestyle wrestling grew in popularity across Britain and the US and took a firm hold because of its greater freedoms within the rules to tackle and subdue your opponent. Greco-Roman wrestling was part of the first modern Olympics Games at Athens 1896 before freestyle was introduced eight years later. Women's wrestling only joined the Olympics in 2004 Athens. In Greco-Roman wrestling, you can only use your arms and upper bodies to attack and holds are allowed from the waist up, while in freestyle, legs can also be used to attack and holds are allowed on the whole body. Matches in both styles consist of two, three-minute bouts, with a 30-second interval. Wrestling made its Asian Games debut in 1954 Manila.

Iran won five golds with five other countries winning two golds each – China, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, North Korea and South Korea.



TEAM SRI LANKA

**NOC Officials & HQ Officials**



**Dampath Fernando**  
Chef de Mission  
**Gamini Jayasinghe**  
Deputy Chef de Mission



**Asanga Seneviratne**  
Administrative Official  
**Dinesh Krisantha**  
Administrative Official



**Hansika Wijayagunasekara**  
Administrative Official  
**Chalani Dayarathna**  
Administrative Official



**Dilema Peterson**  
HQ Official (Lady Chaperone)  
**R.A. Wimalasena**  
HQ Official (Former Olympian)

**Archery**



**M. Sajeev De Silva**  
Athlete  
**Lee Chung Woon**  
Coach

**Golf**



**Anura Rohana**  
Athlete  
**Nadaraja Thangaraja**  
Athlete

**Athletics**



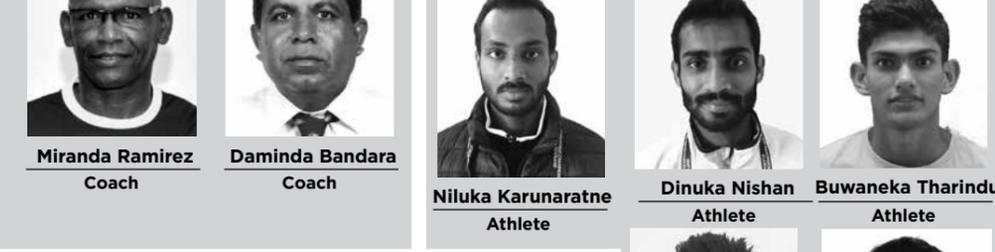
**Ajith Premakumara**  
Athlete  
**Aruna Dharshana**  
Athlete  
**Kalinga Kumarage**  
Athlete  
**Pasindu Lakshan**  
Athlete  
**Dilip Ruwan**  
Athlete



**Janaka Prasad**  
Athlete  
**Indunil Madushan**  
Athlete  
**Gayanthika Thushari**  
Athlete  
**W.K.L.A. Nimali**  
Athlete  
**Nilani Rathnayaka**  
Athlete



**Rumeshika Kumari**  
Athlete  
**Hiruni Kesara**  
Athlete  
**Saman Kumara**  
Manager  
**Badra Gunawardana**  
Coach  
**Sajith Jayalal**  
Coach



**Miranda Ramirez**  
Coach  
**Daminda Bandara**  
Coach  
**Niluka Karunaratne**  
Athlete  
**Dinuka Nishan**  
Athlete  
**Buwaneka Tharindu**  
Athlete

**Beach Volleyball**



**Sachin Premashan**  
Athlete  
**Kavidi Ishadika**  
Athlete  
**Asanka Pradeep**  
Athlete  
**Malintha Yapa**  
Athlete  
**Mahesh Perera**  
Coach

**Badminton**



**Thilini Promodika**  
Athlete  
**Tony Wahyudi**  
Coach  
**Arnold Princely Cooke**  
Team Manager

TEAM SRI LANKA

**Basketball**

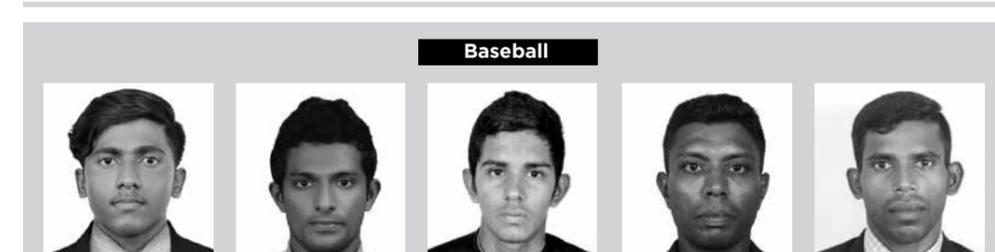


**Brent Thevakumar**  
Athlete  
**Pawan Gamage**  
Athlete  
**Chanuka Shehan**  
Athlete  
**Kisal Damsika**  
Athlete  
**Imesha Thathsarani**  
Athlete

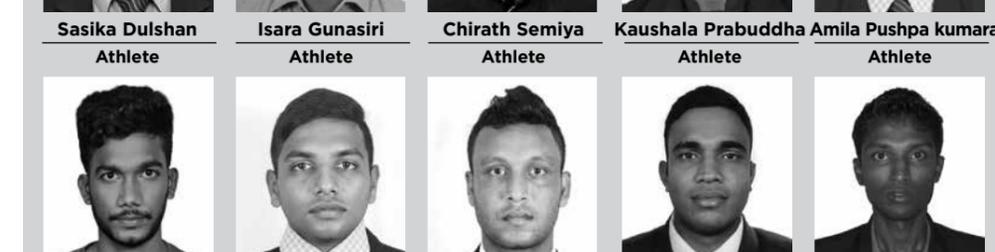


**Fathima Lubana**  
Athlete  
**Rashmi Taniya**  
Athlete  
**Anne Stephanie**  
Athlete  
**Faris Ismail**  
Manager  
**Selvaraja Sivashakthi**  
Head Coach

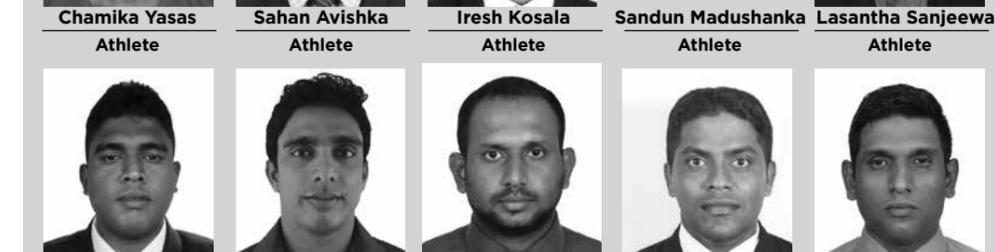
**Baseball**



**Sasika Dulshan**  
Athlete  
**Isara Gunasiri**  
Athlete  
**Chirath Semiya**  
Athlete  
**Kaushala Prabuddha**  
Athlete  
**Amila Pushpa kumara**  
Athlete



**Chamika Yasas**  
Athlete  
**Sahan Avishka**  
Athlete  
**Iresh Kosala**  
Athlete  
**Sandun Madushanka**  
Athlete  
**Lasantha Sanjeewa**  
Athlete



**Tharidu Madumal**  
Athlete  
**Sanjeewa Udayasiri**  
Athlete  
**Saliya Anuradha**  
Athlete  
**Nelank Karunaratna**  
Athlete  
**Naweena Anuradha**  
Athlete

**E-sport**



**Amrith Alfred**  
Athlete  
**Mihiliya Methsarani**  
Athlete  
**Prabash Sri Malinda**  
Team Official  
**Naushard Issadeen**  
Athlete  
**Raveen Wijesinha**  
Team Official  
**C.H. Thalagala**  
Coach

**Canoeing**



**Buddika Idunil**  
Athlete



**Ravindu Hashintha**  
Athlete

**Squash**



**Reshmin Mihin**  
Coach



**Mohamed Shamil**  
Athlete



**Amrith Alfred**  
Athlete

**Squash**



**Mihiliya Methsarani**  
Athlete

TEAM SRI LANKA

Boxing						
 Thiwanka Sandaruwan Athlete	 Ishan Ranjeewa Athlete	 Dushan Saparamadu Athlete	 Anusha Dilrukshi Athlete	 Keshani Hansika Athlete	 Ayoma Dulanjani Athlete	 Dian Gomes Coach
 Amila Aravinda Coach	 Vinnikov Volodymyr Coach	 Manju Dinesh Coach	 Harsha Kumara Coach	Judo		
 Chamara Nuwan Athlete	 Rajitha Pushpa Kumara Athlete	 Amal Ratnayake Coach	Indoor Volleyball			
 Madusanka Premaratna Athlete	 Romesh Ranawaka Athlete	 Lasindu Methmal Athlete	 Janitha Surath Athlete	 Dinidu Chamara Athlete	 Malinda Silva Athlete	 Anna-Marie Suzanne Athlete
 Dilhan Perera Athlete	 Wasantha Lakmal Athlete	 Chathuranga Fernando Athlete	 Dilshan Fernando Athlete	 Vimukthi Sagara Athlete	 Chamara Mihiran Athlete	 Svetlana Joukova Coach (Rhythmic Gymnastic)
 A.W. Lakmal Athlete	 Pramesh Prasanna Athlete	 Chiththadhamma Rathnamudali Team Manager	 Dejan Vulicevic Head Coach	 Charles Thilakarathna Asst. Coach	 Sampath Abeysinghe Asst. Coach	 Akihiro Lokukaluge Athlete
 Lakshitha Jayakody Athlete	 Tharindu Sampaya Athlete	 Prasanga Sadaruwan Athlete	 Dinusha Kumari Athlete	 Tharika Samanmali Athlete	 Rohana Greasman Team Manager	 Chaminda Manohara Coach

TEAM SRI LANKA

Hockey						
 Maduranga Wijesinghe Athlete	 H.M. Pushpa Kumara Athlete	 Tharindu Kumara Athlete	 Pushpakumara Dharmarathne Athlete	 Ishanka Kumara Athlete	 Dilan Kulathunga Athlete	 Irosha Gunawardhana Athlete
 Demian De Silva Athlete	 Chamilka Rukshan Athlete	 Gamage Sanjeeve Athlete	 Gihan Weerasooriya Athlete	 Prabath Ranasingha Athlete	 Anuradha Suresh Athlete	 Gihan Sangeeth Athlete
 Ravidu Seran Athlete	 Priyalanka Sudusinghe Athlete	 Udayashan Fernando Athlete	 Danushka Fernando Athlete	 Palitha Priyantha Team Manager	 Thamara Paragodaliyanage Asst. Team Manager	 Herath Bandara Coach
 Chamika Lanarolle Asst. Coach	 Gamini Siyamudali Trainer	Kabaddi - Men's				
 Ranidu Chamara Athlete	 Chaminda Ruwan Athlete	 Aslam Saja Athlete	 Asiri Sandaruwan Athlete	 Lahiru Sampath Athlete		
 Kithsiri Ekanayake Team Doctor	 Anura Priyananda Masseur	 Milinda Chathuranga Athlete	 Dilan Sanjaya Yapage Athlete	 Ishara Sampath Athlete	 Lahiru Kosala Athlete	 Madushan Pushpakumara Athlete
 Manjula Pradeep Masseur	 Saumya Darshani Masseur	 Sajith Indra Kumara Athlete	 Nishantha Gunawardhana Athlete	 Nishantha Fernando Team Manager	 Kamal Somasiri Coach	 D.P.P. Rangajeewa Asst. Coach

**TEAM SRI LANKA**

**Kabaddi - Women's**



**Madurika Hansamali Athlete** **Kaushalya Herath Athlete** **Indika Damayanthi Athlete** **Sarasika Wijethunga Athlete** **Madusha Wijetilaka Athlete**



**Kokila Edirisingha Athlete** **Dilrukshi Wijethunga Athlete** **Sithumi Manodani Athlete** **Methusala Thilakshani Athlete** **Madushani Chathurika Athlete**



**Manori Jayasingha Athlete** **Thilini Kanchana Athlete** **Udaya Deshapriya Team Manager** **Amila Udayakantha Coach** **Shanaka Geeth Asst. Coach**

**Roller Skating**



**Dilshan Perera Athlete** **Pramuditha Silva Athlete**



**Tharindaya Soyza Athlete** **Maleesha Perera Athlete**



**Rakhitha Savithri Coach - Women's Team** **Rathnasiri Perera Coach - Men's Team**

**Rowing**



**Buddhika Chathuranga Athlete** **Sampath Rupasinghe Athlete**



**Amila Senarathna Athlete** **Udara Udawaththa Athlete**



**Nirmal Kulanthaivel Manager** **Lilan Kannangara Coach**

**Swimming**



**Charles Abeysinghe Athlete** **Matthew Abeysinghe Athlete**



**Gihash De Silva Athlete** **Akalanka Peiris Athlete**



**Kavindra Nugawela Athlete** **Aaron Hulme Coach**

**Tennis**



**Anika Seneviratne Athlete** **Anjalika Kurera Athlete**



**Sharmal Dissanayake Athlete** **Yasitha De Silva Athlete**



**Shalini De Silva Team Manager** **Dineshkanthan Thangaraja Coach**

**Table Tennis**



**Udaya Ranasinghe Athlete**



**Madurangi Darshika Athlete**



**Wajira Madushanka Coach**

**TEAM SRI LANKA**

**Rugby - Men's Team**



**Sudharshana Muthuthantri Athlete** **Jesan Dissanayaka Athlete** **Kavindu Perera Athlete** **Danushka Ranjan Athlete** **Rumesh Silva Athlete** **Srinath Sooriyabandara Athlete** **Sudam Parinda Athlete**



**Dayan Chandradas Athlete** **Tharinda Ratwatte Athlete** **Bushna Piyarathna Athlete** **Reeza Raffaideen Athlete** **Gayan Weerathne Athlete** **Rohan Chinthaka Team Manager** **Peter George Coach**



**Hasitha Tharaka Physiotherapist** **James Groube Strength and Conditioning Trainer**

**Wushu**



**Nuwan Balawardhana Athlete** **Weerasinghe Pathirage Athlete** **Priyantha Edirisingha Team Manager** **Kapila Badra Coach**

**Sailing**



**Roshil Nishantha Athlete**

**Weightlifting**



**Thilanka Viraj Kumara Athlete** **Indika Chathuranga Athlete**



**Dinusha Hansani Athlete** **Chamari Mendis Athlete**



**R.M.R.B. Wickramasinghe Team Manager cum Head Coach** **Rukshan Gunathilaka Asst. Coach**

**Taekwondo**



**Sheron Fernando Athlete** **Sampath Liyanage Athlete** **Thisara Dharmapriya Athlete** **Ranuri Wanthila Athlete**



**Kalpini Wijerathna Athlete** **Nisansala Sandamali Athlete** **Punchihewa Chaminda Team Manager** **Rathnasekara Romesh Coach**



**Gamage Thusitha Coach cum Manager**

**Triathlon**



**Lakruwan Wijesiri Athlete**

**Wrestling**

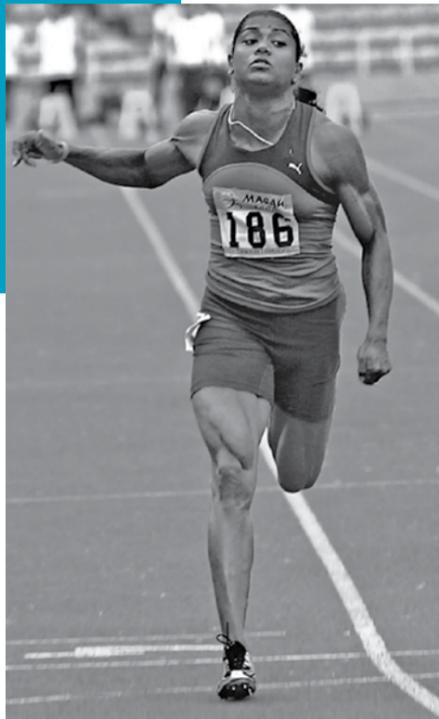


**Charles Fernando Athlete** **Priyanka Perera Team Manager** **Chandimal Fernando Coach**



**Mahinda Liyanage Coach cum Manager**

# The Last Shot



## Susanthika Still Stands Tall

By Alvin Sallay

**A**h sweet nostalgia. Nothing like a good shot of it as we look back at the 18th Asian Games and Sri Lanka's performance, especially in track and field, an area where once upon a time our athletes strode around Asian arenas like Colossi.

The melancholy descended as I watched our class of 2018 struggle in the humidity and heat at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium, a 78,000-seater Coliseum, reportedly given as a gift to former Indonesian strongman Sukarno by Nikita Khrushchev in the 60s.

It was brought on reading the start list for the women's 100 metres showpiece. Every event states the holders of the World record, Asian record and Asian Games record. Against the latter is: Susanthika Jayasinghe, Sri, Busan, 8th October, 2002. Her time was 11.15 seconds.

It still stands. Bahrain's Nigerian-born Edidiong Oding won the race in a dash of 11.30, well behind what our Susie girl did 16 years ago on a balmy night in Korea. I felt proud to be a Sri Lankan seeing her name etched in the record books.

Those were the days when our athletes stood tall on the track. Remember Rosa and Wimaladasa? Rosa winning two gold medals in the long-distance events in the 10,000 metres and 5,000 metres at the 1970 Bangkok Games and Wimaladasa winning gold in the men's 400m and then another in the men's 4x100m relay which included Gunawardene, Sahabandu and Premachandra. These were household names then.

Then what about Damayanthi Darsha winning gold in the women's 200m and 400m at the 1998 Bangkok Games. As did Sugath Tillekeratne in the men's 200m. Darsha's 200m mark – 22.48 – is still a Games record. She won gold again, joining Susanthika as a gold medalist in Busan. Susie also won a silver and bronze in the 100m and 200m respectively at the 2006 Doha Games becoming the only Sri Lanka to win medals at three Asian Games, having started with a silver in the 200m at the 1994 Games in Hiroshima.

Those were heady days. Sri Lanka was feared in athletics. Other countries respected us. Sadly, it is not the case anymore. This is no time for recrimination. That is a pointless exercise. Let's look ahead.

A good start will be to look at how the Prime Minister's Sports Fund will be used. Last month Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe handed over

Rs. 50 million to the National Olympic Committee who together with a specially appointed committee will look at how this money will be used.

This sum is peanuts when compared to what other countries spend on their athletes. The Hong Kong government set up an Elite Athletes Development Fund back in 2011. This fund currently has HK\$12.5 billion (250 billion rupees) in it. This money is invested and only the returns are used annually. Last year HK\$560 million, which is just more than 11 billion rupees, went to athletes. In Singapore, the annual expenditure on elite athletes was S\$70 million or roughly eight billion rupees.

Our 50 million rupees is just a drop in the water. But it is a start. A good one as previously no government has acknowledged our sportsmen and women. How the money is used is the big question now. Let's follow what Singapore and Hong Kong are doing and set up an elite training academy for high performance sports – elite athletes, both senior and junior, get support.

Hong Kong supports 19 different sports. Sri Lanka can start with a handful, say five or six, and look at increasing the number when more funds are available – there is already talk that the Prime Minister's Fund will increase to Rs. 300 million soon.

It is imperative that we identify right away which sports have a realistic chance of winning medals at the next Asian Games in 2022 in Hangzhou, China, and give these sports all the technical and coaching help needed as well as funds to participate regularly in overseas competition.

Athletics must be inked in. It has brought glory to Sri Lanka in the past. Let's help it regain its rightful place in Asia.

**Alvin Sallay was chief sportswriter for the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong for more than two decades. He has covered four Olympic Games, eight Asian Games, one soccer World Cup, an America's Cup, every Hong Kong Rugby Sevens since 1985, and numerous other international sporting events from cricket to tennis. He is now on a mission to raise the profile of Sri Lanka sport.**



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