

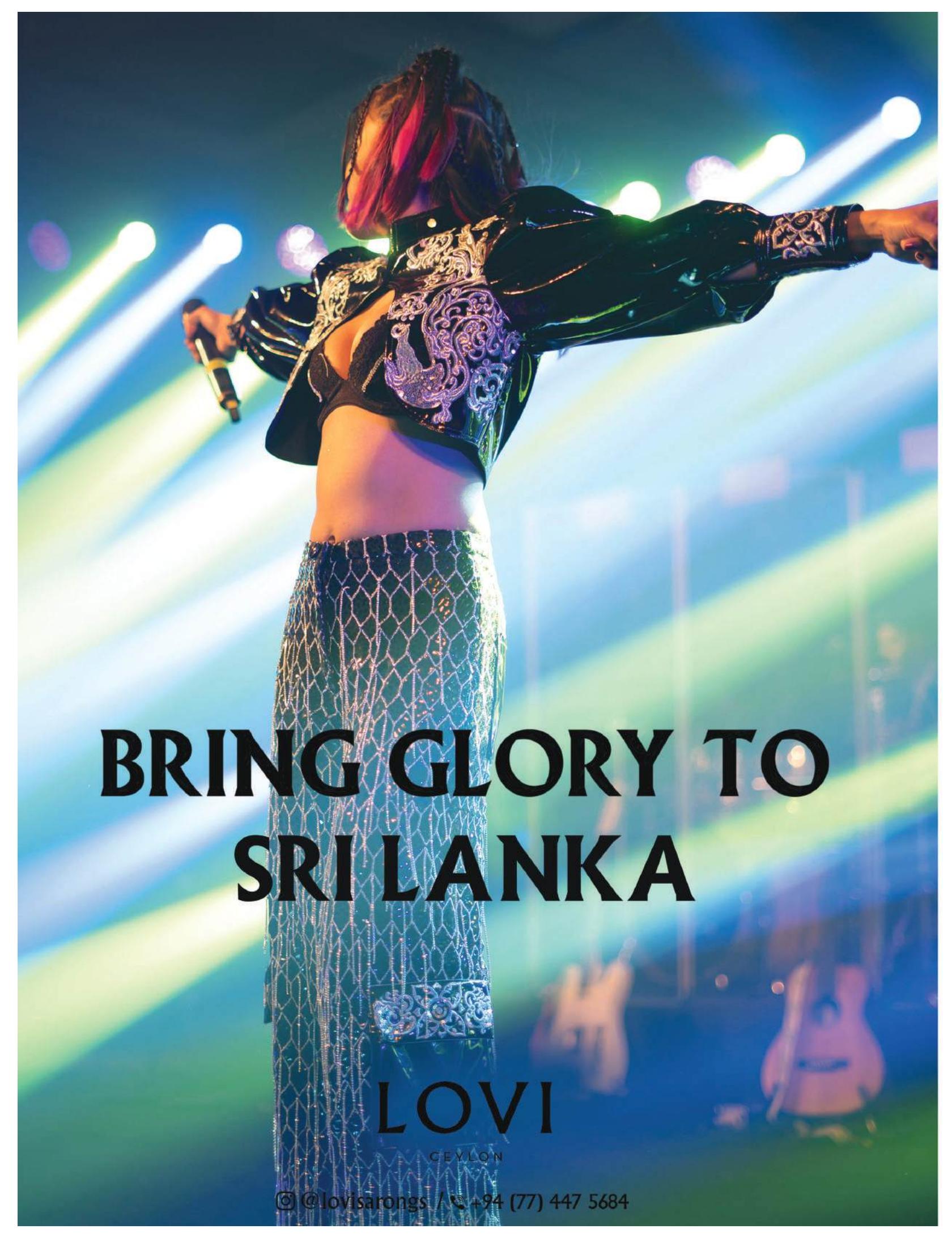
Official Publication of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka

GoodSport

Youth Edition 2025



YOUTH
TO THE FORE



**BRING GLORY TO
SRI LANKA**

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GoodSport

Youth Edition 2025



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President's Message



Time to look deeper

Owing to the prevailing century old education system where there are close to 10,000 schools proving the feeder point to sports, Sri Lanka junior sports system is indeed in a much healthier state than most of the countries of this kind in the global context.

It was a system that started with schools like Royal, Kingswood, Trinity, Ananda, S. Thomas', Richmond and Jaffna College, to name a few. As a result, Sri Lanka's first Olympic Medalist hailed from Trinity College Kandy in Duncan White, winning silver in the 400-metre hurdles at the 1948 Summer Olympics in London, England.

The School sports system thus thrived. In 1951 Pole Vaulter M.A. Akbar won Sri Lanka's first medal in the Asian Games, but the first Gold in the Asian Games realm was bagged by Nagalingam Ethirweerasingam who had his initial education at the Jaffna Central College.

The system went deep-rooted and system really went into the backwoods and the biggest achievement came on the back of Susanthika Jayasinghe, a lass

from an unheard of school by the name of Uduwaka Junior School and then later switched to Athnawala Maha Vidyalaya to continue her studies. Nonetheless by the turn of the millennium once again she Sri Lanka wore a Silver around her neck by taking the 200m sprint title at 2000 Sydney Olympics.

While talking of sports accolades as Sri Lankans we cannot forget to ignore the achievements of our cricketers – a game by far the most organized in the country there too we have the credential of winning the Cricket World Cup in 1996, the World T-20 Championship in 2011. This is ample testimony to claim that we do have the talent. Yet there is a stark reality in these sports pit stops. They have come in yawning gaps.

The two Olympic medals came Sri Lanka's way forty-four years apart. The two cricket crowns came Sri Lanka's way fifteen years apart in spite of having one of the most effective cricket nurseries in the world.

As National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka, we are mindful of the status quo. During the past eight years we have strived to update the sporting the community of Sri Lanka to educate themselves and change the attitudes and machinations in a bid to strengthen base so that while moving up the ages the athletes would be aware of the challenges and also have to know how to deal with them.

Obviously the Lankan junior sports are good standard and in most instances could stand shoulder-to-shoulder with any on the global stage. But, the drawback in most cases come in the mid-session. A teenager may be brilliant in during their school career, but, the oblique hits when the student faces the hurdle of higher studies in this very competitive day and age and the brilliance in sports in the next stage.

As a result some give up, some take a education based break. Both are not healthy to the smooth flow of success.

In a pose in reality it is a hurdle that could not be overcome by the National Olympic Committee or the respective sports authorities. It only could be achieved through a careful peep deep into the looking glass and change the system that could accommodate both academic brilliance and sports brilliance -- maybe sports universities.

Suresh Subramaniam



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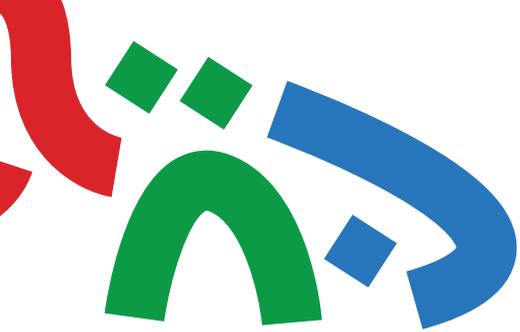
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Secretary General's Message



Growing with the Sport

Sri Lanka has long held an unenviable position in Asia's sporting landscape – a modest island nation with immense potential. Across our cities and remote villages alike, raw talent continues to emerge—driven not by access to world-class facilities, but by sheer will, resilience and an abiding love for sport.

Despite lacking many of the technically advanced training infrastructures that our regional peers such as India, China, Japan and South Korea – enjoy, Sri Lankan athletes continue to demonstrate remarkable promise.

Globally, the role of youth sport is evolving. It is now recognized not merely as a platform for competition, but as a tool to combat physical inactivity, improve mental well-being and promote inclusion.

According to UNESCO, over 80% of adolescents worldwide do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity. In this global dialogue, Sri Lanka is not on the sidelines. Our youth, who train in the most modest of environments yet carry dreams of competing on the world stage, are very much a part of this movement.

At home, signs of promise are everywhere—from school-level events that draw crowds in the thousands to young athletes who train before dawn. The hunger, heart and spirit are undeniable. Yet, we face a recurring challenge: continuity. The transition from promising junior to elite senior athlete remains a steep climb. Many fall through the cracks—not due to a lack of talent, but because of systemic barriers that fail to support the delicate balance between education and high-performance sport.

UNESCO studies indicate that dropout rates in youth sport increase significantly between the ages of 15 to 17—the very age when athletes must navigate national exams, societal expectations and limited institutional support.

Still, there are moments that remind us of what's possible: a youth Olympian making a final, a teenager topping Asian rankings, or a school athlete becoming a local hero. These are not mere anomalies—they are proof that when belief is met with opportunity, excellence can follow.

At the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka, our role extends far beyond selecting national teams. It begins at the grassroots—identifying talent, nurturing potential, fostering resilience and challenging the barriers that hinder progress. Our mission is to ensure that sport is not something young Sri Lankans outgrow. It must grow with them.

Rifdy Fahmy





COVER STORY

The cover story revolves around youth and here we focus upon three youthful sports personalities – barely in their teens or just past it, but are thickly in the focus in the respective international bodies.

First, wrestler Nethmi Ahinsa came into focus as a teenager and became the first recipient of the Lankan female medal order in the sport at the 2020 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. Not stopping at that, Porutotage Nethmi Ahinsa Fernando has created another first by bagging the U23 Asian Wrestling Championships in Vung Tau, Vietnam, once again becoming the first Lankan to win a medal at this event. A few months ago, she was pronounced as the International female wrestler for the month of June 2025.

Badminton player Viren Nettasinghe also grabbed attention as a teenager during the 2022 Asian Games with a plucky performance coming in from virtual oblivion. Though his pre-Asian Games were good enough for the selection, the opposition he met were some of Asia's best. Spurred by the limited Asian Games success Viren improved his performances so much so that the Lankan Olympic Authorities selected him as their team captain for the last Paris Olympics in 2024.

Early this year Viren once again stirred the badminton status quo by beating the reigning world number two, Anders Antonsen of Denmark in an exhibition game in Sri Lanka. Yet, to beat the number two in the World in any sort of duet takes a lot of will and skill.

First, when slightly-built Tharushi Karunaratne walked into the National Olympic Committee office to face an interview for the Crysbro Athletic Scholarship, honestly a few eyebrows were raised. Yet, it did not take long for the Lankan athletic fraternity to learn that she was all talent and had the will to win. Thus she proved it all by winning the 800m Gold at the Asian Games.

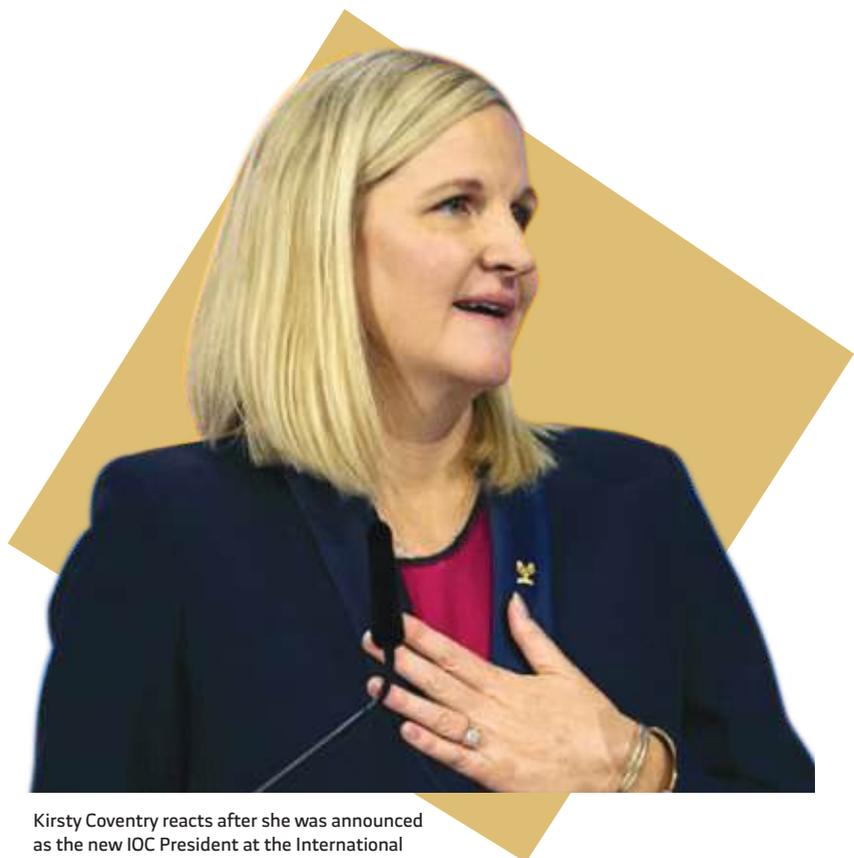
Common among the three icons are; they all belong to the present generation and not too far away from the under 17 athletics contingent who will be on show at the Asian Youth Games from 22-31 October. The three icons have set a new bar proving as to what Lankans could achieve as teenagers and the two Bahrain towers depict the high that is challenged. The above knows the pride of holding on to your National Flag and making it flutter in front of an international audience.

GoodSport has reserved the major portion of this edition to introduce the Bahrain bound contingent. Yet, what the country calls is for you to become one of the icons who sets the bar.





IOC new President Kirsty Coventry signalling a shift in approach



Kirsty Coventry reacts after she was announced as the new IOC President at the International Olympic Committee 144th session in Costa Navarino, Western Greece. | Photo Credit: AP

As the gender furore that engulfed boxing at the 2024 Paris Olympics rumbles on, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is weighing reintroducing testing, while several sports have already embraced testing for male chromosomes. Such testing has its critics and the Olympics have already tried it once only to abandon it in 1996.

Incoming president Kirsty Coventry, who will become the first woman to lead the Olympic movement when she started her term, signalled a change of direction on this politically inflammatory and scientifically complex issue when she was elected in March.

“We will protect the female category and female athletes,” said Coventry, a Zimbabwean swimmer who won seven Olympic medals.

At recent Games, the IOC has left responsibility for setting and enforcing gender rules to the international federations who run their sports.

“I want the IOC to take a little bit more of a leading role,” Coventry said, adding that she planned to create “a task force”.

Even before Coventry begins her consultations, World Athletics and World Boxing have adopted chromosomal testing—generally a cheek swab. World Aquatics in 2023 adopted a policy that foresees such testing.

Their rules make participation in women’s competition conditional on the absence of Y chromosome genetic

material—known as the SRY gene, an indicator of masculinity.

‘Non-invasive’

Only “XX athletes”, as World Athletics calls them, can compete. Both transgender women and those who have always been considered female but have XY chromosomes—a form of “differences in sex development” (DSD)—are excluded.

On the surface, chromosomal screening simplifies access to women’s competition, which has long been the subject of varied regulations and scientific and ethical debates.

Last October, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem, told the UN General Assembly that such tests were “reliable and non-invasive”.

The gender debate reignited in June around Paris Olympic boxing champion Imane Khelif. The Algerian was at the centre of a violent controversy over her gender last summer stoked by Donald Trump, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling.

World Boxing, which is taking over running Olympic boxing in Los Angeles in 2028, ordered Khelif to undergo testing before a competition in the Netherlands in early June. She skipped the event.





During the Paris Games, the International Boxing Association, which was booted out of the Olympics by the IOC in 2019, accused Khelif, raised as a girl, of carrying XY chromosomes.

Chromosomal screening attracts criticism, notably from the World Medical Association and human rights organisations.

‘Highly invasive’

“It is far from being scientifically accurate as a performance indicator, while being very harmful to the athletes affected,” Madeleine Pape, a sociologist of gender in sport at the University of Lausanne, told AFP.

While World Athletics and World Aquatics both say transgender women have a muscular advantage, Pape, who ran the 800m for Australia at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, disagrees.

She said there is a lack of research proving that transgender athletes or those with or one of the many forms of DSD gain a “disproportionate advantage” over XX competitors.

Explaining performance is so complex that this uncertainty applies to “all athletes,” said Pape.

She also said it was possible to have an XY chromosome while being “totally or partially insensitive to testosterone,” as was the case with Spanish hurdler Maria Jose Martinez-Patino, who after missing out on the 1988 Olympics was the first woman to successfully challenge the femininity tests in Court.

Aware of these limitations, World Boxing and World Athletics are proposing additional steps after SRY screening which could include anatomical examination.

“Chromosomal tests seem very simple, very clean, but there is a lot of complexity behind them: potentially a highly invasive and non-standardised gynaecological examination, or expensive genetic sequencing that is inaccessible in many countries,” said Pape.

Ultimately, the future of such tests could be decided in Courts. The European Court of Human Rights is expected to rule on July 10, for a second time, on the case of DSD athlete Caster Semenya, the double Olympic 800m champion.

The South African was barred from competing under an earlier version of the World Athletics rules. In 2023, the Court ruled that her rights had been infringed but that decision did not force WA to reinstate her.

Courtesy AFP





FROM 'GOLDEN GIRL' IN AFRICAN SPORTS TO THE 'ICON LADY' IN GLOBAL SPORTS

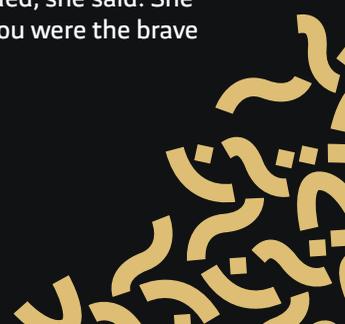
In 2023, the Royal Harare Golf Club in Zimbabwe celebrated its 150th anniversary with pomp and pageantry. Representing the Royal Colombo Golf Club at this prestigious event were three Sri Lankan women: Ms. Niloo Jayatilake, Lady Captain Manori Jayakody, and Ms. Suwineetha Selvaratnam, all veterans in this field of sport. It was an eventful celebration experience especially for Ms. Jayatilake.

For her, the moment stood out. It was her first meeting Ms. Kirsty Coventry, the event's chief guest; a decorated Olympian.

"It was a unique experience -- she was incredibly down to earth for a personality of her stature," she recalled. When we told her we were all ladies from Sri Lanka, Coventry was genuinely impressed. She said, "You are a brave lot'. As for the three of us, it was very encouraging to hear that from someone like her. We had a wonderful time throughout the trip."

The encounter, warm and unexpected, became more meaningful a year later. She explained, "As 2024 ended and 2025 began, I saw a familiar name in the headlines, Kirsty Coventry. Now she was in the running for IOC Presidency. I was overjoyed! A female candidate, and not just any woman, but the person that we met in Zimbabwe!"

The two women would meet once again at the Olympic Council of Asia's Annual General Assembly in Kuwait. "I went up to her and courteously inquired, 'Do you remember me, I am from Sri Lanka, we met in Zimbabwe?'. In fact, no introduction needed, she said. She smiled and said, 'Yes, yes! You were the brave ladies.'"





Now, Kirsty Coventry is not only the first woman to lead the International Olympic Committee, she is also the first African to take up the role. A former Olympic swimmer, she is Zimbabwe's most celebrated athlete, having won seven Olympic medals: two golds, four silvers, and one bronze across the Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008 Games. Nicknamed the "Golden Girl of Africa," her name is synonymous with sporting excellence and fierce determination.

Beyond her pet event swimming, Coventry has made a remarkable transition to global leadership in sport. She chaired the IOC Athletes' Commission and later served as Zimbabwe's Minister of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation from 2018 to 2022, earning recognition for championing youth development and grassroots sport. Her governance philosophy combines inclusivity, athlete empowerment, and integrity, values that resonate with Olympic ideals.

Coventry has long been a vocal advocate for women in sport, equality in governance, and access to sport for all. Her ability to connect with people from all walks of life, from athletics to administration. It has been a defining strength throughout her journey. Her appointment as IOC President is not just historic. It marks a significant shift in global sport leadership, paving the way for more diverse and representative decision-making at the highest levels.

On behalf of all of us at the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka, we extend our warmest congratulations to Ms. Kirsty Coventry on her election as the President of the International Olympic Committee. It is a proud moment for women, for Africa, and for the Olympic Movement as a whole. We look forward to seeing her lead with vision, humility, and strength.



THE GENTLE GIANT WITH A VICIOUS SMASH

The game of Badminton is on the ascend globally. In Europe, especially the Scandinavian belt and in Asia the West Asian belt, this racket sport has become a way of life. Even in India, which is gradually converting itself into a sporting and is even contemplating hosting the Olympic Games on a future date, thus this game is being taken very seriously and that was proved when India finished their badminton campaign at Hangzhou 2023 with three medals. Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy were a part of the Indian men's team which clinched a silver, while H.S. Prannoy won a bronze in the men's singles event.

Just across the Palk Strait on the tiny island of Sri Lanka, six-foot-tall teenager, Pulikkutty Arachchilage Viren Nettasinghe (born 17 June 2003) packed his bags to board the flight to Hangzhou to take part in the men's singles event.

Just out of school, for young Viren, it was terrain that he was not accustomed to. It was his key to the big time – time to take on the games' giants. However, after his local and Junior International heroics, he had a world ranking of 773 at that time and it was up to him to prove that he belonged to the upper echelon.

Prior to the Asian Games, he did have a spectacular run of play; his first break came in 2019 at the World Junior Championships, then at the age of 18 he won the bronze medal at the Yonex Sunrise Bangladesh Junior International tournament. He followed it with a bronze at the 2022 Uganda Challenge and later became the runner-up at the Sri Lankan national championships.

Playing in India, he then reached the quarter-finals of the India International Challenge, defeating a player ranked 83rd globally and then one ranked 105th before losing to 38th-ranked Subhankar Dey.

Concentration is a reflection of his facial expression. Yet, the Asian Games was a different challenge altogether. By then he also had moved up in his rankings. So we picked up the conversation with him as to how he felt! What were the inner feelings, what was going through his young mind, on his excursion to Hangzhou? Viren explained, "It was amazing. Just the opportunity to play against the players and the playing ability of the Asian Games standard was pretty amazing. Playing and being among the ten best players in the world was really awesome."







Next, was the question of how he converted his learnings into real-time playoffs. He went on to say, "I played against the Chinese Taipei player and it was very revealing. It was a very good lesson to me and I really assessed my standard to myself. There was a huge difference. I learned that I had a lot of weaknesses in my game. I worked on it with my coaches. I watched the particular game many times over, just to see what went wrong with me. Learnings like that only come with exposure of that nature."

As expected, Viren worked on his game and got into the international circuit energetically. Within a matter of months, from the oblivion of being a teenage racket holder, he was focused upon as someone for the future. Fittingly he was invited to become flag bearer for the Lankan team for the Paris Olympics in 2024. By then, he was the 74th-ranked player in the world.







Viren was still humble in his expressions on that achievement – he said, “To be honest, I never thought that I would be the flag bearer and the team captain of an Olympic contingent. Yet, I felt that all my hard work and compassion for the game had paid its dividends. I have sacrificed a lot for this game, and I have reached a level that most of the other players still aspire to be. Now I am ranked number 64 in the world, but I have to keep working to improve on that number.”

GoodSport paused to query how he manages to be a part of the local court and the challenges there. To that, Viren said that the local badminton authorities have made it mandatory to only play in the nationals. Therefore, he now has all the freedom to concentrate on his international career.

Early this year, Viren once again stirred the badminton status quo by beating the reigning number two, Anders Antonsen of Denmark. We asked how. Viren calmly explained that it was a huge honour for him to get a singles game against Andres. He won but yet it was only an exhibition game and he added that he would be happy if that same exchange arose in a real contest, so he feels that he can size up his real abilities.

When asked about his future aspirations, he said that he prefers to take one day at a time and improve his skills with every opportunity that he gets, whether it be a win or a loss.

Yet, we at this end feel, the best is yet to come.



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A tale of mind over matter

A young girl who thought that she was overweight while in school and looked to the answer in joining the school wrestling team is now the queen of that sport on the entire island. Not only did she bring home the Commonwealth Bronze in 2022 in the 57kgs category, thus becoming the first to win an international medal of that magnitude, but she sparked a new wave of enthusiasm in this contact sport, which had been a male bastion before.

Not stopping at that, Porutotage Nethmi Ahinsa Fernando has created another first by bagging the U23 Asian Wrestling Championships in Vung Tau, Vietnam, once again becoming the first Lankan to win a medal at this event.

Last September, Nethmi secured another bronze medal at the U20 World Wrestling Championships held in Pontevedra, Spain. With this feat, she made history once again by becoming the first Sri Lankan wrestler to win a medal at any World Championship. Additionally, she clinched another historic bronze in the 53kg weight category at the Asian Wrestling Championships in Bangkok, Thailand, earlier in 2024 – the first for Sri Lanka at the U20 level.

Earlier this year, Nethmi travelled to the United States with her long-time coach and trainer, Suranga Pushpakumara, for a high-performance training programme.

This time, she was with her latest accomplishment. Her eyes were still smiling, while with the face was a dead giveaway with pride when Nethmi walked up to us and presented her latest medal. Yes, it was big and heavy and only fitting a sport of that nature. She held on to it with pride.

She then began as to how it all started. She came from obscurity. She was a young student at the little-known Welpalla Sangaratana Vidyalaya in the Kurunegala District. Weighing 68kgs, young Nethmi sought the advice of her school friend Chamodi Keshani (who is still in the game actively) on how to shed a few kilograms through physical activity.

She explained, “At that time I weighed around 68kgs, and was definitely overweight, so when Chamodi, already a member came with the proposition of joining the school wrestling circle, it would yield some results.

“I knew nothing about the sport of wrestling, but I was chosen to represent my school in the provincial and district tournaments. Through those engagements, I was picked to perform at the national school games, that was in 2018. However, it was at that point that I thought that looking after my weight was not my priority, but, winning a medal could be more yielding.”



The next year, Nethmi along with Chamodi and another wrestling team member Nipuni, began to take things seriously with an eye for the future. To add to that, coach and mentor Suranga Kumara kept them in the loop and good trim.

Nethmi elaborated, “Our strategy yielded results at the next National Games. I had developed my skills to the level of beating a wrestler who had already won a medal at a previous South Asian Games. In 2019 at the National Games, I felt that I had reached a level that I could move on when I beat all my ten opponents at 10-nil and won the best player award too. From that point onwards up to date, I have won the 57kgs championship making it seven in a row.”

In 2021, Nethmi got her first break internationally. She explained, “I was chosen to take part in an ‘Under 20’ tournament in Russia and there I ended up bagging the eighth place. Once again, I was enveloped with that fire in the belly. I told myself, now that I won a gold in my realm, it was time for me to win a medal internationally.

“Lo and behold my next event was at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, which was a senior event. Prior to that, I even had a training session in Hungary. I had that inner feeling that I was going to do it. Thus, when I beat Irene Symeondis of Australia on 5th August 2022, I had become the youngest female to win a medal in Wrestling.”

In spite of winning the Commonwealth Bronze, the christening to the big time was not a bed of roses. From that point onwards, she lost ten international competitions in a row. They were in the senior category. In Wrestling, the biggest challenges come in the Asian region. If you do well in this belt, you can be rest assured that you even could aspire for a medal at Olympic level.





Nonetheless, she made a case study of where she went wrong after every loss and she stated that that has made her a better competitor at this level.

Definitely, she is a proud young woman. Wrestling was a game that was supposed to be a male conclave, but, through her achievements, there are many young girls taking up the game. There are more schools opening their doors to this contact sport.

Yet, she thinks as a nation, we could make a lot more improvements in facilities. She thinks in comparison to other Wrestling nations, we are very backwards. So much so that in Sri Lanka, she has to do her training with male wrestlers, as the girls are still far behind.



TAI '25

WRESTLING
U17-U23 ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

WRESTLING
U17-U23 ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

WRESTLING
U17-U23 ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

UNITED WORLD
WRESTLING

WRESTLING
U17-U23 ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

UNITED WORLD
WRESTLING



EXIT



A glimpse on athletics with a sprint mentor



Stats Guru Wikipedia describes athlete Shehan Ambeypitiya as a Sri Lankan male athlete who competed at the 2010 Commonwealth Games, making the semi-finals in the 100 and 200m events. Specialising in the 100 meters and 200 meters, he won 3 gold medals at the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games. Additionally, he was a finalist in the 2007 World Junior Championship.

He also represented Sri Lanka at the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games, the 2007 World Junior Championships, the 2009 World Athletics Championships, the 2010 Commonwealth Games, the 2010 South Asian Games, and the Asian Junior Athletics Championships.

Yet, we at GoodSport know him as the brains behind NOC Sri Lanka's success of the Crysbro programme, where Sri Lanka and the world discovered talent, such as 800metres Asian Games gold medalist Tharushi Karunaratne and wrestler Nethmi Ahinsa, who brought home the very first Commonwealth Games Bronze at the 2018 Birmingham Games. He could also boast as a person who is now responsible for the youth athletic upsurge during the past few years.

After he trained under veteran Sunil Gunawardena, Ambeypitiya also went under the watchful eye of Glean Mills, who was the trainer of two of the world's fastest men, Usain Bolt and Yohan Blake. Through that experience, we are sure that he has inculcated some insights into his trade, which he is willing to impart.

GoodSport asked, "Through the past half century or more, Sri Lanka has produced international-class athletes in clusters, but never in a steady flow. For instance, Sri Lanka's last Olympic medal by Susanthika Jayasinghe came nearly twenty-five years ago. However, akin to the light at the end of the tunnel, especially now the Lankan youth, have begun to climb the international ladder in a steady flow. Could this be another flash in the pan or a steady redirection with an eye for the 2028 Olympics and beyond?"

The former sprint ace Ambeypitiya explained, "I am pleased that our cluster of youth athletes is performing creditably well. Nevertheless, as for Susanthika, she is a true legend and a once-in-a-lifetime performer. There will never be another Susanthika; she is irreplaceable.



“Winning an Olympic medal in sprint events is not easy, and a medal by an Asian is awe-inspiring. Even countries like China, Japan or India have now come close to it, but with 22 million people in this tiny island nation, we have achieved it.”

Ambeypitiya explained that the younger clan of athletes have performed far beyond expectations in the recent past, notably during the past five years. Yupun Abeykone ran a 9.96





seconds, then Tharushi Karunaratne, after almost two decades, won an Asian Games Gold medal in the 800metres sprint. In the latest edition of the South Asian Junior Athletics Championships, there were two other exceptional performances -- surprisingly, both in the 800metres male and female races. He said that they were Tharushi Abisheka and D.S. Avishka, mentioning that this is a really good achievement at their age. He said that to his mind, there is a definite upsurge in the junior performances at present.

Yet, Shehan Ambeypitiya struck an ironic note when he said that, "The youth athletics is in the upward trend, but sadly, our facilities are on a downward trend. When you take the period between the years 2000 and 2020, our facilities have dwindled in

technology and facilities or facilities for the coaches; we have to get them updated. Yet, worldwide, it has grown leaps and bounds. Besides technology, they have shoes, sustenance to nutrition.

"For instance, Yupun Abeykone, who is doing his training overseas, has several individual trainers attending to his needs. There is one look after his strength and conditioning, another to do his running workouts, another looking to his psychological strengths, a doctor, a physio, a masseur, a nutritionist -- there is a whole team to look after and enhance his performances. For him, there are a lot of inputs going in for one solid purpose. In Sri Lanka, a situation of that nature is done by just one man called the coach. As for talent, yes, we do have it, but what we lack is the proper infrastructure to develop it into international standards consistently."

Nonetheless, the former sprint champion stressed that we have all the ingredients needed to produce athletes of substance. He forwarded the instance when young Merone Wijesinghe, with a timing of 10.41 secs in the 100 metres,





Shehan Ambepitiya claiming victory in the 100m event at the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games.

beat his record of 10.43secs, which he held for a very long period. Thus, he also won the South Asian athletic meet gold.

He said, "Just see the results that they produced at those championships – very encouraging. Even young Tharushi Abhisheka, another huge prospect in the 800 metres and could be the second by the same name to represent the country in the future.

"I stress that our facilities are archaic; we must stress the importance of improving this lifeline in athletics.

"The solution as to how we could win Olympic and other top athletic medals on a regular basis, I think

India and Pakistan has discovered an avenue. In two consecutive Olympics, India and Pakistan have won respective gold medals. I feel that those two countries have found where countries of this nature could produce medals at the Olympics. I think this one aspect that we could dwell upon. For instance, Javelin thrower Rumesh Tharanga recently did a 65.45m at an international meeting. This is not very far away from Olympic qualifying standards. So, why won't we put more bread into this basket and look for a medal like India and Pakistan who have almost the same physical characteristics?"





From the Press

Thrower Dulanjana, Achintha, Rusith among front runners for Asian Youth Games



St. Aloysius' College, Ratnapura athlete Lahiru Achintha is likely to be joined by eight others including javelin thrower Chathura Dulanjana for individual events in the boys' category for the upcoming Asian Youth Games. Achintha emerged as the front runner for the Bahrain event after establishing meet records in both the 1500m and the 3,000m at the recently held Junior National Athletics Championship. He was among very few athletes born in 2009 to have turned tables on senior counterparts to win their events in the Under 18 age category.

Like Achintha, javelin thrower Chathura Dulanjana Jayatissa – still in the Under 17 age category- was able to win the Under 18 event. The athlete from Weera Parakrama Secondary School, Yatawatta (Matale) cleared an impressive distance of 63.30metres to win the Under 18 javelin throw.

St. Servatius' College, Matara jumper Rusith Nimsara, also an Under 17 athlete, won the Under 18 long jump with a distance of 6.97metres at the Junior National Championship.

The organisers of the 2025 edition of the Asian Youth Games have decided to conduct the multi-sports event as an Under 17 event to make it a precursor for next year's Youth Olympics to be held in Senegal. Hence many 2008 born athletes who won their Under 18 disciplines at the Junior National Athletics Championships were ineligible for selections.

Savindu Sudaraka of Kahawatta Central who was placed second in the triple jump with a distance of 14.74metres, C.D. Wickramage of Ginigathena Central who was placed third with a performance of 6:24.56 seconds in the 2000m steeplechase, Kularathne Central Godakawela hurdler Kisal Oshada, placed second in the 110 m hurdles, Methuka Malhiru of Ananda Sastralaya, Matugama, placed third in the 400metres hurdles, Rahula College, Matara athlete Nathan Willaddara who was placed fourth with a time of 1:57.42 seconds in the 800metres and Gateway College Colombo sprinter Shanuka Costa, third in the 400metres with a feat of 48.06 seconds are likely to get the greenlight from selectors for individual events.



Javelin thrower Chathura Dulanjana

THARANI, CHENADI, DILNI AMONG HOPEFULS FOR ASIAN YOUTH

Holy Cross College, Gampaha sprinter Tharani Nirmina and Gamini National School Bentara sprinter Chenadi Dewhara are among top hopefuls who are set to join Lyceum International athlete Dilni Rajapaksa in the girls' category in Sri Lanka's team for the Asian Youth Games.

Rajapaksa who won both her disciplines with flying colours in the Under 16 age category at the recently held Junior National Athletics Championships is the number one choice for both the long jump and the triple jump. She erased her own meet records in both her events.

Chenadi also excelled in the Under 16 age category, sprinting to victory in the 400metres. She broke Janadipathi Balika Nawala athlete Kavindi Sanjana's record established in 2018.

Nirmina clocked 12.41 seconds in the 100metres and returned a time of 26.42 seconds in the 200metres. Competing in the Under 18 age category she was the only eligible athlete (Under 17) among those who won podium places in both 100metres and 200metres.

Devapathiraja College Ratgama hurdler P. H. Amaya who did well in the 400metres hurdles, Chamalsha Dewmini of Welimada Central in the 100metres hurdles are among other hopefuls who are likely to get their names in the long list for the Bahrain event to be held in October. Sri Lanka Athletics will also form a girls' medley relay team.

by Reemus Fernando – courtesy The Island



Tharani Nirmina in action

Crysbro



50 years of bringing people together



LANKAN YOUTH ATHLETES BLAZE THE TRAIL IN SAUDI ARABIA



In an era where Sri Lanka is focusing on tomorrow and what is contemplated in athletics, our youth talent came up with a morale booster at the 6th Asian Youth Athletics Championships in Saudi Arabia in April.

Virile mixed with their will to win the Lankan youth made a lasting impression after four days of thrilling competition. Sri Lanka achieved excellent results, with a historic medal haul. The Sri Lankan team won a total of 8 medals: 1 gold, 3 silver, and 4 bronze, which is the most they have ever won in the history of the Asian Youth Championships.

Key Performances:

M.G. Tharushi Abhisheka: Won a gold medal in the Women's U18 800m, marking Sri Lanka's first gold in this event in over a decade according to Facebook.

Sewmini Fernando: Won a silver medal in the women's 100-meter final.

Lahiru Achintha: Won a bronze medal in the boys' 1500-meter event.

Shalomi Jayakody: Achieved a record in the Under-18 Girls' Javelin Throw.

Tharush Mendis: Won the Under-18 Boys' High Jump.

Pahasara Kivindi: Won the Under-23 Girls' 200m.

P.G.M.S. Gunathilaka: Won the Under-20 Girls' 100m Hurdles.

W.P.S. Kosala: Won the Under-23 Boys' 110m Hurdles.

The highlight of the day came from Tharushi Abhisheka, fondly known as "Podi Tharushi". She tore her way to victory in the Girls' 800m event clocking a time of 2:14.86. She not only won the race but also brought home Sri Lanka's first Gold medal in the championship.

Adding to the celebration, the Sri Lankan Girls' Medley Relay Team, comprising Dilki Nehara, Dhananjana Fernando, U.M. Sansala Himashani, and Tharushi Abhisheka, put on an outstanding performance to win the Silver medal in this event. They also set a new Sri Lankan Youth National Record in the process.



The little Lankans kept on; Dilki Nehara made headlines once again by claiming her second medal of the tournament, a Bronze in the Girls' Triple Jump, showcasing her versatility and consistency across events.

In the Boys' High Jump Final, Nethya Sampath cleared a height of 2.03 metres to earn the Bronze medal, while Dinuka Deshan achieved a commendable fifth-place finish.

Sri Lanka's medal tally continued to grow further when Shavindu Avishka powered through the Boys' 800m Final, clocking 1:53.41 to claim Bronze, demonstrating resilience in a tightly contested race.

Despite some near misses, several athletes still showed great promise. Chathushka Imesh Silva placed seventh in the Boys' 200m Final and Dhananjana Fernando secured sixth place in the Girls' 200m Final. Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Boys'

Medley Relay Team concluded their campaign in a tight finish of fifth place. Chamara Dharmawardena prior to his departure was hoping to repeat his 2016 Rio exploits where he beat an American Samoan in the first round, thus giving the Lankan a belief that he could do it again. But, his Tokyo 2020 campaign lasted just 29 seconds, defeated by Aden-Alexandre Houssein of Djibouti in the Men's Judo -73kg event at the Nippon Budokon.

There was hope that the second-time Olympian could replicate the performance that saw him qualify for the Round of 16 at Rio in 2016, but the encounter was over even before he could settle in.

Dharmawardena spent the first ten seconds of the duel cautiously looking for an opening, with his opponent reaching out and attempting to get a hold of him.

When Dharmawardena finally did reach out to grapple his opponent, Houssein was prepared, leaving the Sri Lankan clutching at his sleeves.





A drive with the next generation of golfers at heart



For decades, Golf in Sri Lanka remained a niche sport, largely confined to the well to do in society. That began to change in 2017, when the Sri Lanka Golf Union launched the Future Lions Programme, a bold initiative aimed at introducing the sport to schools and rural districts, scouting raw talent, and creating a clear pathway from the first swing to national representation.

In conversations with Ms. Niloo Jayatilake, former Chairman of Sri Lanka Golf – Junior Development Sub Committee and Mr. Tharanga Gunasekera – Committee Member, the architects behind these efforts reflected on how it all began, what they've achieved and what still needs to be done.

Gunasekera recalled how the idea first took shape. "Ms. Niloo Jayatilake and another Committee member of

the Junior subcommittee, approached HSBC in 2017 and inquired –why aren't we harnessing Golf in Sri Lanka the way other nations do?" he said. "We believed in its potential as two legends from Sri Lanka, Nandasena Perera and Anura Rohana both won Asian silver medals, and today we have many Sri Lankan pros thriving on the Indian PGTI tour."

That same year, the Future Lions programme was piloted in Anuradhapura, Nuwara Eliya, Kandy and Hambantota. "Since 2017, we've introduced Golf to over 2,000 children," he said. "Around 650 of them have undergone advanced training on location. At each site, we start with 100 to 200 children and then narrow it down to about 25, who go through six months of structured coaching before they enter junior tournaments." The numbers speak for



themselves, he explained, “Today, around 60 per cent of junior golfers come from the HSBC Future Lions Programme,” up from a modest pool of 20 to 40 competitors in previous years and for HSBC this was not new as the Bank is a major supporter of Golf, globally.

One of the programme’s most powerful validations came from an unexpected place, Anuradhapura. “The best talent we’ve seen came from a place you’d never imagine,” Gunasekera said. “Aditya Weerasinghe, a boy from Anuradhapura, is now ranked number three among Sri Lanka’s junior golfers. He was recently selected to represent the country at the Youth Asian Games. Two more children from Anuradhapura have qualified to the National Junior Pool”.

Recognizing a gender gap in participation, the Golf Union launched “Girls on Par” “Wherever we go, we ensure a 50:50 split

between boys and girls in the second stage,” he said. “It’s up to children and coaches to make it from there and show their talent.” The approach has steadily boosted female participation in what was once a male-dominated sport.

But growing the game hasn’t come without its challenges. “Golf is an expensive sport,” said Ms. Jayatilake. “After the economic crisis, even buying gloves or shoes became a huge task. That’s why long-term partnerships are essential.” She commended the consistent support of HSBC Bank, Prima Sunrise Bread and Perera & Sons—sponsors who have backed junior golf for over 15 years, a level of commitment rare in Sri Lankan sport.

She also drew inspiration from Sri Lanka’s 1996 Cricket World Cup victory and recalled advice given by former Sri Lanka Cricket President-- the legendary Ana Punchihewa. “He told me,





Future Lions

Girls
ON PAR



‘Our people have excellent hand-eye coordination for cricket, for golf, for racquet sports. Take golf to the grassroots the way we took cricket.’ That message stuck with me.”

With that in mind, they approached HSBC with a grassroots activation plan. “They believed in our story,” she said. “And we’ve delivered year after year.”

Still, both Gunasekera and Jayatilake agree: for the next generation of Future Lions to truly roar, Sri Lanka Golf needs a national strategy backed by consistent funding. Tharanga stressed the need to improve coaching standards. “Just because someone played doesn’t make them a great coach,” he said. “We need a proper coaching structure, not just passionate volunteers.”

Ms. Jayatilake added that it’s time for big-ticket sponsorships and State support to be part of the equation. “We’ve built the model, we’ve proven the impact, now we need the ecosystem to sustain it.”



دورة الألعاب الآسيوية للشباب الثالثة

3rd Asian Youth Games

البحرين 2025 Bahrain



From the Chef-de-Mission

Lead, live, think positively with discipline



This is the moment for the youth and the following sentiments were expressed by a military man who believes in that -- "I am looking forward to it because I am a military person, I am a service person. My first priority is discipline. Discipline and country comes first always. You can think about the performance and everything after that, because when you are going abroad, representing the country, you are being considered as a diplomat, whether you are in a sports field or administrative or anything."

Rear Admiral Manjula Dissanayake is no stranger to the world of sport or leadership. A product of Vidyarthi College, Kandy, he played both rugby and cricket at school level, before joining the Sri Lanka Navy in 1991. He went on to captain the Navy's cricket team and later secure a place in the Premier League. He has represented the Navy in multiple disciplines including rifle shooting, badminton, rugby and basketball.

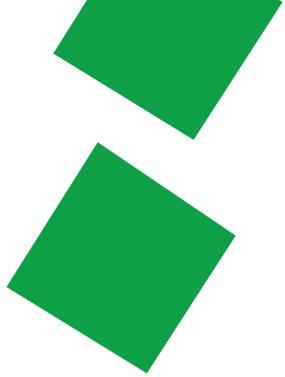
His contributions to sports administration are equally extensive. From holding office as Treasurer and Secretary to eventually becoming President of the National Rifle Association, he has also taken junior shooting teams abroad to major events in countries such as Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand and Thailand. Now, as he steps into the role of Chef-de-Mission for the Sri Lankan

contingent at the 3rd Asian Youth Games (AYG) in Bahrain, his focus is clear.

He firmly believes that medal prospects are important, but that his role goes beyond that. "As Chef-de-Mission, other than the performance of the athlete and their potential to win a medal, I think my area is to look after the administrative side, the discipline and basically, representing the country as a disciplined and good governing country. That is my intention."

Rear Admiral Dissanayake described the Bahrain workshop as a valuable and well-executed experience. Held over two days, the summit brought together representatives from 56 countries, offering him his first exposure to a multi-sport event of such scale. He found the sessions insightful and praised the high level of organisation.

Reflecting on Bahrain and the broader region, he shared his impression that the Middle East is emerging as a serious player in global sports hosting, noting how the region is investing heavily in sports. He believes these efforts are part of a long-term vision, possibly aimed at securing even larger events in the future, such as the Olympic Games.



When asked about his vision for the Games, his answer was rooted in long-term national interest. “To be frank, my main concern is about the future of the country. As a part, I am a cricket umpire. So, when there is a choice between two assignments – a school level match or a club level match, I always opt to do a school match. Because one thing that is interesting is the magnitude that they are playing is different. They are in a very competitive level. The other thing is, you can also teach something to those kids.”

He continued, “This is the initial platform for the athlete. What we are looking at is the future. These athletes are going to be 14 to 17 years old and this is where we can see the potential of an athlete, regardless of their discipline. Also, we should note that this competition is meant for Asia. So, we have to step into the first at the Asian level, then into the next level, then finally into the Olympics.”

Rather than seeing it as a challenge, he views the opportunity with a sense of optimism.

“I think it is not a challenge, but I am very inquisitive to see how the performance is going to be. If I can see any potential, I can make a recommendation to the respective association to pursue on that player.”

The upcoming Games are, for him, not just about medals or placing but about shaping the next generation. And, what sets his vision apart is a clear understanding that Medals come later. Character comes first.

As someone who has handled several outbound contingents over the years, he doesn't shy away from addressing a sensitive issue. “In the past, a few athletes have chosen to desert, leaving sport and the nation behind for odd jobs abroad. That mindset must change. To reach this level, their families, schools, coaches have all made sacrifices.”

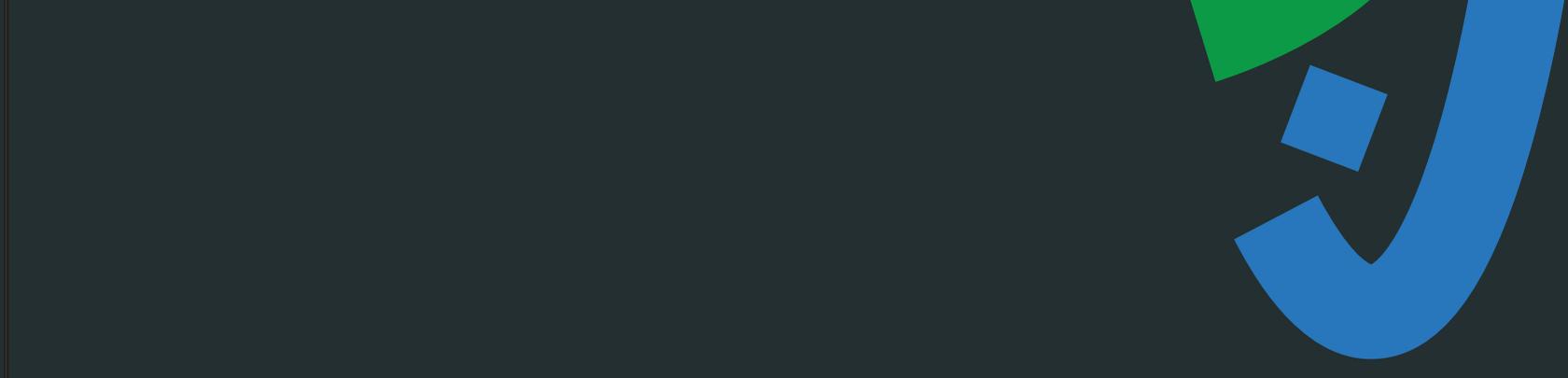
He added, “I think that message is not passing most of the time. I just wanted to teach that part of life for this youth. So I look forward to deal with them, interact with them. To see their attitudes. To make them as good sportsmen and good human beings. And ultimately, a proud citizen of Sri Lanka.”





Asian Games Sports in Asian Youth Games

SPORT	YEARS	SPORT	YEARS
3x3 Basketball	All	Ju-jitsu	2025
Athletics	All	Kabaddi	2025
Badminton	Since 2013	Mixed martial arts	2025
Beach volleyball	2009	Muaythai	2025
Boxing	2025	Rugby sevens	2013
Camel racing	2025	Sailing	2009
Cycling	2025	Shooting	2009 - 2013
Bowling	2009	Squash	2013
Diving	2009 - 2013	Swimming	All
Equestrian	2025	Table tennis	All
Esports	2025	Taekwondo	Since 2013
Fencing	2013	Tennis	2013
Football	2009 - 2013	Teqball	2025
Futsal	2025	Triathlon	2025
Golf	Since 2013	Volleyball	2025
Handball	Since 2013	Weightlifting	Since 2013
Judo	Since 2013	Wrestling	2025



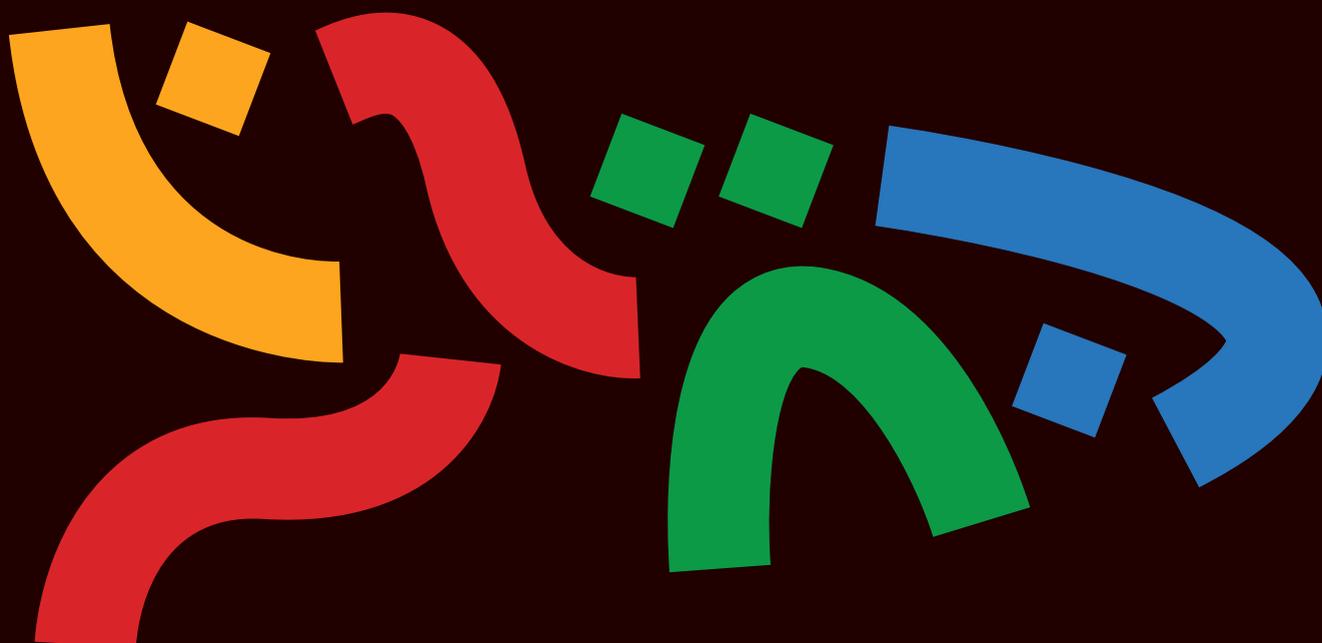
MANAMA





Host Cities

Edition	Year	Host city	Host nation	Opened by	Start date	End date	Nations	Competitors	Sports	Events	#1 Team
I	2009	Singapore	Singapore	Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong	29 June	7 July	43	1,237	9	90	China (CHN)
II	2013	Nanjing	China	Vice Premier Liu Yandong	16 August	24 August	45	2,404	16	122	
—	2017	Originally awarded to Hambantota, then awarded to Jakarta, eventually cancelled by the Olympic Council of Asia									
—	2021	Originally awarded to Surabaya, then awarded to Shantou, eventually cancelled by the Olympic Council of Asia due to the COVID-19 pandemic									
III	2025	Manam[a]	Bahrain	King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa	22 October	31 October	Future event		24	207	Future
IV	2029	Phnom Penh	Cambodia	<i>Future event</i>							



Medal Table

Rank	Nation	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	 China (CHN)	71	39	35	145
2	 South Korea (KOR)	45	30	31	106
3	 Thailand (THA)	17	22	18	57
4	 Singapore (SIN)	14	18	21	53
5	 Japan (JPN)	12	11	10	33
6	 India (IND)	8	7	10	25
7	 Chinese Taipei (TPE)	7	13	20	40
8	 Hong Kong (HKG)	7	13	18	38
9	 Kazakhstan (KAZ)	5	10	12	27
10	 North Korea (PRK)	5	6	9	20
11	 Vietnam (VIE)	5	6	2	13
12	 Malaysia (MAS)	4	6	8	18
13	 Kuwait (KUW)	4	3	5	12
14	 Philippines (PHI)	2	4	1	7
15	 Iran (IRI)	1	9	4	14
16	 Qatar (QAT)	1	4	0	5
17	 Uzbekistan (UZB)	1	2	8	11
18	 Indonesia (INA)	1	2	3	6
19	 Saudi Arabia (KSA)	1	1	2	4
20	 Yemen (YEM)	1	0	1	2
21	 Syria (SYR)	1	0	0	1
22	 Sri Lanka (SRI)	0	2	7	9
23	 Iraq (IRQ)	0	1	1	2
	 Macau (MAC)	0	1	1	2
	 Tajikistan (TJK)	0	1	1	2
26	 Jordan (JOR)	0	0	3	3
	 Mongolia (MGL)	0	0	3	3
28	 Bahrain (BRN)	0	0	2	2
29	Kyrgyzstan (KGZ)	0	0	1	1
	Myanmar (MYA)	0	0	1	1
	Pakistan (PAK)	0	0	1	1
		213	211	239	663



Athletics

A Promise for the future

"For Sri Lanka track and field has been a forte even at international level. Starting from 2000 Sydney Olympics 'Silver' by legendary Susanthika Jayasinghe the list is long in spite being sporadic. As for these Bahrain bound junior contingent who are aspiring brilliance - it's a case of breaking the ice. None of these have not yet tasted the whammy of real international, yet, what they must take it as their key to the door of the wonderland rather than a challenge. Talking to them they had that glimmer at the corner of their eyes, now it is up to them put 'that might be' into real action."



Chamindu Sathsara Hewage

School: Tholangomuwa Dudley Senanayake MV

Age 16

Event 200m - relay

He accomplished 22.4 secs at the trials

"Very proud that I was selected for this prestigious event and I would justify the selectors have their faith in me with a fitting performance"



W. A. Kisal Oshadha Gaganadara

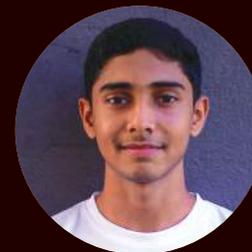
School: Godagala Kularatne MV

Age 16

Event: 110m hurdles

At the last Junior Nationals won the second place and 14.4:8secs

"My aim is to bring home the Gold in this event"



Chamith Loshana de Silva

School: Holy Cross, Kalutara

Age 16

Events: 100 and 200 metres (Medley Relay)

At the Junior Nationals did a 11.1:9secs in the 100m. 22.3 in the 200m

"My intention is help our team win the gold medal for the country"



G. D. Lahiru Achintha
 School: St. Aloysius National School, Ratnapura
 Age 16
 Event: 1500m 3000m
 3.59:24 in the 1500metres and 8.42:87 in the 3000metres
"I will only be satisfied with gold medals in both events"



Chathura Dulanjana Jayathissa
 School: Yatawatte Weeraparakrama MV
 Age 16
 Event: Javelin
 67metres at the last Junior Nationals
"This is my first tour overseas and I am determined to make my presence felt".



Nirudaka Vishal Fernando
 St. Joseph's College, Wennapuwa
 Age 16
 Event: (Medley Relay)
 Represents the 400m and 4x100 and 4x400 relay teams at the last local meet he did a 49.3:69ses
"I am very happy about being selected for meet and I will strive do make my country proud with my performance"



Adithya Bandara Seneviratne
 School: Ananda Sastralaya, Matugama
 Age 16
 Events: 100m and 200m (Represents the Medley lap in the relay team)
"I feel that I have reaped the benefit of representing the country at an international meet. I know that this should be the first step of a long run"



W. M. Savindu Sudhakara Padmasiri
 School: Kahawatte MMV
 Age 16
 Event: Triple Jump
 Finished with a distance of 14:74metres
"When it's an international of this nature everyone thinks it is an arduous task, but I feel that if I could keep my cool, I could achieve the impossible".



Chirantha Deshan Wickremage
 School: Ginigathhena MMV
 Age 16
 Event 2000metres steeple-chase
 At the 2024 Junior National meet I did a 6.24:31
"My aim is to come out with a fitting performance to justify selection"





Shanuka Costa
 School: Gateway College
 Age 16
 Event: 400metres (Medley Relay)
 Besides the 400m event will take part in the Medley relay also at the Junior Nationals he did a 48.06

"I will strike to achieve my personal best at this event"



T. H. Rusith Nimsara
 School: St. Servatius' College, Matara
 Age 16
 Event: Long Jump
 Did 7.2metres at Southern Province meet at last national meet I won the first place with 6.97metres

"My aim is to win a gold medal for my country"



H. D. Methuka Malhiru
 School: Ananda Sastralaya, Kotte
 Age 16
 Event 400m hurdles
 At the last Western Province meet and before the Junior Nationals. At the Junior Nationals I won the 3rd place 54.7secs in 400metres, At the Western Province meet 400m hurdles 1st place.

"I strived for this opportunity for a long time and I really put a lot heart and soul towards achieving that goal, and now I really want to this stamp with a fitting performance in Bahrain"



H. W. Nethan Willaddara
 School: Rahula Matara
 Age: 16
 Event: 800metre
 Did a 1.57:4 at the Junior Nationals

"I am very proud of being selected for this prestigious event and I hope to win the Gold Medal in the 800metres for my country"



P. H. Amaya
 School: Devapathiraja MV, Rathgama
 Age 16
 Event: 400hurlles
 Did 64.08mts

"This is an indeed a rare opportunity, I will do my best at the meet in Bahrain"



Kaushalya Jayawardana
 School: Lyceum International School, Wattala
 Age 16
 Event Women's Medley Relay
 Will take part only in the medley relay at this meet

"My aim is to bring a medal to my country"





Dilini Nethsala Rajapakse

School: Lyceum International School

Age 15

Event: Long Jump and the Triple Jump

Won the first place at the last Junior Nationals 5.96metres my best is 6.26metres last year at the long jump I created records at this event.

"My aim is to enhance my performances with every opportunity that I get. Getting to perform overseas will give me more exposure"



Teshani Movindi Wanshanayaka

School: Maliyadeva Balika MV, Kurunegala

Age 16

Event: Medley Relay

Will take part at the individual, relay and the mixed relay 25.3 at the Junior Nationals

"I am very happy; this will also help me to enhance my performances with this exposure"



N. S. Gimhani Pulle

School: St. Andrew's College, Puttlam

Age 16

Event: Middle Distance

800metres 2.16secs, 1500metres 4mts46scs

"My aim is to bring home a medal"



H. M. Tharani Nirmina

School: Holy Cross, Gampaha

Age: 16

Event: 100 and 200 metres and women's medley relay

At the provincial meet 200metres 24.9 and 100metres 12.4secs

"To make this opportunity a memorable one to me and the country"



K. A. Chamalsha Dewmini

School: Welimada MMV

Age: 16

Event: 100metres hurdles

15.secs in the 100 metres

"I will give my best and strive for a medal at this event"



B. D. Chenadi Dewhara

Age 15

School: Benthara Gamini MV

Event: 400 metres Women's Medley Relay

Record at the Junior Nationals 57.33secs

"Longing to do my best timing and also bring home a medal"









Badminton

Ready to climb the ladder



Keneth Aruggoda who hails from Lyceum International School now donning the National Crest of the National Olympic Committee is a confident young man who feels that he possesses what it takes to be a player of the next realm.

By the age of sixteen he had stamped his credential by his junior level heroics by winning the doubles and mixed event championship and the singles runner-up at the recently concluded South Asian Championships in Bhutan.

More impressive is determination to run that extra yard to that summit looks closer. He feels to do so that he should strive for more opportunities to take part in international championships. Nonetheless Keneth feels that this opening in Bahrain should be the place where he stamps his class in gold and bring glory to our motherland.



Pamudu Randiligama – Eyeing the Youth Olympics

Even at the tender age of sixteen Pamudu has been in the circuit from 2022 where he was a part of the who already has been in the Youth Asian Games so performing at that level is not novel to him. Besides he was in Indonesia in an international championship which proves that he has broken that ice at that level.

At the last age group championships at Anuradhapura Pamudu won both the singles and doubles championship. He considers that his next major goal is to be a part of the next Youth Olympics.





Sithuli Ranasinghe – Proud to be a part of the Youth Asian Games
Sixteen-year-old Sithuli Ranasinghe from Anula Vidyalaya is someone who should keep a tab on. She is willing to work hard for her credentials.

Already a bronze medalist as a singles player at the 8th Asian School Badminton Championship in 2024, she has impressed a lot of racket experts with her flowing style of play. She said "As a badminton player I am proud to be a part of the Youth Asian Games 2025 in Bahrain". She added by saying that she is determined to win more international medal with this exposure that has come her way.



Nethmi Amaya Ratnayake – I will make my country proud.
Petite, Nethmi Amaya Ratnayake even at the age of sixteen she stands well above the boundary wall of a net that separates she and her opponent.

Still a student of Lyceum International, she amply proved that she is qualified the don the National Crest at the Badminton Asia Regional Championship 2025, which concluded in Thimphu, Bhutan, recently. Besides she is ranked number one in her age group nationally.

Nethmi Ratnayake impressed with a hat-trick of gold medals in the Under-17 category, winning the Women's Singles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles.

Commenting on the Bahrain opportunity Nethmi said "I 'am really proud that the authorities have recognized my talent and afforded me that opportunity. I am determined to perform according to my abilities and make my nation a proud place to live in".



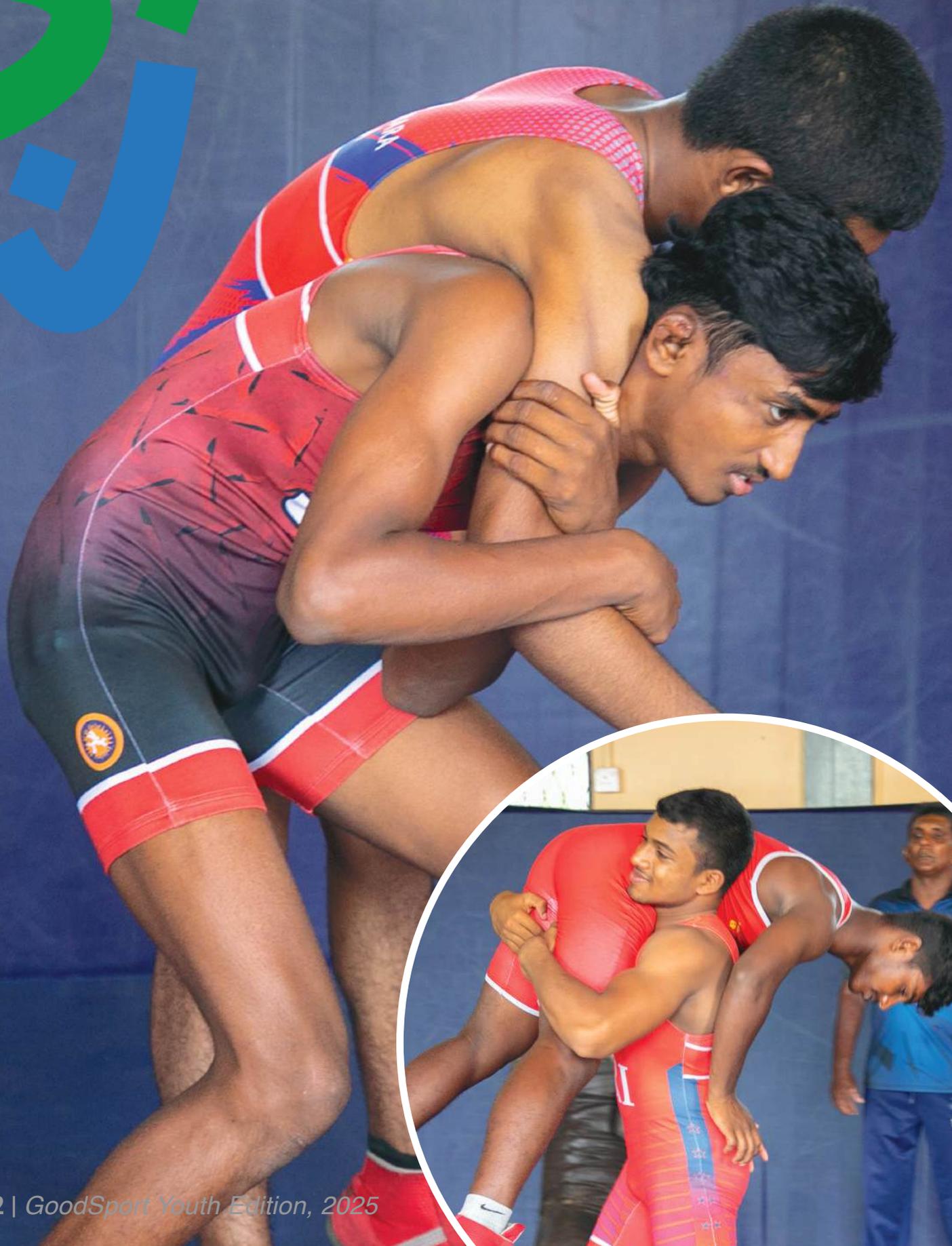


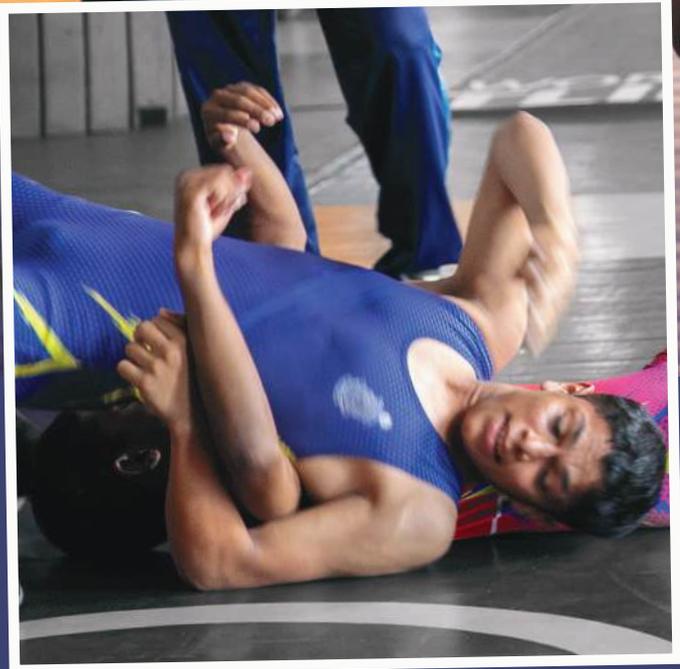
Wrestling Opportunity to prove themselves

After lurking in the backgrounds for a given period of time, Nethmi Ahinsa broke the shackles and brought the game to the limelight at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. And now, Wrestling has become a household name in Lankan sports. Now, 10 youthful hopefuls are trying to emulate the feat of Nethmi and establishing the game into the future.



پہلے







Nimesh Dulanjan Senadeera
 School: Pagamuwa MV
 Age: 17
 Weight Class: 55kg Free Style
"Hoping to win a gold Medal for my country in my category"



Seneru Dilmin
 School: Weerasumana Vidyalaya
 Age: 17
 Weight Class: 65Kgs Free Style
"I will do my best and win a medal for my country"



T. S. V. D. Iduranga
 School: Sangaratana Maha Vidyalaya
 Age: 17
 Weight Class: 45Kgs Free Style
"Make maximum use of this opportunity and win a medal"



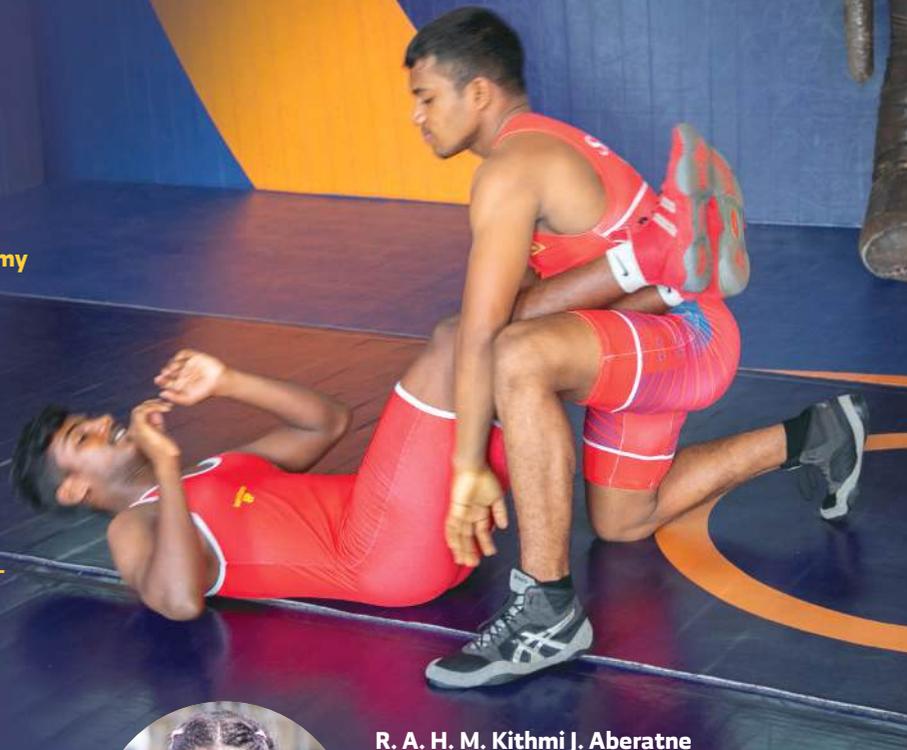
Theekshana Karunarathna
 School: Pahatha Dumbara MV
 Age: 16
 Weight Class: 51kgs Freestyle
"My intention to do well in the under 17 age group competition and win a medal for my Country"



S. Dirushanth
 School: Sivananda Vidyalaya, Batticaloa
 Age: 17
 Weight Class: 60kgs Free Style
"My hope is to win a medal at this competition"



Deshika S. Bandara
 Age: 17
 Weight 43kgs Freestyle
"I hope to win a weight class gold at the event"



R. A. H. M. Kithmi J. Aberatne
 Age: 16
 Weight Class: 49kgs Freestyle
"My intention is to win a Gold at the Asian Youth Games"



Dewmini Ranaweera
 School: Marapona Maha Vidyalaya
 Age: 17
 Weight Class: 57kgs freestyle
"At the AYG my intention is to win a gold for my country"



G. M. G. Piyumi Sathsarani Rambukwella
 School: Pahatha Dumbara Maha Vidyalaya
 Age: 15
 Weight Class: 53kgs Freestyle
"My dream is to win a gold medal for my country at the Asian Youth Games"

Girls



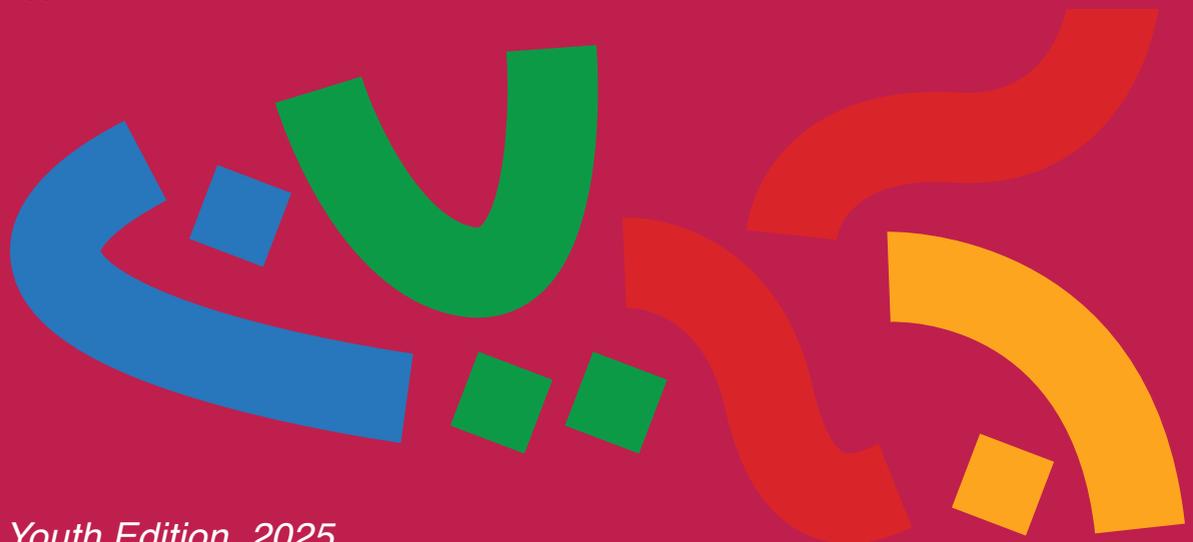
Savindi Bandara
 School: Parakumba Jathika Pasela
 Age: 16
 Weight Class: 46kgs Freestyle
"I hope to bring a medal at the AYG"





Esport Winning with the electric dream

Raveen Wijayatilake - President Sri Lanka Esports Association says "Sri Lankan Esports takes another step forward as the country's Esports athletes compete at the Asian Youth Games this October. As the youngest sport to be included in the games, SLESA and its athletes are ensuring that Sri Lanka is not left behind as the world progresses into the future of Sport. This highlights the importance of Esports to the next generation and gives our youth the chance to showcase their passion and skills while connecting with others across the region. It is just the beginning of a journey that will inspire many young Sri Lankans to dream bigger."





Haiyan Aqwam
School: Zahira College
(National School), Puttalam
Age: 15 years
Event: Street Fighter - Boys



W.L.A. Sayuni Sadushika
School: IES International
School, Polonnaruwa
Age: 16
Event: eFootball - Girls





Kabaddi Moving to the next base

“We are really excited that we have got this opportunity to represent Sri Lanka at the 3rd Asian Youth Games in Bahrain explained the manager Nimal Dharmasiri “We did a scrutiny in the process of these selections where we looked at the schools, provinces. For this ensemble we have selected a side that will represent all nine provinces.

There may be slight hic-ups in preparations as a result of the island possessing only a few fully fledged canvasses, but, we do well enough with our own homemade preparations.

As far as we are concerned Kabaddi is one sport that we can dwell upon and expect positive results. We do have past performances that we can savour.

Our selectors initially selected 18 possibles and then pruned it down to the fourteen who will be a part of the tour.

The Boys team will comprise:



Dasun Theekshana



Tharusha Nimsara



Sahan Iduwara



Thilina Pramodya



Milhan Mahil



Madusha Dilshara



Niyaaf Zaini



Sahan Rashmika



Thisara Denuwan



Pradeep Kumara



Mohammed Samri



Mothisha Tashmika



Pirathaap Karunakaran



Sithum Sathsara

The Girls team will comprise:



G.G.P. Abhilasha



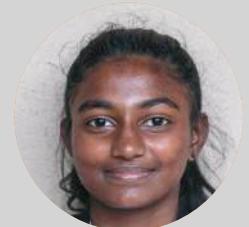
D.G.A. Sharanya



T.D.G. Theekshana



D.B.D.D. Perera



M.H.A. Perera



S. Lukshani



B.D.M.S. Samaranayaka



W.A.N.H. Sunimal



T. Nishalani



S.T. Pithursha



E.M.R.N.E. Ekanayake



K.M.S.R. Bandara

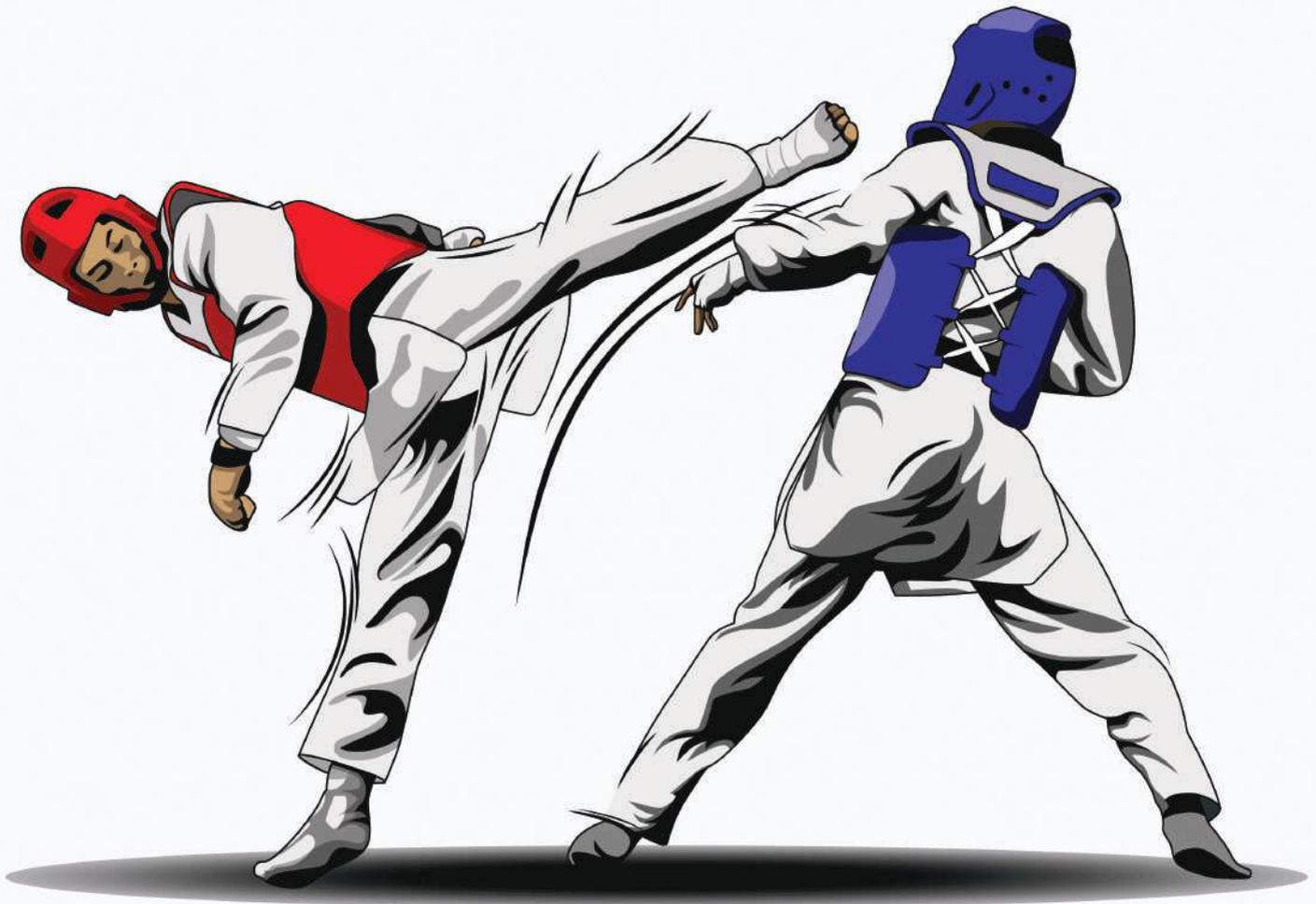


G.D.A. Sayurangani



P. Thirushana

Taekwondo



A promising prospect

The game of Taekwondo is based on 5 indelible disciplines: courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit. And it is a game that builds character as well as sports. These youths who have got this opportunity have to enhance their inner skills and protrude the true skills at the stage in Bahrain.





P. Ashen Nimsara
 Scghool: St. Luke's MV
 Weight Class: -55kgs
 "I thank the all officials who chose me for this meet in Bahrain and I will strive to do my best"



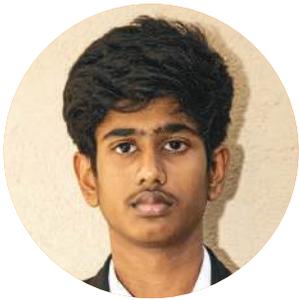
R. Savidya Durangi
 School: Pushpadana BMV
 Weight Class: -49kgs
 "I Thank the Ministry of Sports, the NOC SL, my school and my coach for this opportunity and hope to do my best during the AYG in Bahrain"



R. Pasanjaya
 School: Bharathi Maha Vidyalaya
 Weight Class: -63kgs
 "My intention is to win a Gold Medal at this contest in Bahrain"



T. V. Vishmi Nethara
 School: St. Lawrence's Wellawatte
 Age: 16
 Event: Women's Individual Poomsae
 "I will do my best and bring honours to my school and country"



W. K. F. Keshan Nethmina
 School: Joseph Vaas College, Wennappuwa
 Event: Men's Individual Poomsae
 "While thanking all officials and Coach for this opportunity I will aim to win a gold Medal in my event and make the country proud"



Beach Volleyball

Training hard for honours





Mahesh Perera, Manager/Coach, thinks this Junior Beach Volleyball team has what it takes to be in the limelight. He explained “Our prime motive during this opportunity is to bring home a medal at the Youth Asian Games. We were in training during the last quarter and the local authorities have backed by in no uncertain terms.

“We have a girls’ team and boys’ team. The girls did their training in Hambantota at the Wijeyaba Vidyalaya while the boys did their training at Maris Stella College, Thimbirigaskatuwa. At present we practise on the beach, however in Bharain, if the games are conducted on an artificial surface we are at a definite advantage and this is the bonus that I am counting. In addition, we practise in windy conditions that also could be advantage to us. As far as I am concerned we are hoping to exploit these advantages to the maximum”.

“I will be handling and coaching the boys team and H. Liyanage will be in-charge of the girls team”.





Kusal Dulmina Sandaruwan

School: Maris Stella College, Thimbirigaskatuwa
Age: 16

Event: Beach Volleyball (Boys)
2025 National School Games, Champions.

"Hoping that we could be a part of the winning team and bring home a medal"



Didula Maheema

School: Maris Stella College, Thimbirigaskatuwa
Age: 16

2025 National School Games Champions

"Very happy with the opportunity that has given us and are striving to win a medal"



H. R. Shadeesha Dilrukshi

School: Negombo National School
Age 16

Was a member of the DSI Championship team.

"Appreciate the opportunity and hope to do the best"



Chamudi Adithya Muthumala

School: Ahungalle Wijeyaba National School
Age 15

Was a member of the National School Games Champion team

"Hoping to do the best in a medal winning team"







BOXING

Trying to bring
back lost glory





Vinod Dulnada

School: Vidyaratna University College, Horana

Age: 16

Weight class: 44-46kgs

Won the weight class 'Gold' at the last Junior National Games.

"I consider this as a rare opportunity and I intend making the maximum use of it. In my language I should be looking for nothing but a 'gold'.



W. A. Janindu Dhananjaya

School: Vidyaratna University College, Horana

Age: 16

Weight class: 48-50kgs

Won the weight class 'Gold' at the last Junior National Games.

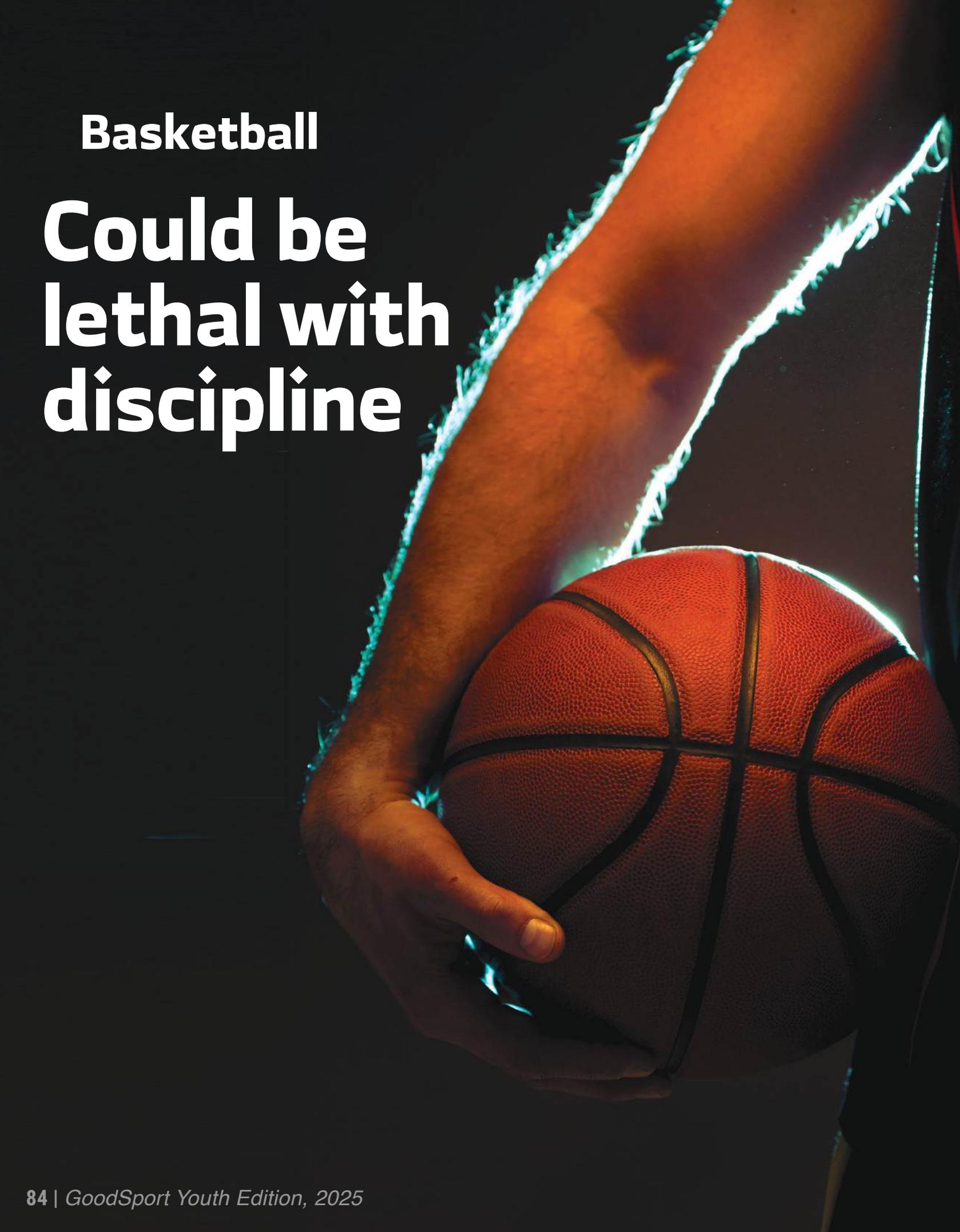
"From a very young age I have been a good student of the game of boxing and is willing to learn with every opportunity that comes my way".











Basketball
**Could be
lethal with
discipline**

Boys team manager Thusitha Yatigammana explained modus operandi of the boys 3x3 in this manner. He said “3x3 Basketball hit the road with Street Basketball and then it became an international discipline in 2010 where it reached the global competitive arena at the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore. Then it made its Olympic debut in Tokyo during the last Olympic Games.

“In case of opportunity the invitation came through the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka and filtered through the National Basketball Federation and now these youngsters have made it once again to the international stage.

“The Selection process of these came through a very vigorous selection process where there were over 100 aspirants initially categorized for selection and it was shortlisted to 48 and then to the last ten also. So, it was long and intense process and we got six players - 4 players and 2 reserves.





Aaron Gerald (St. Joseph's College, Maradana)



Himaru Tissera (St. Peter's, Negombo)



Rasindu Nimsara (Prince of Wales College, Moratuwa)



Vijan Nethmika (Prince of Wales College, Moratuwa)

Standby



Kemitha Gunawardena (Trinity College Kandy)



Samuel Tsung (Gateway College)

Manager of the women's team, Jayantha Rani Bandara said, "As the General Secretary of the Schools' Basketball Federation I am very grateful for this opportunity.

"Our task was to select 4 players to represent the country at the upcoming Youth Asian Games. However, the process was a very arduous one. Initially the selectors had the envious task of pruning down number of 4 players from a lot of over 200 from all over the island. Finally, we have reached the 4 players plus two stand-by players".



Binuthi Jayasinghe (Holy Family Convent Colombo)



Sithuki Sehansa Kodagoda (St. Joseph's, Nugegoda)



Tinara S. Perera (Colombo International School)



Pramuditha Chandrasekera (Mahamaya College, Kandy)

Standby



Anuki Abeypala
(Holy Family Convent, Colombo)



Yeheni Balalle
(St. Joseph's, Girls School
Nugegoda)















Weightlifting

Breaking new ground

Weightlifting has been a game that has yielded many Lankan legends in the sporting arena at various levels, including Commonwealth Games. Now, these 3 young hopefuls do have the making of fulfilling the demands called for by the sport to be in the limelight again.



K. B. Venura

School: Niyagama Vijitha MV

Age 16

Weight Class: Men's -65kgs

I was selected for this event after my performances at the last Junior Nationals. Besides, previously I won a 55kgs bronze medal at the Commonwealth Weightlifting Junior Championships in India 2023, this year competing in the 65kgs category I won a silver medal in the same championships.

"With my experience behind me I will strive to win a gold medal at the coming Asian Youth Games in Bahrain"



V. N. T. Weerasinghe

School: Royal College, Polonnaruwa

Age: 16

Weight Class: Men's -88kgs

Won the weight class 'gold' at the Junior Nationals

"I will strive to win the Gold Medal in my weight class at the AYG"



R. G. Samadhi Pabasara

School: Akmeemana MV

Age: 17

Weight Class: -77kgs

I was chosen after my impressive performance at the last All Island Schools' Championships

"Hoping to do my best during this opportunity and bring honours to my homeland"











Swimming Youthful plunge with a quest for Gold

Manager cum coach Mathew Abeysinghe said: “We are very excited to Bahrain for the Youth Asian Games. I personally took part in this event in 2013, it is a good event and a good experience. As for most of these guys this is the first time that they will experience the real feeling of a games village - some of them have taken part for instance in the Singapore Nationals, besides most of these guys were also a part of the World Junior Swimming Championships in Romania recently, so I am really excited for them to experience this event - being a part of the Athletics Village and they are all phenomenal performers from the Asian sector in all sports and all walks of life. It is a different experience when you are in the Athletes Village in comparison to a Hotel. I am excited for them to get that opportunity now I am really keen to know what they could achieve with this opportunity”



Adeetha Siriwardena

School: Wesley College

Age 17

Events: 50metres, 100metres and 200metres Backstroke, 200metres Individual Medley

"Honestly it is a huge privilege to be a part of the Youth Asian Games. Previously I went to the World Junior Championships, there I did not live up my expectations, but now I take the Youth Asian Games a platform to prove my worth."



Lithum de Silva

School: Gateway College, Colombo

Age 17

Event: 400metres Freestyle

"It means a lot to me to represent Sri Lanka at the Asian Youth Games. I recently represented Sri Lanka in the Junior World Championships and there I learned what international competition really is. Now my aim is to take that experience to my own heart and come up with a fitting performance at the AYG."



Jayden de Silva

School: Stafford International

Age: 15

Event: 1500 and 200metres Butterfly, 100metres Backstroke

"My maiden exposure at the recent World Junior Swimming Championships was a huge experience to me; now I am hoping to take that experience at the AYG in Bahrain to perform better"



M. F. Muhammad

School: Zahira College

Age 17

Events: 50metres, 100metres and 200metres Breaststroke

"I am happy because I was able to break the existing National Record during the World Junior Swimming Championships (2.22.41secs) this has given me the impetus to hone my skills in preparations for the upcoming AYG and I am curious to also experience the real participation of a Games Village.



Yashith Wijesundera

School: Stafford International

Age: 17

Events: 200metres Freestyle, 100metres and 50metres Butterfly

"I am really looking forward for this event and I am hoping to bring my best in me at the AYG and achieve my best timing"





Syesha Anthony

School: Abbotsleigh, a school in Sydney, Australia

Events: 50metres and 100metres Freestyle, 50metres Butterfly

"I train at the Abbotsleigh swim club. For the upcoming Asian youth games, I am most excited to gain more international racing experience and learn new things along the way. Although I live in Australia, I'm a Sri Lankan at heart so I am very excited and grateful for the opportunity to represent Sri Lanka on the world stage"



Sasha Rajapakse

School: British School in Colombo

Age: 15

Events: 50metres Butterfly, 50metre Backstroke, 200metres Individual Medley

"I am grateful for the opportunity to represent my country in the international stage and I am excited to swim against some of the best swimmers in Asia"



Lehara Melegoda

School: Anula Vidyalaya, Nugegoda

Age: 16

Events: 100metres, 200metres and 400metres Freestyle, 200metres Individual Medley

"I recently took part in the World Junior Swimming Championships and that was a great experience for me and there we learned how fast the international swimmers in our age really are and the Bahrain experience would be really great for me. I am hoping to do my best at these games"











Golf Swinging into gold

Though still in their teens, the Golf team definitely are not short of international experience and exposure. Right now, they have just completed taking part in the mainstream golf championship in Sri Lanka and surely they can use it as a launching pad for greater deeds during the Asian Youth Games in Bahrain.



Reshan Algama

School: Colombo International School

Age: 17

Event: Men's Individual and Team event

"I'm grateful for getting to represent my country in one of the biggest stages and would like to win a medal along with my fellow players in the team"



Jevan Mikel Sathasivam

School: Asian International School

Age: 17

Event: Men's Individual and Team event

"I am pretty excited that I have got this opportunity and I feel all of us have a good chance as a team we are pretty strong, but it all depend upon the day yet I am very confident"



Adithya Weerasinghe

School: Ananda College

Age 15

Event: Men's Individual and Team event

"I am very happy that I got this opportunity and I hope to be a part of the winning team"



D. Kaya Daluwatte

School: IVLA (online school)

Age: 16

Event: Women's Individual event

"It is a great opportunity to discover all the talent from Asia and really how I am fit in the big stage and hopefully bring home a medal"



Jacob Norton

Age 17

Event: Individual and Team event

"I think it's a great opportunity, a new golf course and playing conditions and especially the opportunity to represent the country. I hope to win a medal"



Standby











Faster, Higher, Stronger - Together 2028

What's next seems to be motto of the International Olympic Committee, Olympic Solidarity and also the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka. Simply, the custodians of the world sport are looking beyond the horizon for the next Olympic Gold and from where it comes.

With this in mind, the driving force of world athletics have derived a scheme to enhance the promising next generation of athletes so that be the occupiers of the podiums iconic games of tomorrow. The final destination now aimed at is the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

The Executive Board of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka has plans in place to map out a pathway, not only in selecting the prospective recipients who could make it to Los Angeles, but also to diligently monitor progress.

The selection process was entrusted to a qualified team with data to support the process. 8 athletes from different sports were selected after local and international screening processes.

Financial support will be extended to these athletes to enable them to access nutrition, coaching, international training and competitions, equipment and other support services, towards reaching their peak by 2028.

The current Executive Team is aware that Ceylon/Sri Lanka has achieved just two medals in its history and are thus determined to set in motion a programme to reverse this trend. The correct attitude and being focused on reaching peak performance should be the goal of these athletes and their coaching staff.



Nethmi Ahinsa – Wrestling (57kg)

National Ranking: 1st

World Ranking: 43rd as of September 2025

Named as Wrestler of the Month by the United World Wrestling in June 2025

3rd Place – 2025 U23 Asian Championships (57kg, Vietnam)

3rd place at the 2022 Commonwealth Games (57kg, United Kingdom)

3rd place at the 2024 U20 Asian Championships (53kg, Thailand)

3rd place at the 2024 U20 World Championships (53kg, Spain)

5th place at the 2024 Senior Asian Championships (53kg, Kyrgyzstan)

5th place at the 2022 U23 World Championships (55kg, Spain)



Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage Athletics (Javelin Throw)

National Ranking: 2nd

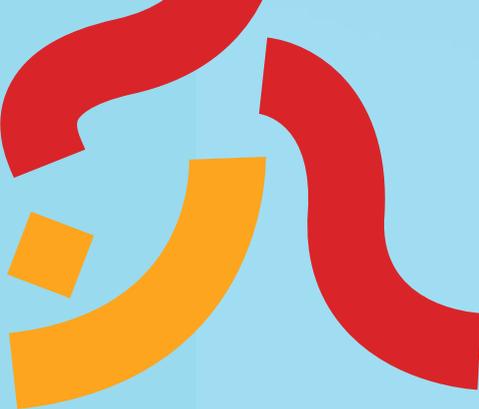
World Ranking: 9th as of 23rd September 2025

National Record Holder (86.5m at 1st Round of the Men's Javelin Throw at the World Athletics Continental Tour – Bronze in India

Asian Throwing Championships 2024, South Korea: Gold Medalist (Established new meet record – 85.45m)

World Junior Championships 2022, Colombia: 6th place (70.68m)





Aruna Dharshana - Athletics (400m)

National Ranking: 2nd

17th Place (44.99 sec) - Olympic Games, France Paris, 2024 (Personal best)

1st Place (45.79 sec) - 1st (N.C.R) Asian U20 Champ: Gifu Japan, 2018

1st Place (46.69 sec) - SAG Games, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2019

2nd Place (45.88 sec) - Continental Tour 2nd, Nassau, Bahamas, 2024

1st Place (45.30 sec) - Army Championship, Sri Lanka, 2024

1st Place 45.48 sec - Continental Tour, Chongqing, China, 2024

1st Place (45.50 sec) - Sri Lanka Nationals, Sri Lanka, 2024



Lesandu Arthavidu - Athletics (High Jump)

Asian Senior Championship, Gumi, Korea (May 27, 2025):

8th place (2.10m)

National Trials, Colombo, Sri Lanka (March 9, 2025):

1st place (2.22m) - Sri Lanka Junior

Record

Junior South Asian Championship, Chennai, India

(September 18, 2024): 1st place (2.7m) - South Asia Junior

Record

Asian Youth Championship, Kuwait (October 15, 2022):

3rd place (1.97m)

Commonwealth Youth Games, Trinidad & Tobago

(August 9, 2023): 4th place (1.94m)





Hiruki De Silva - Swimming (100m and 200m Freestyle)

National Ranking - 1st

National Record Holder in the 200m Individual Medley

Ranked 9th in 400m Freestyle at Commonwealth Youth Games, Trinidad and Tobago, 2023.

Silver Medal - 2*100m Freestyle relay at South Asian Games, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2019.

National Champion for 2 consecutive years (2023,2024) - Sri Lanka National Swimming Championships.

Ranked the highest among South Asian swimmers and 41st overall in the 200m Freestyle event at the World Aquatic Championships, Singapore 2025.

Awarded best player of the year at Sri Lanka Sports Festival 2024.

Ranithma Liyanage - Badminton (Singles)

National Ranking: 03rd

BWF World Rankings - Women's Singles: 94th as at 23rd September 2025

BWF Junior Rankings - Women's Singles: 05th as at 23rd September 2025

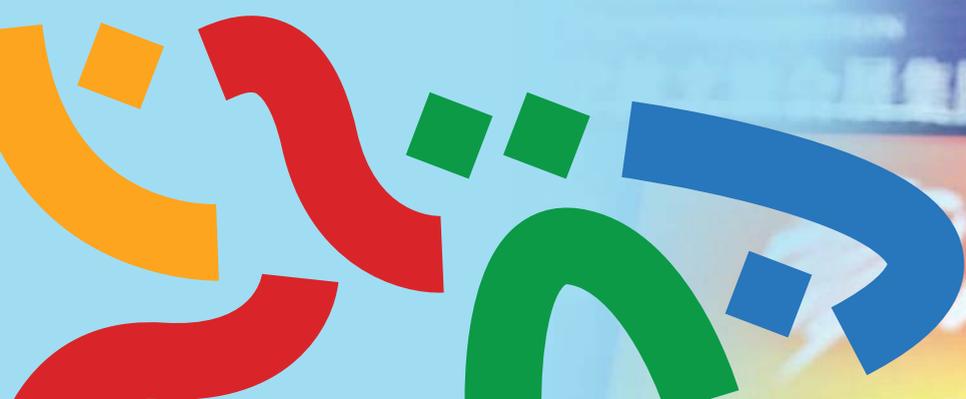
National Champion Women's Singles (2022, 2023, 2024) and Mixed Doubles (2024)

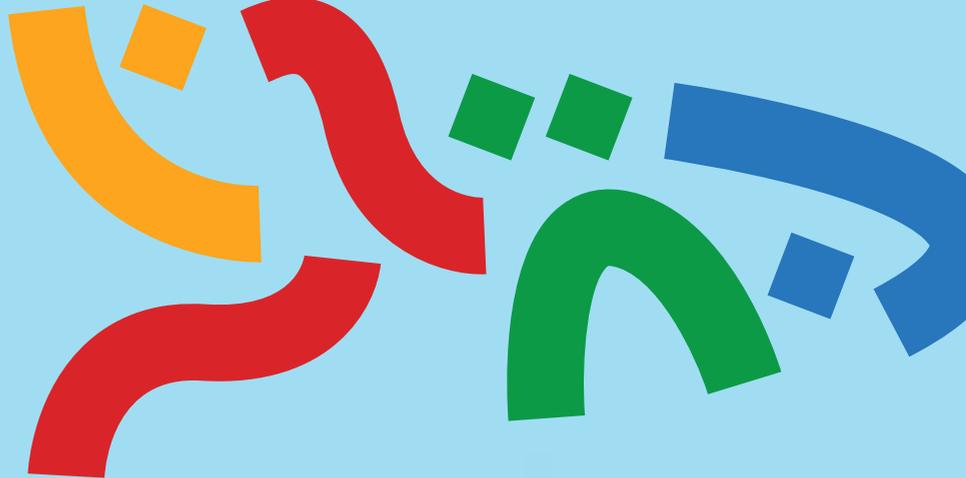
Pre-Quarter Finalist (Women's Singles) - World Junior 2024 (first ever for a Sri Lankan Badminton player)

Quarter Finalist (Women's Singles) - St. Denis International Badminton Challenge 2024

Runner-up (Women's Singles) - Bahrain International Series I - 2024

Semi-Finalist (Women's Singles) - Bahrain International Series II - 2024





Tharushi Abhisheka – Athletics (800m, 1500m)

National Ranking: Junior No. 01 in 800m, 1500m

Gold Medalist (Women's 800m) - Asian Under 18 Championships 2025

Gold Medalist (800m) - South Asian Junior Championship 2024

Silver Medalist (Medley Relay) - Asian Youth Championship 2025

Sri Lankan Junior record holder for Women's 800m and 1500m





Viren Nettasinghe – Badminton (Singles)

BWF World Rankings - Men's Singles: 65th as at 23rd September 2025

Olympic Participation: Participated in the 2024 Paris Olympics as the youngest direct qualifier.

Bronze Medalist - Hundred Sri Lanka International Challenge

Quarter-finalist - SBH Singapore International Challenge 2025

Pre-quarter finalist - Princess Sirivannavari Thailand Masters.

Sri Lanka National Champion 2024 (Men's Singles and Mixed Doubles)

Gold Medalist - Yonex-Sunrise Bangladesh International Challenge 2024

Bronze Medalist - 32nd Iran Fajr International Challenge 2024

Bronze Medalist - Victor Swedish Open 2024

Pre-quarter finalist (Individual Event) - 19th Asian Games 2022 in Hangzhou, China in 2023

Silver Medalist - Expora Indonesia International Challenge 2023

Bronze Medalist - Uganda International Challenge 2023

Bronze Medalist - Li-Ning Maldives International Challenge 2023



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