

Official Publication of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka

GoodSport

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Editor-in-Chief: S R Pathiravithana
Susil Premalal

IMAGES

Thusith Wijedoru
Thishan Dissanayake
Kandula Yatawara
thepapare.com

GRAPHICS/DESIGN

Strategic Alliance (Pvt) Limited

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CONTACTS

Please send your feedback to:
GOODSPORT, Olympic House,
100/9F, Independence Avenue,
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka
Email: info@olympics.lk
natolcom@sl.lk
Tel: +94 11 2684420/21/22/23
Web: www.olympics.lk

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FOREWORD

SURESH SUBRAMANIAM

President, National Olympic Committee

DREAM 2028 -- EVERY PRACTICE SESSION IS A MATCH

I was always curious to know about the ascendance of Lanka's sport in general; may be because I initially had my roots in local tennis. At every local meet I used to see flag waving fans hovering around the stadiums followed by their bellowing on how someone broke the existing national record of a given event especially in the field of athletics. There was indeed a sense of euphoria and everyone wanted to know when the next Olympic medal was forthcoming; yet, it used to simmer to a whimper across our shores. Nonetheless, overseas Sri Lanka's achievements are few and far between, and even the two

Olympic silver medals arrived in Sri Lanka fifty years apart. Even in a lesser scale like Asian Games and Commonwealth Games level, the achievements are declining in alarming proportions.

Even my predecessor Hemasiri Fernando during a serious assertion on the decline of performance of our athletes in the international arena lamented "Except in Cricket, Sri Lankan sportsmen and women have failed to perform satisfactorily at international and regional multi-disciplined sports festivals for the last so many years.

"The bitter truth is that authorities have failed to find immediate reasons behind these miserable failures in the field of sports and have not done anything to rectify those mistakes or wrong doings which have resulted in the said mediocre performances by our athletes.

"The current trend in merely participating in international and regional 'games' or 'championships' by our sportsmen and women will continue in the same manner unless swift and drastic action is taken to arrest the aforesaid situation and address these issues

of malfunctioning in the engine of sports development in our country." Though these exasperations were aired way back in 2011, the situation in 2018 when I took office was not far off. At the last Commonwealth Games in Brisbane, we had a few weightlifting and boxing medals, but, the 2018 Asian Games once again was old Mother Hubbard's – we ended up with an empty basket. Being a former National tennis player I am well used to serving volleys and receiving them. Since I took over the reins of the NOC SL, I learned how the clock ticks and in which direction the athlete runs when the track is laid out.

Now, I have got the assistance of Olympic Gold medallist Susanthika Jayasinghe to act in the capacity of Director of High Performance in our development team and in turn is looking to get further assistance from personalities in the calibre of Tony Campbell; who churned the Lankan mare to a medal winning running machine.

This is one ploy that I think that I have circled to cast my point. The next is, I have taken a cue from our own local tennis. The SLTA now has recognized that competition inbound and outbound is the only solution to our present predicament. Now at the SLTA the volume of

competition has increased by several fold and the results are evident. Tennis in Sri Lanka is in its ascendancy.

For perfection, you must cover all aspects of the challenge at hand and I term it as "Every practice is a match; so every match will become a practice". This is my 'Manthra' for success in any field.

The reality is that now in athletics how many competitions do they face per season? – May be one or two the most. This is a sorry state of affairs that has to be addressed. I feel the volume of local competition must go up several fold while there should be international exposure at least once a month; while giving the opportunity for some of the leading athletes to do their training overseas in a systematic manner. I learned that an average international athlete engages in at least at fifteen international meets per year – this count to more than one competition every month.

I presume this is 'the volume of activity' that we have to look at if we are to be competitive akin to the international demands and be on par with the rest of the athletic community by at least year 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.



Photo:
NOC SL President Suresh Subramaniam with Abraham Tolentino, President Philippines Olympic Committee




Photo:
Sri Lanka National Olympic Committee President Suresh Subramaniam met the President of the Qatar National Olympic Committee President Joaan bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, recently. Also in the picture is Secretary General Olympic Committee Maxwell de Silva

Photo:
With Mr Wong Po Kee MH, Deputy Secretary General Olympic Committee Hong Kong

Photo:
With Reza Salehi Amiri, President of the National Olympic Committee of Iran





Meeting of the titans

Mr. Suresh Subramaniam - the President of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka and the Secretary General Mr. Maxwell de Silva met the International Olympic Committee's President Dr. Thomas Bach today in Doha. The 24th Association of National Olympic Committee's General Assembly was held in Doha, Qatar. 204 National Olympic Committees and International Sport Federation and over 1000 delegates took part in the assembly.

NCDs future programme



A four-day training course was hosted by National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka under the auspices of Olympic solidarity at Olympic House, Sri Lanka. Fourteen participants from Bangladesh,

Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, and Sudan took part in the course and the session was facilitated by the Programme Director and one of the National Course Directors of the Olympic Council of

Malaysia. Vice President of the NOC SL Mr. Joseph Kenny was the chief guest at the closing ceremony and all participants were conferred with certification of participation.

Dr. Chula Senaratne appointed to FIBA Medical Commission



Secretary General of Sri Lanka Basketball Federation, Dr. Chula Senaratne has been appointed to the Medical Commission of the FIBA international for the term of 2019-2023. It is a rare achievement to get an appointment into a professional commission of FIBA International from South Asia, especially in a sport dominated by America and Europe. Dr. Chula Senaratne works at the Colombo South Teaching Hospital Kalubowila. His Basketball career spans around 40 yrs where half of this as a player and the other half as an administrator.

He is a Member of the Central Board of South Asian Basketball Association (SABA) and also serves in the Medical Committee of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka. He was appointed as the Chef-de-Mission of the Sri Lankan Contingent at the Youth Olympic Games held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2018. He was the Chairman of the National Selection Committee for Basketball for 7 years in the past, apart from his other positions on the Sri Lanka Basketball Federation.

Netballer Mellony loses her bout with Leukaemia



Sometimes time is too little. Definitely for 17-year-old Mellony Wijesinghe it was sadly true. She was a youth national player with a dazzling future; often spoken about bigger ascendancies, yet, tragically it was all taken back from the maker of all things itself.

One of the brightest stars in the netball horizon, she was still a student at Visakha Vidyalaya when she fell victim to the vicious cancer of leukaemia and this left the Sri Lankan netball community in shock at her demise.

It was said that Mellony had fallen ill during the All Island Schools Netball Championship back in August.

It was none other than the world renowned Sri Lankan netballer Tharjini Sivalingam who played a heart-rending tribute about the loss of her team mate. "I was so very much senior to her in the ranks as a Senior National Netball player, but, somehow I always felt a closeness - may be at 6' 3" she was catching up on

me. Often I have heard good things being spoken of her and with players of that calibre I felt the game of netball in Sri Lanka was in safe hands."

Tharjini was also of the view, that she would have been another player who could fit into the Australian professional circuit in the future just like the opportunity that she got purely owing to her height and Mellony came very close she feels. All in all Mellony's loss is a loss for the whole nation. At her demise she was a student of Visakha Vidyalaya, was earmarked as one of the next big netball stars in the country after representing Sri Lanka at the 8th Netball World Youth Cup back in 2017, playing with and against players 4-5 years her senior. Mellony was a part of the Sri Lanka Development Pool before being named the vice-captain of the Sri Lanka Youth Team back in June this year. The dominant Goal Shooter was a major part of Sri Lanka's successful campaign in the tournament where they finished 3rd behind Singapore and Malaysia.

A star on the court as well as in her studies, Mellony passed her G.C.E. Ordinary Level examination with flying colours last year and was studying for A/L's in the Bio stream with aspirations of becoming a doctor in the future.

Three lasses off to Singapore for TT

Three young Table Tennis players were identified and given support and scholarships by the Foundation of Goodness and NOC SL with the assistance from Singapore National Olympic Council to go to Singapore. They will stay there for a short period for further training.



A power packed NOC SL team made a visit to Kathmandu to finalise arrangements to the 13th South Asian Games. On behalf of Sri Lanka Team Mr. Maxwell de Silva, Secretary General of NOC Sri Lanka, Mr. Asanga Seneviratne, Vice-President of NOC Sri Lanka, Maj. Gen. (Retired), Dampath Fernando, Chef-de-Mission, Mr. Gamini Jayasinghe, Deputy Chef-de-Mission, Mr. Dhammika Muthugala Director General Sports, and Mr. I.P. Wijeratne Director of Sports, Ministry of Sports, Roy Fernando Medical Unit, Ministry of Sports and Accountant, Ministry of Sports, participated at the meeting



Photo: Painter Ms Dillai Joseph with Secretary General National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka, Maxwell de Silva



Photo: NOC SL Secretary General Maxwell de Silva (Left) President NOC SL Suresh Subramaniam handing over 'Reef painting' to International Olympic Committee President Dr. Thomas Bach. Also in the picture is Pere Miro, Deputy Director General NOC relations

DILLAI'S

painting handed over to

IOC President Dr. Thomas Bach

There the Lankan duo handed over a painting done by Sri Lankan artist Ms. Dillai Joseph depicting environment sustainability done under the theme 'Give the reef another chance'. NOC Sri Lanka initiated this environmental sustainability programme in Polhena on June 25, 2019.

The President of the National Olympic (NOC) of Sri Lanka Mr. Suresh Subramaniam and its Secretary General Mr Maxwell de Silva met the International Olympic Committee Chairman Dr. Thomas Bach during the 24th ANOC Annual Assembly in Doha, Qatar recently.

In that initiative, Joseph was also part of the programme and took a very serious responsibility of creating its information centre. Joseph designed all the visual materials and contents for the centre to educate the public on the importance of the coral reefs. Artist Dillai Joseph says, "I, as an artist, have tried to capture the

essence of this endeavour in my painting. It is no longer sufficient to 'conserve' coral reefs; rather it is to go one step further, where pro-active human intervention is needed to restore the reefs. The painting depicts a human hand giving out colour blobs to bring back life to somewhat dead corals (some parts of the coral is white). The stance of the human hand is also to have resemblance of the famous frescoes in the Sistine Chapel 'The creation' and drawing a parallel, where we as humans have the ability to give life back to coral reefs not merely to stop at conservation. I have tried to depict the bright colour scheme underwater and textured the corals to give a better effect.



Photo: The NOC Secretary General and President in conversation with Dr. Bach

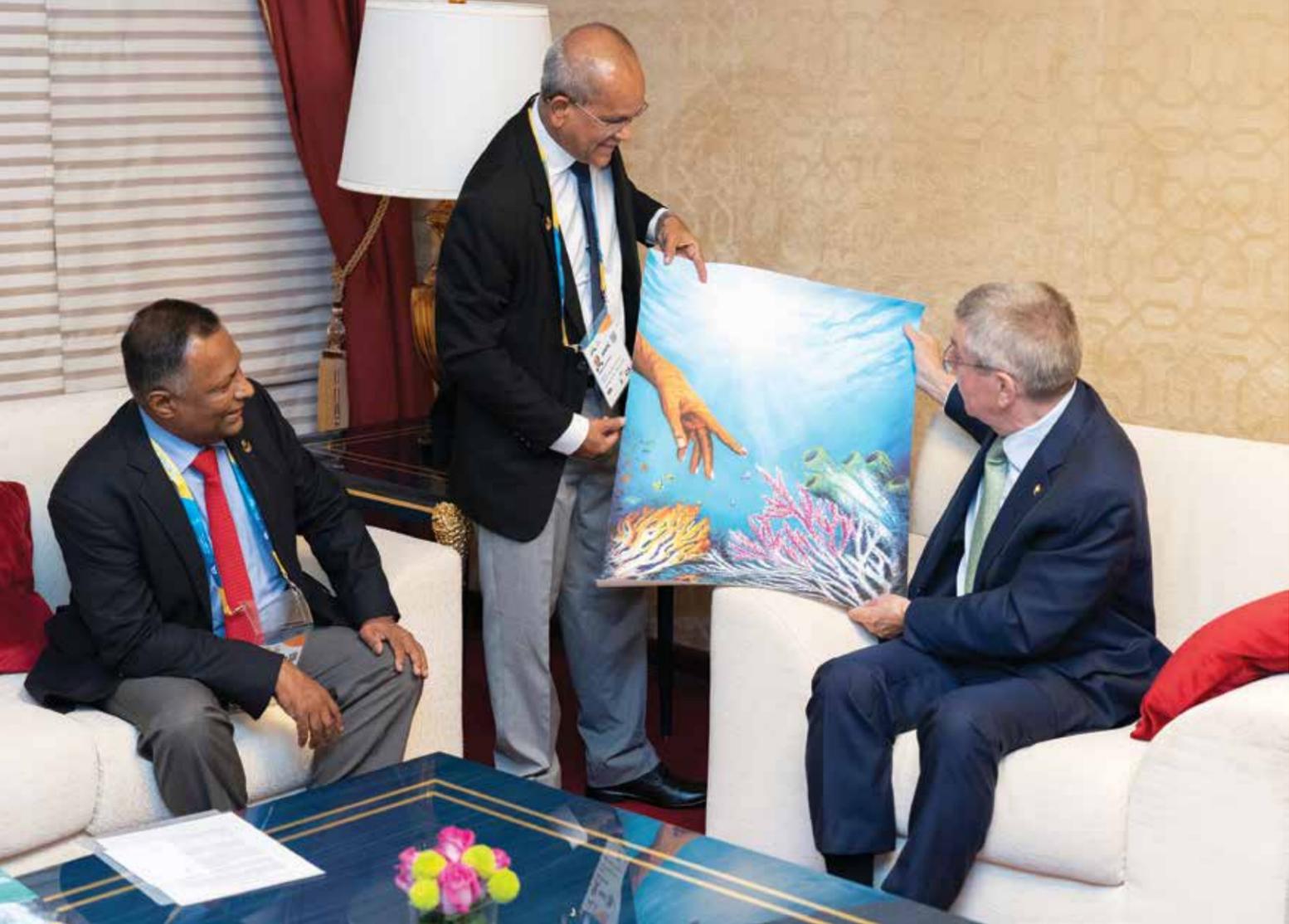


Photo:
NOC SL
Secretary
General Maxwell
de Silva
explaining the
"Reef Painting"
to Dr. Bach
while NOC SL
President Suresh
Subramaniam
looks on.

'Humans have the power to give life back' "I wish to gift this painting which is Acrylic on canvas (60cmx80cm) to the International Olympic Committee as a token to celebrate Olympic values and the remembrance of this work done in Sri Lanka with the NOC team to encourage how we can work together to bring back what was lost and it is not too late to keep trying.

It is a very dear painting to me and I wanted to part with the original as I believe this can inspire many beyond borders. We need to do this for the generations to come so that they too will enjoy the planet and value it."

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SOUTH ASIAN GAMES

SPORTS IN SRI LANKA ENTERED A NEW PLATEAU AFTER 1991

By Susil Premalal

The South Asian Games (SAG) was held in Sri Lanka in 1991 and 2006. The first one was the fifth edition of the SAG Games which was then known as the South Asian Federation (SAF) Games. It was transformed as the South Asian Games in 2006 for the first time and continues to this day.

The idea behind having an exclusive event for South Asian countries was because the performances of the region sunk to a disappointing low at the Asian Games held in Bangkok, Thailand in 1978.

Therefore the Olympic Committee of South Asian countries decided to have a regional competition similar to the South East Asian Games which began in 1959 also in Bangkok with the participation of 11 countries.

For the South Asian competition, there were seven countries namely Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives. Afghanistan joined the South Asian Games recently. It was in 1982 during a meeting held in Dhaka, Bangladesh that it was

decided to stage the first ever South Asian Games in 1983. However, hosts Bangladesh could not hold the inaugural event as planned that year because of political instability. Then it was decided by the South Asian Olympic Council to hold the first ever SAF Games in Kathmandu, Nepal in 1984. It was held from September 17 to 23 with competitions being held for five sports - athletics, boxing, football, swimming and weightlifting.

In the Nepal SAF Games Sri Lanka came second overall winning 7



gold, 11 silver and 3 bronze medals. Swimmer Julian Bolling, athletes Simone Van Heer (100m), Ramani Mangalika (200m) and Ruwan Chandratilleke (400m) won individual gold medals. The men's 4 x 400m relay team comprising Chandrathilleke, E.K.C. Gunawardena, George Sunil Rodrigo and Ranjith Aluvihare also bagged the gold medals.

The right to host the Games was selected according to alphabetical order thereafter. Originally it was decided to hold the event annually but it was held once in two years thereafter.

This is the third time that Kathmandu hosted the Games with the 13th edition of SAG being held from December 1 to 10. After 1984, the SAF Games was held in Nepal in 1999.

Sri Lanka hosted the Games for the first time in 1991 at the Sugathadasa Stadium. The Games was a turning

point in the history of sports in Sri Lanka.

With the full backing of the state resources, it gave a fillip to sportsmen and women in the country generating a new sporting culture and patriotic feeling. This was the first multi-disciplined sporting event ever hosted in Sri Lanka.

Late President Ranasinghe Premadasa ensured state patronage for the Games taking a personal interest to ensure the success of the event.

Former Sports Minister Nanda Mathew, former NOC chief late Roy de Silva, NOC Secretary General Prema Pinnawela, Education Ministry's Director of Sports Sunil Jayaweera, Sports Ministry Deputy Director Capt. Tilen Perera, and top level officials of all state institutions were members of the higher organizing committee.





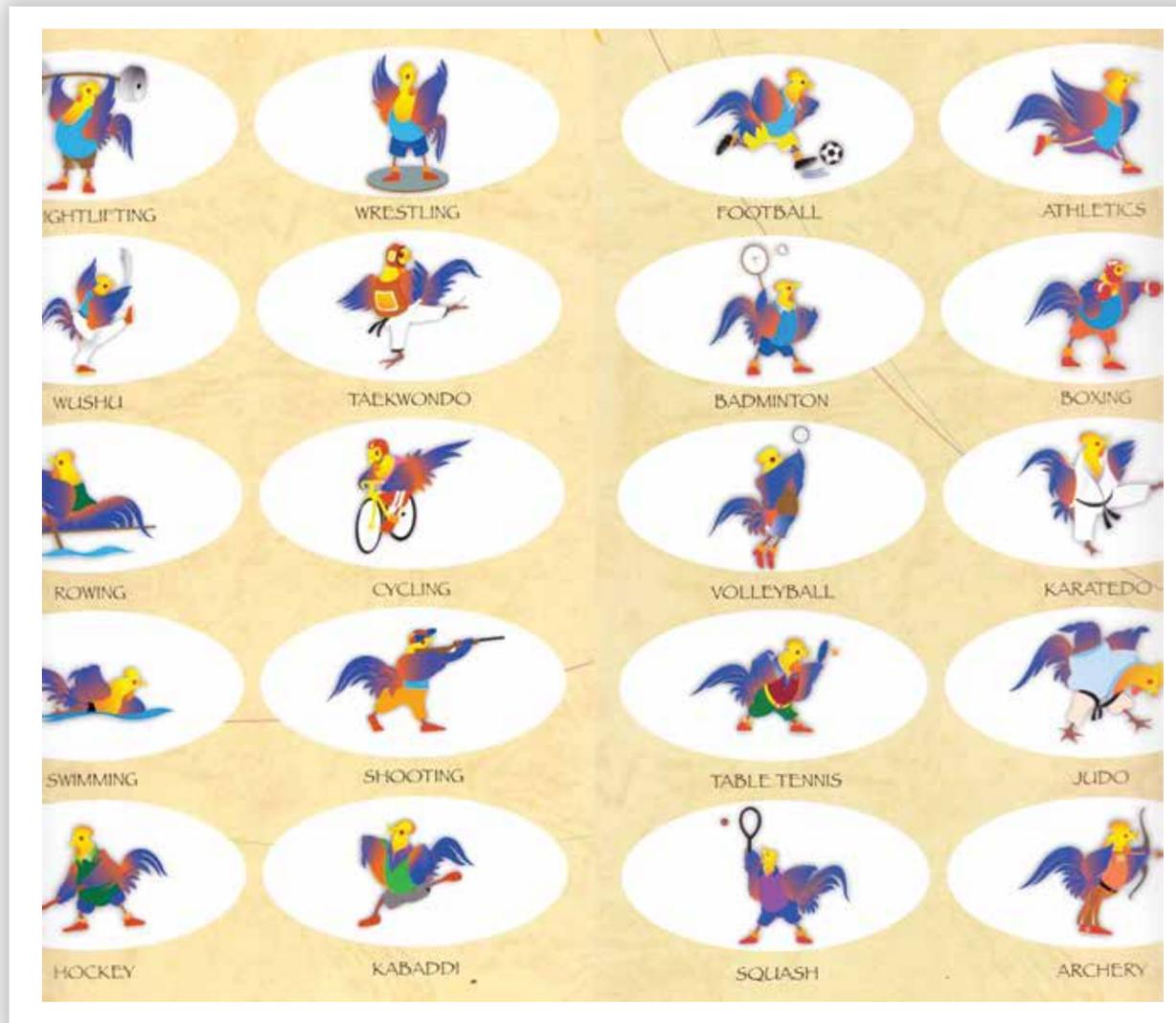
President Premadasa left no stone unturned to make the Games a success looking into the needs of participants and organizational aspects almost on a daily basis. The area around and within the Sugathadasa Stadium complex received a major facelift with the decision to host the Games in Sri Lanka.

Significantly in conjunction with the SAF Games, Colombo also hosted the SAARC Summit which was a resounding success with heads of the states of all the participating countries gracing the occasion. Even the international media which attended the event, endorsed the 1991 SAF Games as the best ever organized sporting event in all spheres especially in the hospitality as a host nation. The countries which hosted the South Asian Games thereafter took the Colombo Games as a yardstick and tried to emulate Sri Lanka thereafter.

There were 10 sports when Sri Lanka hosted the SAF Games in 1991. They were athletics, basketball, boxing, football, rifle shooting, swimming, table tennis, tennis, volleyball and weight lifting. Sri Lanka secured a total of 118 medals including 44 gold, 34 silver and 40 bronze medals.

The host nation emerged champions in athletics for the first time in the history of the Games winning 15 gold medals as against 12 by India. Sri Lanka also became the first winner of the women's volleyball gold medal defeating India in 1991.

The momentum of success achieved at the Colombo Games in 1991 continued until 2000 in all sporting disciplines especially athletics. Star athletes such as Sriyantha Dissanayake, Jayamini Illeperuma, Ineka Cooray, Dhammika Menike, Sriyani Kulawansa, Prasanna Sampath



Amarasekera, Damayanthi Darsha, Chinthaka Soysa, Sugath Tillekeratne, Rohan Pradeep, Ranga Wimalawansa and Olympic medallist Susanthika Jayasinghe emerged during this era. They made gradual progression after winning medals at the SAF Games and went onto shine at the Asian Athletic Championships, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, and World Championships culminating with Susanthika Jayasinghe crowning herself with glory at the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

The resurgence of sports in Sri Lanka after hosting the Games in 1991 also permeated to non-Olympic sports as Sri Lanka won the cricket World Cup in 1996, while the netballers emerged Asian champions while winning laurels in rugby football as well.

However, on the flip side of the coin, the success of 1991 SAF Games also spawned the evil menace of doping in sports especially athletics. Sri Lanka hosted the South Asian Games for the second time in 2006 after a gap of 15 years. However, Sri Lanka could not repeat the success they achieved when they staged the games in Colombo for the first time in 1991.

There were a record 20 sporting disciplines at the 10th edition of the Games held from August 18 to 25. Sri Lanka won a total of 178 medals (37 gold, 63 silver and 78 bronze medals) but was placed third behind South Asian giants India and Pakistan. Sri Lanka's athletes won the most number of 33 medals including 14 gold, 12 silver and 7 bronze medals with Susanthika Jayasinghe announcing her arrival by bagging a triple gold in the 100, 200 and 4 x 100m relay.



**13th**
SOUTH ASIAN GAMES - 2019
KATHMANDU-POKHARA
1-10 December, 2019



THE 13TH SAG A JOURNEY OF DESTINY FOR SRI LANKA'S ATHLETES

By S.R. Pathiravithana

It's a landlocked country on top of a mountain range—the Himalayas. Obviously the result would be wintry conditions in December and heavy clothing – your guess is right; we were talking about Nepal and the 13th South

Asian Games which was held in the cities of Kathmandu, Pokhara and Janakapur. Thronged in this location were athletes from the South Asian nations – Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the hosts Nepal, which

counts to around a quarter of the world's population.

Individually there were many winners, but as for sports; the ultimate winner was sport as a whole, because it displayed



oneness and amity through individual and team sport, proving the subtle point “Participation is the biggest achievement”. Medal tally wise the highest achievers were giants India whose athletes were responsible for bringing home 173 gold medals and a final tally of 311. Hosts Nepal made the maximum of home conditions ending up with a very impressive 51 gold medals in a tally of 206 medals.

However the most impressive performance came from islanders Sri Lanka who ended up with 40 gold medals 83 silver and 128 bronze medals by far the biggest haul by a collective effort in a single sports gathering. Reason is the Lankan athletes competed in somewhat alien conditions, considering the climate that they live in. Yet, competition is competition and you must learn to play straight on any wicket.

The games got under way with volleyball – men and women on November 29, but the games proper were flagged on December 1 at the Rangashala Stadium at Dharmashala in Kathmandu.

As expected it was a roar of a success. The pomp and pageantry and the

enthusiasm of the Nepalese public said that they were there to make an impression. Then after the first quarter of the competition it was the Nepalese athletes who were heading the table, while India was charging their dynamo for the latter half of the competition. Initially it was a tussle between Sri Lanka and Pakistan for the third position.

The final outcome was more or less predictable. Once, Sri Lanka with their full complement of athletes came out with an all-out performance especially through track and field event they finished with a memorable tally but, one still wonder should we go overboard with this performance or should be vigilant and make this the springboard for greater achievements and come in par with the rest of the athletic world.

Making the narration in a positive manner we must ask ourselves did we really achieve in a broader sense of the word. It was more than a secret that India and Pakistan held back some of their prize horses in the stable? Did our own athletes come out with exceptional personal achievements which could take them to the borderline of international maturity?

Yes, They were a cut above the rest. May be had women’s marathoner Hiruni Wijaratna had competition, she could have been coaxed to run faster and broken some records, but ironically even she did not know where her competition was – apparently nine minutes later. At the end of the race she was all in her wits may be could have run to catch the bus home had she lived there in Nepal.

Likewise golfer, Grace Yatawara too was incomparable with her “Club Art” and would have been more competitive with more meaningful competition. The third was Mathew Abeysinghe—the seven Gold wonder in swimming. Yet, the stark truth in their success is that they all live and train in the United States of America where sport is a different bar of reality. “There you have to be good to be competitive.”

Finally judoka Chamara Dharmawardena has had the Olympic exposure and the NOC SL has also given him many opportunities to better himself and he obliged that by bringing home a rare judo gold.





Athletics

DAZZLING HIRUNI SPURS SRI LANKA'S GOLD SHOWER

She is petite and lithe and she sailed like the wind. It was still morning in Dasharath Rangasala Tripureshwor when the crowd that thronged went agape with a woman in rhythmic motion striding past the main gate of the stadium.

At that point she was nearly nine minutes ahead of her closest rival Pushpa Bha of Nepal. There were no signs of fatigue and she looked as if she just has started the 42km195metre course. Then after a victory lap the Lankan woman marathoner Hiruni Wijayarathne whizzed past the post

in 2hrs 41 minutes and 24 seconds while the lass from Nepal came in with a timing of 2hrs 50mts and 11 seconds.

A beaming Hiruni looking just normal said: "Only my feet are hurting a little and other than that I am okay. This is my first gold for my country and will promise there would be many more. At the same time records did not cross my mind at all; all what I wanted do is to bring home a gold medal."

Spurred by this omen the Lankan women build its athletic castle, the athletic contingent closed its curtains adding 5

more gold in Javelin Throw, 800 men and women, and 4x400 men and women relay. The men's marathon runners disappointed. Sri Lanka's Pradeep Dhammika (2:28.31) finished fifth while Sisira Kumara (2:29.32) was placed sixth while Nepal's Kiran Singh won the gold medal (2:21.17). India's Rashpal Singh (2:21.57) and Shre Singh (2:22.07) claimed the silver and bronze medals respectively.

Sprinters Aruna Darshana and Dilshi Maheesha, hurdler Lakshika Sugandi and triple jumper Hashini Prabodha won gold medals, to put Sri Lanka back on

Photo: Marathoner Hiruni Wijayarathne leading her way to the SAG Gold



Photo:
 Legendary Olympic Silver Medallist Susanthika Jayasinghe admires Aruna Dharshana's medal.



Photo:
 Dilshi Kumarasingha



Photo:
 Himasha wins his battle

the saddle in track and field events among South Asian nations.

Sri Lanka started off Day 5 with a gold medal from Lakshika Sugandi, who edged out India's Aparna Roy to win the Women's 100m Hurdles event. Lakshika won the gold medal with a timing of 0.13.68 seconds, with a quick run in the final few metres to push back Roy, who clocked 0.14.37 seconds, to second place. Sri Lanka had the possibility of claiming a top two finish, but Ireshani Rajasinghe failed to dominate over the Indian silver medalist, and claimed the bronze medal clocking 0.14.18 seconds. Sri Lanka won three back-to-back gold medals in the Men's 400m, Women's 400m and Women's Triple Jump stealing the limelight, before noon. Aruna Darshana, Sri Lanka's favourite and medal prospect, made a perfect run to claim the gold in the Men's 400m final after clocking 0.46.69 seconds, while Lakmal Priyantha followed in close to claim the silver with the timing of 0.46.79 seconds, sealing a Lankan dominance. India's K. Jeevan won the bronze medal after finishing the run at 0.47.42 seconds.

Sri Lanka claimed another gold in the Women's 400m final, with Dilshi Maheesha dominating the rest of

the runners to finish the race in 0.53.40 seconds. India's Priya Habbanath won the silver medal finishing behind Dilshi at 0.54.31 seconds, while Sahib Asra claimed the bronze medal with a timing of 0.54.38 seconds.

Sri Lanka enjoyed another one-two finish in the Women's Triple Jump event, as the favourite in the event and gold medal hope, Vidusha Lakshani was bettered by her compatriot Hashini Prabodha. She achieved 13.21 metres in her third attempt, after failing twice, and the leap was sufficient to give her the gold medal, over Lakshani, who jumped 13.14 metres. Out of six jumpers, besides the two Lankan jumpers, others failed to hit the 13metre mark. India's Bharabi Roy, who claimed the bronze medal, jumped 12.77 metres. Hurdler Roshan Dhammika and triple jumper Safreen Ahmed added the remaining two bronze medals for Sri Lanka taking the entire count to nine from the fifth day in athletics. Dhammika clocked 0.14.42 seconds in the Men's 110m Hurdles to win the bronze medal, finishing behind gold winner Muhammad Naeem of Pakistan (0.14.30sec) and India's Surendhar Jayak (0.14.37sec) in a close finish.



Photo:
 The SAG athletic contingent



Photo:
Roshan Dhammika



Photo:
Aruna Dharshana and
Lakmal Priyantha



Photo:
Waruna Lakshan

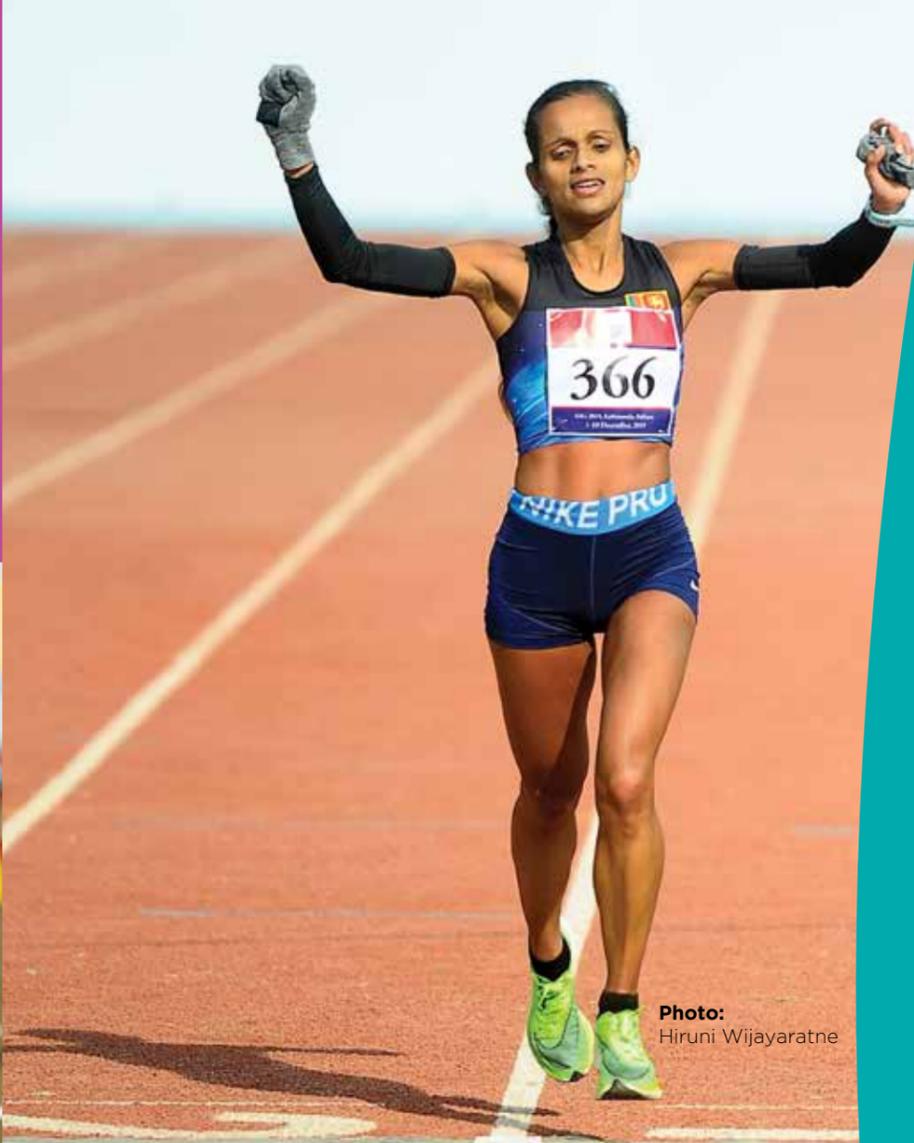


Photo:
Hiruni Wijayaratne



Photo:
Sugandi Lakshika

Safreen Ahmed gave Sri Lanka a bronze medal in Men's Triple Jump, with a clearance of 15.95 metres, which he achieved in his fifth attempt. He was bettered by India's Karthik Unnikri, who won the gold medal after clearing 16.47 metres and Mohammed Salahudin, also of India, who claimed the silver with a jump of 16.36 metres.

Then after Hiruni's dazzle came the Men's 800m: Gold – Indunil Herath (SL) 1:50.52, Silver – Mohammed Afzal (Ind) 1:51.25, Bronze – Som Bahadur (Nep) 1:51.44 - Sri Lanka's Rusiru Chathuranga finished fourth 1:51.51.

Women's 800m: Gold - Dilshi Kumarasinghe (SL) 2:06.18, Silver – Gayanthika Abeyratne (SL) 2:08.52, Bronze - Lily Das (Ind) 2:08.97
Women's Javelin Throw: Gold – Nadeesha Lekamge (SL) 55.02m, Silver – Nadeeka Lakmali (SL) 54.41m, Bronze – Kumari Sharmila (Ind) 53.63m

Men's 4x400m: Gold - Sri Lanka (Aruna Darshana, Senira Gunaratne, Rajitha Rajakaruna, Lakmal Priyantha) 3:08.04, Silver – India (Jeevan Karekopp, Santhosh Kumar, Angrej Singh, Jabir Madari) 3:08.21, Bronze – Pakistan (Umar Sadat, Mehboob Ali, Abdul Mueed, Nokar Hussain) 3:08.24

Women's 4x400m: Gold – Sri Lanka (Omaya Udayangani, Gayanthika Abeyratne, Kaushalya Madushani, Dilshi Kumarasinghe) 3:41.10, Silver

– Pakistan (Sahib E. Asra, Aneela Gulzab, Rajiha Ashiq, Najma Parveen) 3:41.74, Bronze – India (Priya Habbathan, Vijayakumari, Manisha Kushwaji, Nancy) 3:41.81
Men's Javelin Throw: Arshad Nadeem (Pak) 86.29m (NMR), Silver – Shivpal Singh (Ind) 84.16m, Bronze – Sumedha Ranasinghe (SL) 74.97m.

Men's 400m: Gold - Aruna Darshana (SL) 0.46.69, Silver – Lakmal Priyantha (SL) 0.46.79, K. Jeevan (Ind) 0.47.42

Women's 400m: Gold - Dilshi Maheesha (SL) 0.53.40, Silver – Priya Habbathan (Ind) 0.54.31, Bronze – Sahib Asra (Pak) 0.54.38

Men's 100m Hurdles: Gold – Muhammad Naeem (Pak) 0.14.30, Silver – Surendhar Jayak (Ind) 0.14.37, Bronze – Roshan Dhammika (SL) 0.14.42

Women's 110m Hurdles: Gold – Lakshika Sugandi (SL) 0.13.68, Silver – Aparna Roy (Ind) 0.14.13, Bronze – Ireshani Rajasinghe (SL) 0.14.18

Men's Triple Jump: Gold – Karthik Unnikri (Ind) 16.47m (3), Silver – Mohammed Salahudin (Ind) 16.36m (2), Bronze – Safreen Ahmed (SL) 15.95m (5)

Women's Triple Jump: Gold – Hashini Prabodha (SL) 13.21m, Silver – Vidusha Lakshani (SL) 13.14m, Bronze – Bharabi Roy (Ind) 12.77m.



Photo:
Mathew Abeysinghe

Swimming

HE'S GOT THE MIDAS TOUCH; EVERYTHING TURNS TO GOLD

By S.R. Pathiravithana

Repeating an astounding performance akin to winning seven gold medals in an International meet is rare and awe inspiring. When one does attain that feat it goes to prove what sort of international star he/she is and how that person's metabolism ticks.

Sri Lanka's swimming star Mathew Abeysinghe is one such individual whose metabolism works in that manner. He

works and trains consciously with a certain goal in mind rarely deviating from it. The plus point in this endeavour is that he belongs to a swimming family and that art is a way of life. He swims because he was born to do it and other achievements that come along with it are the fruits of his sweat.

At the 13th SAG, competing under alien conditions compounded with real pitfalls like an underdone swimming pool and

insufficient training facilities; he stood out like a beacon and a cut above the rest; thus he proved that he is blessed with the Midas touch.

We started our little conversation asking Mathew about his impressions of the 13th SAG swimming, as he emulated his last SAG performance in India last time out. Mathew spelled out his impressions in this manner. He said: "I think the conditions weren't ideal, being Nepal naturally the altitude, the weather conditions and the pool not being ready played a vital role in the final outcome. I think me and the team we did our best with what we could; those were not perfect conditions. Yet, I am happy with the final result."

Obviously the following question was 'what's next'? Mathew explained, "the next step for me is the Olympics and qualifying for it. That is going to be my target in life for the next eight months starting with a training camp in Hawaii. From there my coaches along with my father Manoj Abeysinghe we will plan out different meets that we are going to participate in. Some of those meets do have qualifiers, so we have to work towards that."

Then in reply to our query on what is the status of our game at present Mathew Abeysinghe explained that he feels that swimming as a sport is in safe hands and the bar is constantly being raised. He said: "For this question my answer has always been, Sri Lanka swimming over the past few years has been improving. If you look at the national records – the national records between the years 2010 and 2019 it's not the same. A lot of people in the SAG team looking out for Gold medals but failed only by a whisker. But, I think the team was extremely good and it's a good omen for Sri Lanka swimming."

Then GoodSport asked the question – after you, the Akalankas and Rahims-- does this mean that Lankan swimming possesses the necessary ingredients to move on at the present pace. Mathew said: "When I moved to Colombo in 2010 the national record for 50metre free style was 24.7secs done by Heshan Unamboowe who was considered really good at that time, now there at least 25-30 swimmers in Sri Lanka who could attain that feat. The National record at present is at 22:5 – 2.2 seconds in ten years is unheard of."

Explaining the upsurge of Sri Lankan swimming Mathew said: "I think people like my dad Manoj do possess the talent to spot talent and develop them. My family moving to Sri Lanka played a big part in the improvement of Sri Lanka swimming; before, it was like a kind of stagnant where competition was concerned, but now with me and my brothers and some others setting the bar so high, the younger kids are also trying to achieve that and to get there and they have to work at it. As the level of the top end people like me and others get higher the others have to emulate us to keep with bar that is set."



Photo:
Ganga Senevirathne



Photo:
Aniqah Gafoor



Photo:
Mathew Abeysinghe



Photo:
Ramudi Samarakoon



Photo:
Bhakthi Karunasena



Photo:
The contingent



Photo:
Sandu Savindi

Photo:
P.G.H.C. Madusanka



Photo:
M.A.S.U. Jayasingha

Photo:
N.I.S. Mendis



Taekwondo **THE CATALYST**

By S.R. Pathiravithana

By The 13th South Asian Games in Nepal well could be the catalyst as far as Taekwondo is concerned in one meaning than one. After two dry days of medals, Taekwondo opened Sri Lanka's gold rush producing three in one day. The other is that from rather a 'nonentity' pre-game reception, the public as well as the officialdom have taken a step back and begun to take notice of this discipline with respect that is due.

Team manager Sampath Alahakone was beaming after the event. He knew his boys and girls have backed the sport that they are a part of and have made it more meaningful to be a part of. He said: "Prior to our departure some of the officials had doubts about how the game of Taekwondo is being run in Sri Lanka in somewhat a critical tone, but they were the very people who then shouted their voices hose singing all the hosannas in praise of the achievement. Yet, as far

as we are concerned this performance is the turning point of Taekwondo in Sri Lanka, now it is up to us to make it work and become a regular feature all programmes."

Alahakone explained as to how they broke the ice. He said: "In our very first outing we won a gold medal which was brought home in the individual men's under 17-23 Poomsae event by talented Ranuka Prabhath. That set our bar for the entire game. Every Sri Lankan player who followed Ranuka wanted to emulate that performance."

Alahakone added that this gold being Sri Lanka's first at the games also had a huge impact on the players and definitely they were pumped up. He added: "So much so by the end of the first day's events Sri Lanka had three gold medals in their larder and they were the only ones who had gold under their belts by then.

Besides, the gold by the end of the first day, the Lankan team were displaying 5 silver and 5 bronze medals too." He feels that was the bar that they set in for the rest of the contest. At the same time all the players also reciprocated by giving their maximum to the cause. On the second day of events, he said our players finished with three medals in four outings with silver and two bronze. In the third day of events Sri Lankan players had medals in all our matches including gold in a fighting competition which was won by Chalinda Liyanage in the 62kgs and under category.

"All these signs add up to a healthy future for the game of Taekwondo in Sri Lanka. We must make sure that we maximise the awareness and edge that we have worked on. I am sure that our young players would take this as a stepping stone for bigger deeds in the International arena. Besides all their achievements also go into their individual international grading."

Men's 63 Kg
Gold - Chalinda Liyanage

Men's Individual Poomsae (17-23) Years
Gold - Ranuka Prabhath

Pair Poomsae (17-23) Years
Gold - Isuri Suhara Mendis Nammuni & Ranuka Prabhath

Pair Poomsae (23-29) Years
Men's Team Poomsae 23 Years Above
Gold - Nishanka Jayasinghe, Lakshman Ilandarige, Krishantha Weerasinghe Ilangan Weeragedara
Silver - Thilakshika Jayaweera & Nissanka Jayasinghe

Men's Individual Poomsae 29 Years Above
Silver - Lakshman Ilandarige

Women's Individual Poomsae (23-29) Years
Silver - Thilakshika Jayaweera

Men's 54 Kg
Silver - Anura Bandara

Women's 49 Kg
Silver - Irangani Pushpa

Women's Team Poomsae 23 Years Above
Silver - Ranpatipura Dewage Madhavee, Thilakshika Jayaweera, Shalini Upekha Sithumini Bandara Wijewickrama, Dhanusha Nayanangani Rajapakse Arachchige

Men's Team Poomsae (17-23) Years
Silver - Ranuka Prabhath Menik Pedi, Durayalage Amila Sahan Isuru, Nimesh Viranga Mallawa Thanthirige

Men's 58 Kg
Bronze - Ramesh Jeewantha Thikarathna

Men's 80 Kg
Bronze - Suranga Dihan

Men's 87 Kg
Bronze - Charma Tharindu

Women's 73 Kg
Bronze - Sachitha Pramodini

Men's 87+ Kg
Bronze - Balapatiyage Bless

Men's 74 Kg
Bronze - Darshana Kumara

Women's 62 Kg
Bronze - Maneesha Samarajeewa

Women's 53 Kg
Bronze - Dasuana Nimesha

Women's 73+ Kg
Bronze - Nuwanthi Lakmali

Women's 46 Kg
Bronze - Ishara Piumali Samarakoon

Men's 68 Kg
Bronze - Tharanga Lakmal

Women's Team Poomsae (17-23) Years
Bronze - Isuri Suhara Mendis Nammuni, Sanjeewi Udyogya Jayasinghe, Hashihni Chapa Madusanika Pahalagedara

Women's Individual Poomsae (17-23) Years
Bronze - Isuri Suhara Mendis Nammuni

Women's Individual Poomsae 29 Years Above
Bronze - Gayathri Sandamali

Men's Individual Poomsae (23-29) Years
Bronze - Nishshanka Jayasinghe

Pair Poomsae 29 Years Above
Bronze - Laxman Ilandarige & Gayathri Mehenchiarachchige



Photo:
N.I.S. Mendis

Photo:
M.P.D.R. Prabhath



Photo:
I. Lakshman



Photo:
R.D.M.T. Jayaweera

Photo:
S.U.S.B. Wijewickrema

Photo:
R.A.D.N Rajapakse



Photo:
J.A. Nishshanka

Photo:
I. Lakshman



Photo:
I.W.K. Weerasinghe, I. Lakshman, J.A. Nishshanka



Wrestling

LANKAN WRESTLERS TAKE HOME 14 MEDALS OVERALL

G.G. Ayomi Senaratne and W.M. Deepika Weerabahu shone at the 13th South Asian Games Wrestling Championships by bringing home two gold medals at Janakapura, Nepal.

Besides the two gold, the Lankan women were able to bag four other silver and a bronze making it a tally of seven medals over all.

In the men's competition the male competitors were behind the women's with no gold, but finished with seven Silver and a bronze tally of also seven medals.

Women's overall:

- Women's 72 Kgs G.G. Ayomi Senaratne (GOLD)
- Women's 65kgs W.M. Deepika Weerabahu (GOLD)
- Women's 76 Kgs Shanika Weerasinghe (Silver)
- Women's 68kgs R.A. Mala Rupasinghe (Silver)
- Women's 62Kgs M.W. Mahira Priyangani (Silver)
- Women's 50kgs S.P. Sriyakanthi Nirohashini (Silver)
- Women's 53Kgs Sanika Madushani (Bronze)

Men's overall

- Men's 92 Kgs Walpitage Salitha (Silver)
- Men's 79Kgs W.S. Fernando (Silver)
- Men's 74kgs W.M. Madushanka Wijesuriya (Silver)
- Men's 70kgs K.K.G. Anil Munasinghe (Silver)
- Men's 65kgs Chamara Weerasinghe (Silver)
- Men's 57kgs Gayan Chaturangana (Silver)
- Men's 61kgs Udara Fernando (Bronze)



Photo:
J.A.C. Lakmal

Weightlifting **TWO GOLD FOR LANKAN WEIGHTLIFTERS AT POKHARA**

By S.R. Pathiravithana

In the mix of Sri Lanka international sports, weightlifting is definitely a medal yielding exercise especially when it comes to contests in the calibre of Commonwealth Games and South Asian Games.

In the 2019 South Asian Games, the Lankan weightlifters once again proved their mettle by contributing to the Lankan cause with eleven medals which consisted of two gold, eight silver and one bronze.

The weightlifting competition was conducted in the city of Pokhara more than a hundred kilo metres away from the main city of Kathmandu.

Upon the return of the Lankan weightlifters GoodSport took time to share a narration on what transpired with co-lifter Thilanga Palangasinghe; incidentally a silver medal winner at the games. He said: "It started with the ladies 45kgs event followed by men's the 55kgs and 61kgs and women's 55kgs contests. During the

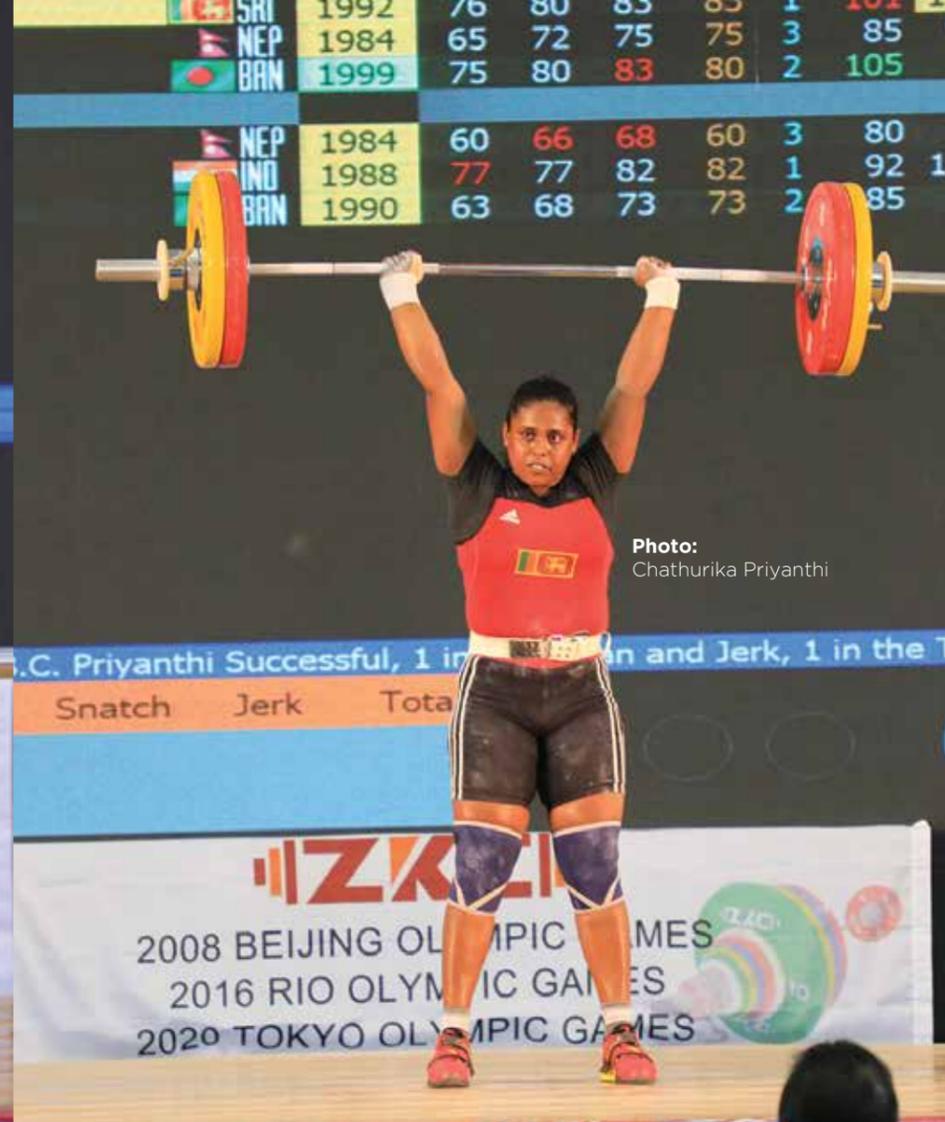


Photo: Chaturika Priyanthi

Photo: Chaturika Priyanthi



Photo: The SAG 2019 Weightlifting squad



Photo: Indika Dissanayake

day's proceedings we ended up with gold and two silver medals. Samarakone won ladies silver in the 45kgs class, the other silver was taken by Hansani Gomes in the 49kgs category while Y.D.I. Kumara became the first Gold recipient in the 55kgs category, then I followed it with a 61kgs men's silver . Then R.M.N. Rajapakse also won silver in the men's 55kgs category.

"In the following day; opening with the 73kgs category Indika Dissanayake lost medal opportunity by seeking the gold lift, but, evergreen Chinthana Vidanage managed a Bronze. This was followed by Chaturika Priyanthi who won a bronze. In the final day of weightlifting Himali Haputenne made another gold winning effort in the 85kgs and over category while Eshan Charuka in the over 109kgs category won a silver."

Palangasinghe finally said in spite of a few logistical issues, the overall scenario was quite impressive and they were very proud to have contributed to the Lankan cause in this manner.



Wushu

THILINI AND ANURADHA BRING HOME GOLD MEDALS

Sri Lanka's Wushu players answered the country's clarion call by bagging gold in the men's and women's categories at the 13th South Asian Games in Kathmandu. In the men's division Namal Anuradha won the gold in the Taolu Taiji Jian category while the women's gold was won by Thilini Gunasekera in the Taiji Jian All Rounder category.

Besides these achievements Sri Lanka also bagged five silver and six bronze medals during their remarkable show.



Men's Taolu Taiji Jian
Gold - Tharindu Namal Anuradha

Women's Taiji Jian All-Rounder
Gold - Thilini Gunasekara

Men's 65 Kg
Silver - K.W.A. Nipun Shanika

Men's 75 Kg
Silver - Puspa Kumara

Men's 85 Kg
Silver - W.R.M.T. Madusanka

Sansou Women's 56 Kg
Silver - W.P.M.M. Madumali

Women's Chan Quan Thaulo
Silver - P.H.G. Wathsala

Men's 56 Kg
Bronze - S.R. Kumara

Men's 60 Kg
Bronze - P.N. Balawardana

Men's 70 Kg
Bronze - S.G.R. Rumesh

Men's 52 Kg
Bronze - A.G.M. Chandika

Sansou Women's 52 Kg
Bronze - S.V.P.R. Dilhani

Nandao All-Round
Bronze - Sanju Kumari



Volleyball

RED CARPET PERFORMANCE BY BEACH VOLLEYBALL SPIKERS

It was a rare all Sri Lankan gold and silver clash for beach supremacy in Beach Volley at Pokhara at the 13th South Asian Games. Finally the teams -- Asanka Pradeep and Ashen Kumara men's and Deepika Jadera and Madushani Weerasinghe women's took home the gold while the duo of Tiron Jayatilleke Jayan Sanuja (Men's) and Tharuka Lakshini and Dinesha Prasadini pocketed the silver title.

The speciality of this win was that during the entire championship, both teams stayed unbeaten and only the women's team even dropped one set during the proceedings.

It's worth showing off the dominance. In the men's opening tie, the Tiron-Sanju pair beat Man Bahadur and Dil Sunar of Nepal while Asanka Pradeep Kumara and Ashen Kumara beat B.K. Raju and Sanju Shah also of Nepal.

In the women's first outing the pair of Tharuka Lakshani and Dinesha Prasadini beat Kopila Upreti and Manisha Choudhari 2-0 while Deepika Jadera and Madushani Weerasinghe beat Birita Budakothi and Nebika Chudhari 2-1. In both games the opponents were from Nepal.

In the second encounter Deepika and Madushani met opponents from the Maldives – Aminath Rudhaina and Ibrahim and beat them 2-0 while Lakshini and Dinesha beat Moosa Zeeniya and Aminath Rudhaina – Rudhaina being involved in both matches in a losing cause 2-0.

In the men's second outing, Tiron and Sanuja beat the Bangladesh duo of Mohammed Imran and Shaikh md Samy 2-0 while Pradeep and Kumara beat Hossain Md Monir and Ali md Shjaha (Bangladesh) also 2-0.

In their third set of games, the Maldivian pair of Tiron and Sanju beat Abdulla Zayaan and Ahmed Mohammed 2-0 while Pradeep and Kumara beat Adam Naseem and Mohaammad 2-0.

Tiron and Sanjua's next outing was with a pair from Pakistan. There the Pakistan duo of Khan Zasnab and Khan Afaq also lost at 2-0.

From there in the last round Tiron and Sanju beat B.K. Raju and Sanju Shah of Nepal while Pradeep and Kumara beat Abdulla Zayaan and Ahmed Mohammed 2-0.



Golf

GRACEFUL YATAWARA, GUIDES LANKA TO TWO GOLD MEDALS

As expected Grace Yatawara's golfing ladies became darlings of the 'club sport' by bringing home two gold that was meant for ladies individual and the Ladies team event at the Gorkarna Forest Golf Resort at the 13th SAG.

On her way to that achievements, Yatawara who broke the course record on day one maintained her lead over the next three days and made sure of a ladies golf individual gold for the very first time in SAG history.

Her contribution along with her compatriots Thuhashini Selvaratnam and Tania Minel Balasuriya powered their way to give Sri Lanka second gold in the Ladies Team event. Thuhashini Selvaratnam played steady golf to clinch the Ladies individual bronze.

The men's team had to face stiff competition from Nepal and Bangladesh who made a last two day rally and that saw them losing both Gold and Silver and had to be content with only the Team bronze.

Speaking to GoodSport Sri Lanka Golf Union (SLGU) Secretary Nishan Navaratne explained: "Sri Lanka started their preparations as early as February 2019 when the ministry of sports informed our national federation to form their pools for training.

"They did their high altitude training along with physical and mental preparation was done to give the athletes the best training. At the same time, in a fine gesture Sri Lanka Golf



Photo:
Grace Yatawara



Photo:
Tanya Minel
Balasuriya,
Grace Yatawara,
Thuhashini
Selvaratnam



Photo:
Grace Yatawara



Photo:
Tanya Minel Balasuriya

Union was able to obtain the necessary equipment and replace aging golf equipment too. Then the pool was reduced to 6 male athletes in August and to 4 in November while two female athletes Grace Yatawara and Thuhashini Selvaratnam trained in the United States of America and joined Tania Balasuriya to form the three woman Ladies team." Thuhashini Selvaratnam led the Ladies team and Chanaka Perera led the men's team. Chanaka Perera is incidentally a National Olympic Committee Scholarship recipient. NOC SL can be proud of nurturing such an athlete who led from the front with four days of good golf. But alas it was not enough as Bangladesh made a strong comeback to clinch individual silver and the team silver. Sri Lanka men's team had to content with bronze.

Navaratne also added that the final day's highlight was the ladies individual and team as Sri Lanka lost the opportunity to clinch the ladies silver. At one point Tania Balasuriya was three strokes

ahead against Zakiya Sultana of Bangladesh and one shot ahead of Thuhashini and was assured of an individual silver too, but proving the proverbial "a slip between the cup and the lip", Tania's poor course management saw her ending up with seven strokes to putt the final hole and losing a silver and also the bronze which was within her grasp. Golf is such that Bangladesh was virtually gifted the Silver.

Final Medal tally

Grace Yatawara Ladies Individual Gold with a total 296 in four days. Gorkarna Course record broken on day one 69 Gross by Grace Yatawara.

Thuhashini Selvaratnam Ladies Individual Bronze 318.

Ladies Team Gold With a lead of 32 points Grace Yatawara, Thuhashini Selvaratnam and Tania Balasuriya



Photo:
The SAG Golf contingent



Badminton

THILINI A GOLD AND TWO SILVER

In an all Sri Lankan women's doubles final Thilini Hendehewa and Kavidi Sirimannage had the better of their team mates Achini Ratnasiri and Upuli Samanthika Weerasinghe as they to bag the respective gold and silver medals at the SAG in Pokhara.

The women's doubles bronze was an all Indian affair. There Meghana Jakkampudi and N. Sikki Reddy beat Kuhoo Garg and Anoushka Parikh. The feat of Thilini Hendehewa, Kavidi

Sirimannage, Achini Ratnasiri and Upuli Samanthika will go down in history of creating the landmark occurrence of two teams competing against each other in a final of a SAG competition.

The two Lankan Women's Doubles teams took very little trouble in outdoing the much fancied Indian pairs, which comes as welcome news for a squad that had to face unforeseen odds, besides the cold weather and appalling conditions.



Photo:
Thilini Hendahewa



Photo:
Buwaneka Gunatilleke



Photo:
Sachin Dias

In their run up to the final, Thilini Hendahewa and Kavidi Sirimannage paired up to beat Meghana Jakkampudi and Sikki Reddy of India in straight sets while Achini Ratnasiri and Upuli Samanthika, the other Lankan Women's pair, India's beat Kuhoo Grag and Anoushka Parikh, also in straight sets, to book a berth in the final. Besides the gold, Hendeheewa was also featured in a silver effort when she paired off with Sachin Dias to take charge of the mixed doubles Silver. There they lost the final to Dhruv Kapila and Meghana Jakkampudi of India.

In the third medal won by Hendaehwa, she became of the women's team that won the Silver. Besides Hendaehewa , Hasini Ambalangodage, Kavindika de Silva, Dilmi Dias, Achini Ratnasiri, Kavidi Sirimannege, Upuli Weerasinghe and Hasara Wijeratne.

The other silver was won by the men's team that comprised – Chrisan Danushka, Lochana de Silva, Sachin Dias, Maduka Dulanjana, Buwaneka Gunatilleke, Chanaka Hasitha, Dinuka Karunaratne and Santhushka Sasindu.



Photo:
The SAG 2019 Badminton Squad



Photo:
Dinuka Karunaratne



Boxing

GUTTY SANDAKELUM BROUGHT HOME THE 40TH GOLD FOR SRI LANKA

Rumesh Sandakelum (Men's Light Heavy 81kg) brought Sri Lanka their 40th and final gold medal for Sri Lanka as the 13th South Asian games came to an end amidst raucous and ornate closing ceremony at the Dasrath Stadium, Rangashala in Kathmandu.

The Lankans pugilists ended the day with gold, silver and 4 bronze medals the boxing matches took place at the Satabado Stadium, also in Kathmandu.



Photo:
Rumesh Sandakelum
and Aubrey Peiris



Photo:
Boxing squad with their medals



Rumesh competing in the 81kgs category beat Nepalese counterpart Pradhan Ganesh to take the gold. The boxing silver was won by Ayoma Dulanji in the Women's Feather 57kg category while the four bronze medals were won by Buwaneka Eranda (Men's Super-Heavy +91kg), Lasindu Eranda (Men's Fly 52kg) and Nissanka Jeevantha (Men's Light 60kg) while Nilmini Athauda a bronze in the Women's Fly 51kg category.

The Lankan pugilists progressed in silence. The first the days of the proceedings were quiet and almost without incident in spite being a boxing affair, yet, by the penultimate close the bouts finished with two possible gold and a few other medals.

However on the final day Sandakelum broke the impasse by bagging the 81kg gold while Ayoma did justice to the 57kgs women's silver.



13th SOUTH ASIAN GAMES
COMMISSION
FITNESS... ANKHEL
DEMBER

Judo

OLYMPIAN CHAMARA BAGS JUDO GOLD FOR LANKA

In his day-to-day demeanour he is affable and unassuming. Yet, when Olympian Chamara Dharmawardena sets foot on to that fighting square he means business in a very clinical manner. The opponent does not even have the time to settle in as the bout is already over.

This afternoon Chamara stood up to that lethal reputation. First it was his India opponent. Prior to the bout he said that he was a bit hesitant because the Indian

too had a mean reputation. Lo and behold the bout lasted only a few seconds and it was all over.

At this point his friends said: "Sir, this weight class is ours you can confidently write down the result. And the delivery was prompt. First in the semi-final bout the Pakistani opponent looked taller and better set. But, the result was the same as before— before we could say 'Jack Robins' and the game was over."

Photo:
Chamara celebrates his golden performance



Photo:
Chamara in action



Photo:
A Ladies bout



Photo:
The Judo team celebrating the gold by Chamara Dharmawardena



Photo:
Shalini Lakshika

The third bout was for the gold and was against a partisan crowd and a Nepalese opponent. Yet, his friends were remarking "More noise and pressure, Chamara begins react more menacingly". So ended the story of the day and how Chamara added yet gold to the ever increasing Lankan larder.

The two silver medals came from Buddhika Premaratne and Chamila Dilani while Shalini Liyanage, Yameena Refas and Lakshika Maduvantha added the bronze medals.

Buddhika Premaratne bagged the silver medal in the Men's 60kg Extra Lightweight category, while Dilani's silver medal came in the Women's 48kg Extra Lightweight category. The three bronze medals came from Liyanage, who competed in the Women's 57kg Lightweight, Rifaz, who competed in the Women's 63kg Half Middleweight and Maduvanathi, who competed in the Women's 52kg Half Lightweight categories.



Photo: Dulakshi Weerasinghe



Photo: Nuwan Kumara



Photo: Nuwan Kumara



Photo: Puvini Kahandawela

Triathlon

ERANGA WINS THE DUATHLON GOLD

Sri Lanka made their mark by winning gold and three silver at the Triathlon event at the South Asian Games in Pokhara. In this year's competition Duathlon which consists of only running and cycling was also introduced.

The inclusion of the Duathlon stood in good stead for the Lankans. There they won a gold and the bronze in the women's event while winning a bronze in the men's event.

The Lankan gold was won by Eranga Dilrukshi in the women's Duathlon event while the bronze was won by Udaya Kumari. The silver of this event was won by Humi Magar of Nepal.

The third bronze won by the mixed relay team in the Triathlon event. This team comprised – Puvini Kahandawela, Hasanka Nilaweera, Gayani Dissanayake and Chalaka Wickremaarachchi.



Cricket

MEN'S CRICKET HAD TO BE SATISFIED WITH A SILVER

Bangladesh Under 23 cricketers accomplished their SAG 'Gold' mission with consummate ease when they crushed their Under 23 Lankan counterparts by seven wickets at Kirtipur.

If the first win was a roar for the Lankans; the next outing was a whimper. The only difference was the toss that it was a reverse and winning the toss Sri Lanka were invited to take the first lease of the popping crease.

The game started well enough for the Lankans when the openers Pethum Nissanka and Nishan

Fernando added 34 runs for the first wicket in 4.4 overs.

The wicket of Nishan Fernando sparked off the huge slide, owing to a series of rash strokes and needless run outs. There was no Lankan batsman who was in control of the situation. The only batsman who did try to salvage the situation for Sri Lanka – Sammu Ashan was given out by an umpire that infuriated the Lankan middle order batsman. Some felt bat hit the ground and not the ball.

Thereafter the Lankan innings failed to go gather any momentum and were bowled out for 122 in 20 overs.

Right arm pacer Hasan Mahmud captured 3 for 20 for Bangladesh. The Bangladesh inning revolved round Saif Hassan (33) Soumya Sarkar (27) and Najmul Santo (35) as they coasted to a seven wicket win and thus relegating Sri Lanka to "silver", instead of an expected gold.

Sri Lanka 122 for 3 in 20 overs (Pethum Nissanka 22, Nishan Fernando 16, Sammu Ashan 25; Hasan Mahmud 3 for 20) Bangladesh 125 for 3 in 18.1 overs (Saif Hassan 33, Soumya Sarkar 27, Najmul Santo 35)



WOMEN'S CRICKET ALSO A SILVER

Sri Lanka women's cricketers experienced the ignominy of losing a low scoring cricket final by two runs, but, had the satisfaction of securing the silver at Pokhara.

Taking the first lease of the wicket the Bangladeshi lasses managed only 91 in their allotted 20 overs with U. Thimashini ending up with 4 for 8.

For the Lankan women only wicket-keeper batswoman Harshitha Madhavi showed any resolute make 32 while L. Upsara worked with the late order to make 25. The Lankan women were stuck at 89 for 9 when the last ball of the 20th over was bowled.

Bangladesh Women 91 for 8 in 20 overs (Nisar Sultan 29 not out; U. Thimashini 4 for 8)

Sri Lanka women 89 for 9 in 20 overs (H. Madavi 32, L. Upsara 25; N. Akthar 2 for 9)



Karate

NINETEEN MEDALS BY LANKAN KARATEKAS

The Lankan Karatekas took the maximum opportunity of the 13th SAG by winning 19 medals that included 4 Silver and 15 Bronze Medals. The four Silver medals were won brought home by the Men's Team Kumite, Men's Team Kata, Karate Men's 50Kgs and Karate Women's 50kgs Karatekas.

MEN'S TEAM KUMITE (4th December)

Silver - Buddika Erandi Jayakody, Kasun Dhanushka , Thushara Nishantha Mendis, Sandaruwan Bandara, Sumith Suresh Priyadarshana, Akila Harshani Bandara Thuresinghe, Hashan Jayamal

MEN'S TEAM KATA (2nd December)

Silver - Laksitha Bandara Herath, -Thilina Chathura Dayananda, Kasmiyar Rosairo Thesera

KARATE MEN'S 50 KGs

Silver - T.K.H. Lakmal

KARATE WOMEN'S 50 KG (2nd December)

Silver - Dinusha Kumari

WOMEN'S KUMITE (4th December)

Bronze - Tharika Samanmali Kulathunga, Akila Harshani Bandara, Aruni Prabhathi Kumari, Anjalika Thathsarani Diyawadana

WOMEN'S 68+ KG (4th December)

Bronze - Kulathunga Wijeykoon Mudiyanse

MEN'S 60 KG (3rd December)

Bronze - Prasanga Sandaruwan

MEN'S 67 KG (3rd December)

Bronze - Kanchana Lakshan

MEN'S 75 KG (3rd December)

Bronze - Kasun Dhanushka

WOMEN'S 68 KG (3rd December)

Bronze - Sarani Pooja Piumanthi

WOMEN'S 55 KG (3rd December)

Bronze - Tharika Samanmali

WOMEN'S 61 KG (3rd December)

Bronze - Buddika Erandi Jayakody

KARATE MEN'S 84 KG+ (2nd December)

Bronze - Sumeda Wimalasiri

KARATE WOMEN'S 45 KG (2nd December)

Bronze - Ishka Muthuwanthi Perera

KARATE MEN'S 50 KG (2nd December)

Bronze - Rosairo Thesera

KARATE MEN'S 84 KG (2nd December)

Bronze - Kavindu Lakshitha Jayakody

WOMEN'S TEAM KATA (2nd December)

Bronze - Navodhi Thathsarani Fernando, Nirosha Nirmalie, Vihangi Sashenka

MEN'S SINGLE KATA (2nd December)

Bronze - Sounthararasa Baluraj

WOMEN'S SINGLE KATA (2nd December)

Bronze - Heshanee Hettiarachchi





Fencing

LIMITED SUCCESS WITH ONLY 8 BRONZE

The Lankan Fencing team also were also in the medals list, but, with limited success. The Lankan fencers failed to win either Gold or Silver, but finished with eight Bronze in their kitty.

Team Men's Sabre:

(Bronze) Nishani Sri Kanthi Fernando, Nilanka Upamali, Prabhitha Karunaratne, Ratnamalee Abeysekera.

Team Men's Foil:

(Bronze) Anura Bandara, Tharindu Madumal, Vishmitha Bandara, Suresh Sudarshana Valimuni Dewage.

Team Women's Foil:

(Bronze) Asoka Udayangani Abeynayake, Harshani Roshika Wijewardhana, Bawani Sri, P.G. Hansani Wickramarathne.

Team Men's Sabre:

(Bronze) Roshan Sameera Palihawadana, Ashan Kannangara, Horanage Manjula Prabhath Fernando, Sasanka Perera

Team Men's Epee:

(Bronze) Ayesh Dilantha, Padma Pathirennhelage, Kasun Pradeep Subasinghe, Chamara Nuwan Priyadarshana Warnasuriya

Team Women's Epee:

(Bronze) Chamodi Prathibha Karunaratne, Pushpa Kumari, Shiromani Chathurangi

Men's Foil:

(Bronze) Tharindu Madumal

Men's Sabre:

(Bronze) Roshan Arachchige



Photo: Sajeew de Silva



Photo: Rehana Thayabally



Photo: Sandun Herat, Sajeew de Silva R. Dalpadado

Archery

LEARNING CURVE FOR ARCHERY

Amidst many a pitfalls like a nightmarish 10hour bus ride from Kathmandu to Pokhara and other foreseen and unforeseen issues, the men and women with the bow and arrow did well to be featured in four of the gold finals. However, they had to settle for the second best and returned with an encouraging score of 4 silver medals and four bronze medals.

According to insiders they may have done better had they received more exposure at international level. According to them the matter was not technique, but it was

the stagefright of being green horns at the top level.

They won their first silver in the Recurve men's team event. The players involved in that feat were -- Ravien Dalpatadu, Sajeew de Silva and Sandun Herath. Not to be outdone, women's team emulated the men. The three ladies responsible for that were – Thishari Silva, Rehana Tayabally and Malsha Waduge.

In the Recurve Mixed event Sajeew de Silva and Rehana Tayabally took custody of a bronze medal. Sajeew's third medal of the

event came in the men's Recurve event where he won a bronze medal.

In the Compound discipline the Lankans had more medals. In the women's team event which comprised Anuradha Karunaratne, Harshini Shalika and Damayanthi Thakshila they had a win in silver while in the women's event they had the Silver and bronze through Anuradha Karunaratne and Damayanthi Thakshila. Finally Sanjeewa Athanpola and Damayanthi Thakshila won the bronze medal in the men's mixed event.



Cycling

SLIDE IN PERFORMANCE

Cycling: Slide in performance. In comparison to the 2016 South Asian Games cycling performance in Guwahati and Shillong in India, the show in 2019 could be listed as mediocre. At the Indian excursion the Lankan cyclists finished with 2 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze.

However the Kathmandu performance had more questions than answers as they failed to win a single gold. In this Nepalese outing Sri Lanka finished with two silver and 4 bronze medals.

Men's Individual Road Race:
(Silver) Madushanka Prabhath Silva
(Bronze) Shenal Chamod de Silva

Women's Individual Road Race:
(Bronze) Sulochana Nawanage

Women's Elite:
(Silver) Adikari Mudiyansele Dinesha Dilrukshi
(Bronze) Kumarasinghe Udeshani Neranjani

Men's Elite:
(Bronze) Avisha Mawatha



Handball

HANDBALL – IMPRESSIVE SHOW

It was a learning curve for the Lankan team – especially their men’s team. In spite of being relatively members in this society, the men’s team brought home a Bronze medal which they may cherish like gold until the next time out.

The men’s team started their journey by beating hosts Nepal 37-30 thus registering their maiden SAG and international victory.

They may have lost 42-20 to ultimate gold winners Pakistan next time out, but, this did not dissuade the little Lankans. In their next outing they came back strong against India, but, lacked proper exposure at this level to convert their youthful exuberance to winning points and lost by a close margin of 39-32 in an enthralling game.

The intensity of the Lanka-India game proves in this manner. In the final, India lost

to Pakistan only by a single digit at 29-30. In the game for the bronze – once again the Lankan men played well to win by a close margin at 26-23 beating much experienced Bangladesh.

The women’s team failed to impress. They lost their game against Nepal at 29-19 and lost to Bangladesh at 34-13.



Kabaddi

MEN'S TEAM IMPRESSES WITH SILVER

The Kabaddi men's team impressed at the 13th South Asian Games at Kirtipur, Nepal where they won the majority of their matches well. For their intriguing work, they were awarded with a silver medal. However the same could not be said about the women's Kabaddi Team. All their exchanges ended up in losses; but were rather lucky to end up with a default bronze on the weight that only four countries – Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka taking part and there were a bronze assured for the fourth position too.

In the men's event Sri Lanka opened their journey by beating Pakistan 29-27, but lost their first round game to India at 49-16.

The Lankan lads bounced back with two other wins against Nepal (34-22) and Bangladesh (35-20) to book a berth in the final against strong India. However India prevailed in this final and beat Sri Lanka at 51-18.

In contrast the Lankan ladies all their matches – India 53-14, Nepal 28-24 and Bangladesh 17-16, but, were assured with a medal as only four teams participated in this leg of the Kabaddi contest.



Photo:
W.K.Y. Krishantha



Photo:
The Shooting Team



Photo:
Amali Kulathunga



Photo:
H.D.P. Kumara

Shooting

SHOOTERS SETTLE FOR TWO SILVER

In almost an impenetrable performance by the Indian shooters where they won 18 out of a possible 20 gold (other two were won by Pakistan); the Lankans men and did reasonably well to end with two Silver and five bronze at the 13th SAG in Kathmandu.

Even in silver India dominated. There the Indians won seven silver, Bangladesh six silver, Pakistan five silver leaving the Lankans the space to win only two 'silver'. In the bronze category; Pakistan had a haul of seven followed by the 5 by Sri Lanka while India and Bangladesh had four each.

Medals won by Sri Lanka:

Silver:

10metre Air Pistol (Mixed Team): K.A.I. de Alwis and T.D.S. Fernando

25metre Pistol (Women): K.A.I de Alvis, M.T.R. Abeymanne and S.C.G. Kandawela

Bronze:

25metre Centre Pistol (Men): Nimal Baddegama, Gamini Walgama and T.D.S. Fernando.

10metre Air Rifle (Women): M.S.Y.P. Weerasinghe, G.J.M. Wataraka and A. Amerasinghe.

50metre Rifle 3 position (Men): Hendagederalage Shanushka, Weeraratne Kodikara and M.M.S. Samarakone

50metre Rifle 3 position (Women): G.T.E. M. Egodawela, Priyanthi Kapugedera and Kankanige Kavindika.

25metre Rapid Fire Pistol (Men): D.D.F. Herby Karuna, M.K.K. Wanasinghe and D.D.K. Arawwalage.



Photo:
K.A.I. de Alwis and T.D.S. Fernando



Photo:
Mohomed Shamil



Photo:
Drunvika Manura



Photo:
Fathoumi Issadeen



Squash

ONLY TWO BRONZE FOR SQUASH

Amid very heavy and stiff competition from India and Pakistan, the Lankans had to be satisfied with two bronze medals in their 13th SAG outing at the Satabado Stadium, Kathmandu.

Nepal and Bangladesh, but, were almost stonewalled against the challenges meted by India and Pakistan.

Finally the Lankans were placed with team bronze medals in the men's and women's segments.

The racquet men and women did well when it came to the contests against



Photo:
Ravindu Hasitha



Table Tennis

ONE SILVER AMID STIFF INDIAN COMPETITION

In a sport which is relatively dominated by the Indian paddlers Sri Lanka managed only one Silver at the 13th South Asian games, 2019 in Nepal.

While watching the proceedings one could just get the vibes of the domination of the Indian players over the rest of the Table Tennis community of the region. However the women's team comprising skipper Ishara Madurangi, Bimandee Bandara, Erandi Warusawithana, Ayla Chitty and Hansani Kapugeekiyana did well to capture the silver in the women's event.

Final medal tally:

- **Women's Team – Silver**

Ishara Madurangi/ Bimandee Bandara/ Erandi Warusawithana/Ayla Chitty/Hansani Kapugeekiyana

- **Men's Team – Bronze**

Udaya Ranasinghe/ Nirmala Jayasinghe (Captain)/ Krishan Wickramaratne/ Chameera Ginige/ Senura Silva

- **Women's Singles – Bronze**

Ishara Madurangi

- **Women's Singles – Bronze**

Erandi Warusawithana

- **Women's Doubles – Bronze**

Ishara Madurangi and Hansani Piumila

- **Men's Doubles – Bronze**

Krishan Wickramaratne and Chameera Ginige

- **Mixed Doubles - Bronze**

Ishara Madurangi and Udaya Ranasinghe



Photo:
Anika Seneviratne



Photo:
Rushika Wijesuriya



Photo:
Rushika Wijesuriya and Alana Seneviratne



Photo:
Sharmal Dissanayake



Photo:
Anjalika Kurera

Tennis IT WAS UP TO THE WOMEN PLAYERS TO COVER-UP

The women's players performed admirably to win a team Silver and an individual singles Bronze, after a rather unyielding tennis excursion.

The Lankan men's team was unsuccessful and failed to win any medals.

The Lankan team came on board for the 13th South Asian Games at the Satabado Stadium with a men's team that boasted of many players with international

experience with names in the calibre of Sharmal Dissanayake, Thangarajah Dineshkanthan, Chathurya Danindu Nilaweera, Balachandran Suren, Yasitha de Silva and Sankha Atukorale, they floundered.

However the Ladies team did restore some prestige first by taking the team Silver. The ladies who were responsible for it were Anika Seneviratne, Alana Seneviratne, Anjalika Kurera and Rukshika Wijesuriya with Janali Manamperi and Savini Jayasooriya as standbys. The Gold

for this event was won by the Indian Ladies team.

The Ladies Singles Bronze was won by Anika Seneviratne. Seneviratne did well to beat the Pakistani number 1 Mahin Aftab Qureshi of Pakistan in the quarterfinals but lost to S. Bavasetti of India (no 1 seed) after leading 4/3 in the first set.

In the final Bavasetti met Sathwika Sama also of India. In that outing Bavasetti could not cope with the skills of Sama and lost at 4-6, 6-2, 6-5. (retired)



Photo:
Alana Seneviratne



Photo:
Thangarajah Dineshkanthan



Volleyball

VOLLEYBALL FAILED IMPRESS

In spite of being the national sport, Volleyball failed to ignite its performance as they ended with two bronze medals at the 13th South Asian Games in Kathmandu.

At the last South Asian Games held in Guwahati, India the men's and women

spikers were second only to the Indians where they finished with two silver medals in the men's and women's events.

In the 2019 volleyball third place play-off the Lankan women beat the Maldives 3-0 while men beat Bangladesh 3-1, to finish with two bronze medals.





Basketball

SILVER FOR BASKETBALL

Sri Lanka was outwitted by India 62-101 in the gold medal match of the Basketball competition at the covered hall.

The tall and lanky Indian men were in control from the opening stage of the game as they led the first three quarters by 26-14, 25-10, 28-11 but in the last quarter they were virtually given the best challenge by the Lankans who dominated by 27-22, but settled in with the silver medal.

P. Charith and Indian skipper Bhri Gubanshi top scored for their respective teams with 17 points each in a game where Sri Lanka made a late charge.

For Sri Lanka P. Udayanga (11), C. Kusal and C. Joseph (10) scored well.

Amritpal Singh and A. Annadurai added 15 points each while Hafiz Bek and Prasanna Sivakumar scored 13 points each for India.





3X3 CAGERS BAG A SILVER AND BRONZE

The 3x3 cagers did reasonably well to finish with a silver and a bronze at the 13th South Asian Games at the Dasharath Rangashala Tripureshwor, Main Stadium.

The men's cagers finished with a bronze. In their run to the medal, they initially lost to India at 21-13, but bounced back to get the better of hosts Nepal in a close game at 18-14 in spite of a highly partisan local support gathered at the stadium. In their third game – once the dust of caution had settled, the Lankan men had

a relatively easy opposition against the challenge of Bangladesh and beat them at 21-13. However, that elation turned sour in the semi-final when Nepalese cagers re-grouped and made emends to their initial loss by beating the Lankan 3x3 team by a hefty margin of 21-9. Thus, the run ended with a bronze for the Lankan 3x3 Lankan men.

The Lankan ladies opened their exchanges with satisfactory performance when they beat Bangladesh ladies at 18-11. However

the next engagement was a stiff proposition -- taking on a game against India which they lost at 18-10. The Lankans then had a do-or-die semi-final battle against Nepal and they did go past that hurdle with flying colours. Sri Lanka Ladies beat their Nepalese counterparts by a single digit at 11-10. Yet, the gold outing was too challenging. The highflying Indian female cagers held their wits together to beat Sri Lanka at 15-12, but, that win came against a stiff opposition posed by the Sri Lankan ladies.



Football

NO MEDALS FOR FOOTBALL AND KHO KHO

The tail-end performances came from much taunted Football and Kho Kho teams. They definitely may have to justify their participation at this level of competition if they keep floundering at this frequency.

In a tournament which was sans the talent of India and Pakistan, Sri Lanka men managed only one

goal in four outings. Sri Lanka men held the Maldives at nil all and held Nepal 1-all in their first two outings, but, then lost to Bhutan at 3-0 and Bangladesh at 1-nil.

The women dribblers lost their matches at 1-0 against Nepal, 6-0 against India and 2-1 against the Maldives.

Kho-Kho
The men lost their matches by 21-8 against India, 13-7 against Bangladesh and 12-11 against Nepal. Their women's team lost their matches against Bangladesh 14-11 and India 32-4.





CLOSING CEREMONY HERALDS A NEW BEGINNING!

The Bhutan vs Nepal – which was almost a home and home affair – the final of the SAG football that preceded closing ceremony. The almost 30,000 people who thronged to Dasharath Rangasala Tripureshwor stayed on until the last sparkle of the splendid fire display disintegrated to the dark sky beyond the Kathmandu mountains.

The closing ceremony itself was a sparkling spectacle. There were acrobats and dances sporting a bevy of colours that pleased the eye of everyone present. The atmosphere of festivity of the 13th South Asian Games was a clear indicator that there were a lot of happy faces in the stadia in spite of seen and unseen pitfalls that meandered along its eleven-day programme.



As the giants of the region India paid put for their efforts with the usual top position in spite of some of their top most athletes hibernating as they were preparing for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, six months later. The hosts Nepal had all the reason to be happy. They ended up in the second spot with a very impressive execution of their schedules and programmes – I guess the host country's prerogative.

Third placed Sri Lanka too ended up as a happy nation. The tally of 40 Gold, 83 Silver and 128 Bronze efforts with a final tally of 251 medals gave a new lease of

life to the flagging athletic image of Sri Lanka.

Like Sri Lanka's cricket victories in 1996 and 2011 along with Susanthika Jayasinghe's Olympic 'Silver'; every Kumara, Siva and Tuan wanted to be a part of it and celebrated the achievements with pride in their eyes. The Bandaranaike International Airport became truly a busy affair. It were not the immigration and emigration of the people, but the other people who really wanted to celebrate the medals haul which was the biggest by far by the Sri Lankans ever.

Yes, now the dust is settling down and it is back to business of maintain standards. Now it is a challenge to maintain the bar of achievement that they set during the Games. Remember this came directly after lean and barren performances at the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games. The sports enthusiasts and followers then waited and shared the gloom silently, but, now athletes will be looked at in a different perspective – with new hope in the near future.



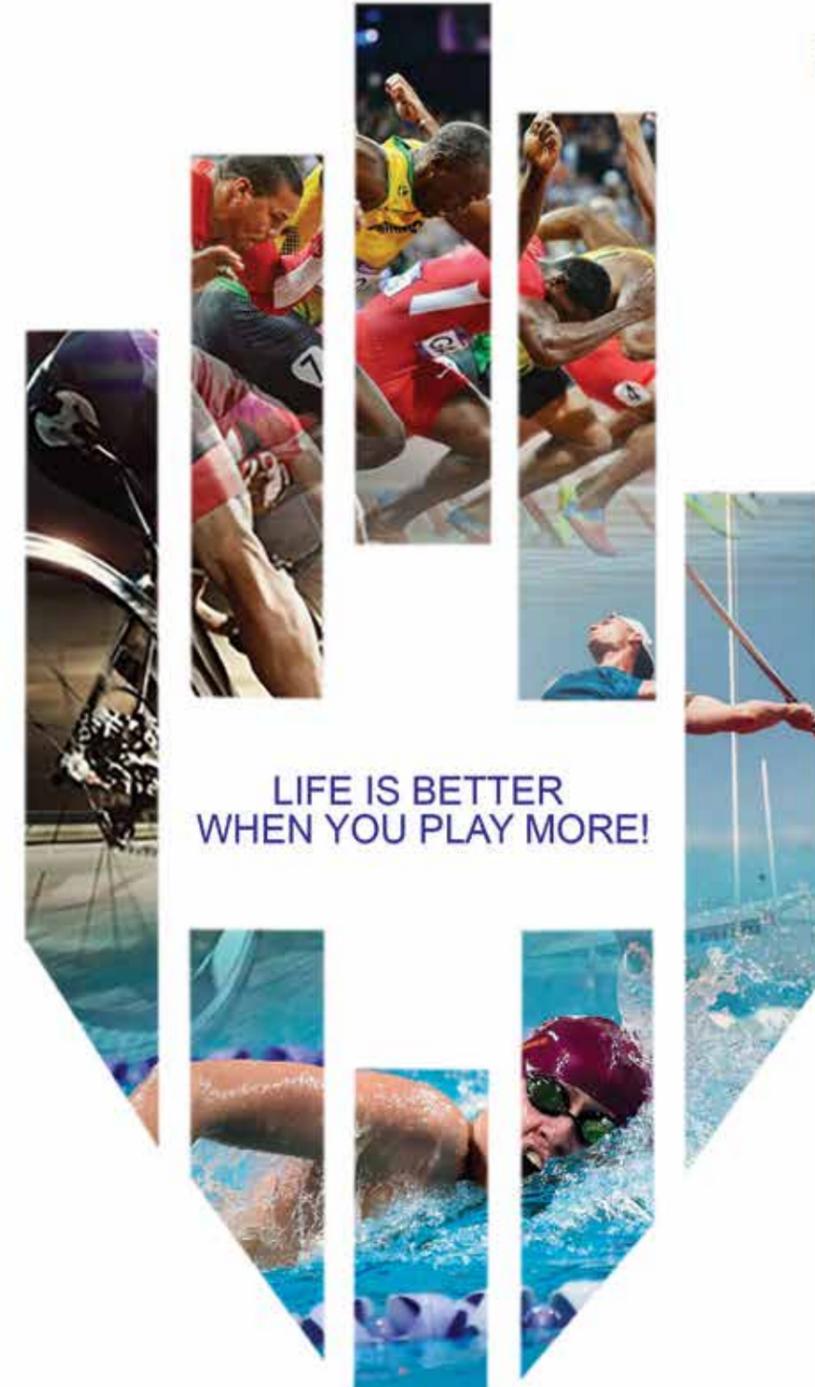
13th SOUTH ASIAN GAMES 2019

COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
1-India	174	93	45	312
2-Nepal	51	60	95	206
3-Sri Lanka	40	83	128	251
4-Pakistan	31	41	59	131
5-Bangladesh	19	32	87	138
6-Maldives	01	00	04	05
7-Bhutan	00	07	13	20
Total	316	316	431	1063

13th SOUTH ASIAN GAMES 2019

Sri Lanka Medal Tally

SPORT	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL	SPORT	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
Athletics	15	12	08	35	Shooting	00	02	05	07
Swimming	07	11	18	36	Cycling	00	02	04	06
Taekwondo	04	07	16	27	Basketball	00	02	01	03
Wrestling	02	10	02	14	Cricket	00	02	00	02
Weightlifting	02	08	01	11	Table Tennis	00	01	06	07
Wushu	02	05	06	13	Kabaddi	00	01	01	02
Beach Volleyball	02	02	00	04	Fencing	00	00	08	08
Golf	02	00	02	04	Squash	00	00	02	02
Badminton	01	05	03	09	Volleyball	00	00	02	02
Boxing	01	02	08	11	Handball	00	00	01	01
Judo	01	02	10	13	Football	00	00	00	00
Triathlon	01	00	03	04	Kho-Kho	00	00	00	00
Karate	00	04	15	19	Total	40	83	128	251
Archery	00	04	04	08					



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Photo:
NOC SL President Suresh Subramaniam (second from left) hands over a plaque to former national high jump champion Nagalingam Ethirweerasingham. Also in the picture are NOC SL General Secretary Maxwell de Silva (extreme left) and Gamini Jayasinghe (extreme right)

ETHIR'S

VISION FOR

THE FUTURE

By S.R. Pathiravithana

Though his disposition shows signs of aging, the spritely figure of Nagalingam Ethirweerasingham would always reveal a story of athletics and his eyes give out the story of "I have seen it all". The tall lanky figure still tells the world that he would have been a high jumper of yesteryear. Mention the name Ethirweerasingham; you draw up a sketch of athletics in your mind, because it is synonymous with

sports and especially track and field. The next that come to mind is the 'gold' he brought home at the Asian Games.

The first 'gold' efforts came at the then Empire Games (now Commonwealth Games) in 1938 by boxer Barney Henricus who won the Feather weight final and then 12 years later by none other than Duncan White who won the 440-yard hurdles final in Auckland, New

Zealand, ending the race in only 52 seconds.

At the fledgling inaugural Asian Games in New Delhi 1951, when Sri Lanka was invited to take part, Pole Vault M.A. Akbar took home Silver. This was followed by the two boxing brothers H.P. and C.P. Jayasuriya winning the Bantam and Light Weight Silver and Bronze respectively at the 1954 Games in Manila.

"IT WAS ALSO THE BASE THAT I BUILD MY FOUNDATION IN SPORTS AND MATTERS PERTAINING TO THAT IN LIFE"

However the man who carved a special niche was 'Ethir' who won the 1958 Tokyo Games High Jump 'gold' clearing 2.03 metres – a new Games record. Not resting on his laurels, Ethir won the Silver at the Jakarta 1962 Games as well.

Though his beginnings were in Jaffna, by then the lad had moved to Colombo and then to the United States of America where he continues to live. There is a difference in Ethir's approach to sports and his relationship with his motherland. Though he opted to live in the United States, he never let off his roots back home. At regular intervals he continued to travel back to Sri Lanka and shed a little of that sweat back on to his

own soil with added vitamins of the US of A.

Ethir saw the horizon of sports growing in Sri Lanka in a unique manner. There was nostalgia when he spoke of his first trip to London.

"It was the Olympic Games that were held in Helsinki, Finland, from July 19 to August 3, 1952. I was around 17 years old when I initially travelled to London after qualifying to take part at the Games and then travel to Helsinki from there. I was only 17 years old when I qualified for the Olympics and I was still in high school. We went by ship.

At that time Mr. W.H.T. Perera was there. He was the Secretary

General. There were three boxers, a swimmer and a diver, and I was the sole athlete. There were coaches and Mr. H.S.R. Gunawardena who was the director of physical education who was an observer from the ministry. It took us 21 days to reach London and from there to Finland. It was a memorable experience to a schoolboy.

"It was also the base that I build my foundation in sports and matters pertaining to that in life. I had transformed myself from an athlete to an international. That's why I say that you must build your roots at a very young age."

Besides, Ethir said that his run to success did not come on a platter. "My next Games were in Melbourne. There too I made it to the finals. By then I was studying at the University of California.

Photo:
NOC SL President Suresh Subramaniam in conversation with Ethirweerasingham



“SRI LANKA TOO MUST IMPLEMENT A SIMILAR THING IF WE ARE TO SEE A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR SPORTSPERSONS”

“Then my first Asian Games experience came in 1954. There I was the co-holder of the record, but there I had more misses and I became the fourth. The Gold medal came in 1958. By then I was living in the USA. There I was not selected though I was jumping more than the Asian Games record. Then journalist Carlton Seneviratne took the case up in the ‘Observer’ newspaper who took the case up very seriously stating that I was clearing 6’ 7” and then I was given the opportunity. I remember once selected they said that they did not have the money to finance my trip. Then businessman cum philanthropist Donovan Andree financed by passage for the 1958 Asian Games.”

For Ethir bygone is bygone. Now he sees ways of seeing the next generation of athletes come of age but he has a running battle with the prevailing system. He said: “I feel the idea is out of the ordinary. Only very influential, strong persons can comprehend my line of thinking; and to get it moving with the government minister’s consent is not a very easy task.”

“Sportsmen are not dumb. They are capable of overcoming impediments. They are capable of achieving great academic heights,” stressed the former High Jumper who has taught in various universities in countries like Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, Nigeria

and Sri Lanka. He also worked for the UNESCO for many years.

Thus, he recommends that all educational institutions should set a minimum standard for their athletes, and should not allow those who fail to achieve that set mark to take part in any sporting championship or tournament in the following term. Minimum level of education “You should get a ‘C’ Grade as the minimum mark for those who are doing sports. All those who are not achieving that mark should not be allowed to take part in competitions in the following semester. This system has yielded good results in USA where even the No.1 in a particular sport is not allowed to compete until he attains

the set qualifying Grade,” says Ethirweerasingham.

He says in any ordinary school in the US of A there are better running tracks than what the whole of Sri Lanka could offer. He hinted that this would be something difficult to do immediately but would yield good results in the long run.

“Sri Lanka too must implement a similar thing if we are to see a better future for our sportspersons,” Ethir stressed. He also questioned the ability and suitability of coaches and trainers who don’t believe in their understudies’ capabilities in education.

Photo:
Ethirweerasingham



OLYMPIC JUMPER MANJULA KUMARA BIDS ADIEU AFTER 18 YEARS

By Susil Premalal

Ideally, the 13th South Asian Games held in Kathmandu, Nepal should have been the swan song for Sri Lanka’s athletic legend Manjula Kumara Wijesekera. The veteran high jumper had dreams of scaling new heights at the land of Mount Everest and bring glory to Sri Lanka before bidding adieu to a sport he had adorned with aplomb for nearly two decades. But sadly he was not allowed to write the final paragraph of a chequered career.

Manjula Wijesekera was emotional when he announced his decision to hang up his spikes less than a

month before the commencement of the Games.

“It was a tough decision,” the 35-year-old said at a hastily arranged press conference in the presence of his teammates, fellow athletes and media just two days before he left for Australia to continue higher studies in Sports Management.

“Having spent more than half of my life for athletics, it was definitely a tough decision but I need to move on now and build a life for me and my family. I am grateful

for the wonderful opportunities I had to represent my country over a very long period of time and, if not for all those people around me, I would never have achieved what I achieved. Thank you,” he said humbly fighting back tears.

Best Athlete at the National Sports Festival for eight years, Manjula had planned to retire after bringing one more medal for Sri Lanka at the South Asian Games. But fate had decreed otherwise.

As he was engaged in his higher studies in Australia, Manjula missed the local trials (National

“THIS WAS A REALLY DIFFICULT DECISION FOR ME; I WANTED MY RETIREMENT TO BE WITH A MEDAL FROM THE NATIONAL SPORTS FESTIVAL.

Athletics Meet) in August, missing his entry to the SAG contingent. He had cleared 2.15 m albeit at the Australian Open Athletics Meet this year which surpassed the qualification requirement but was

denied participation as the jump was not performed at recognised meet in Sri Lanka. The defending champion of the event is usually granted automatic entry. However, the Athletics Association of Sri Lanka turned down Manjula's formal request.

“This was a really difficult decision for me; I wanted my retirement to be with a medal from the National Sports Festival. But unfortunately, that was not meant to be. This decision was taken within 24 hours of this announcement,” said Manjula who has done for athletics what Kumar Sangakkara has done for cricket, performing consistently for 18 long years. But there were no guards of honour, no fireworks, no fanfare or no VIP accorded to heroes. Only a handful of athletes

and coaches for a man who bowed out from a sport he silently served.

Manjula retired from athletics, leaving behind a legacy that would be difficult to match. It's a career with incredible statistics. He became only the second Sri Lankan behind his mentor Nagalingam Ethirweerasingham to win medals beyond the South Asian region.

Incidentally Ethirweerasingham also had a similar reciprocation from the authorities when he was an athlete at his peak as a jumper.

Since winning his first medal at the All Island School Games where he won his first ever medal, Silver, as an underprivileged young kid in 1994 with a height of 1.27 metres, Manjula improved his personal performance in ten years by a meter.



“MEETING ETHIRWEERASINGHAM SIR WAS THE TURNING POINT OF MY LIFE”

Ten years later in 2004, Manjula became one of the few athletes who realised the Olympic dream, being selected to represent Sri Lanka at the Athens Olympics. Not bad for someone who hailed from the outskirts of Morawaka. He started as a volleyball player in his school Kosnilgoda Junior College before getting a scholarship to Dikwella Vijitha College where his trainers identified his athletic talents and directed him towards to the high jump field.

But it was former Olympian Nagalingam Ethirweerasingham who changed Manjula's life forever. Ethirweerasingham, a gold medallist at the 1962 Asian Games,

facilitated Manjula's journey to USA for training and for a degree in Economics.

“Meeting Ethirweerasingham Sir was the turning point of my life,” he recalled. “At that stage, I had no idea who he was, but he had seen my performance in a newspaper and written to my school. I did not understand what he had written and my school Principal and English teacher prepared and sent a reply to him. Since then, he was my second father.”

He now wants to build a life for himself and his wife Anjula Bandara.

“I can still remember stepping onto the Sugathadasa Stadium track, barefoot, wearing my blue school short and skinny,” said the Olympian, whose mother, a tea-plucker and the sole breadwinner.

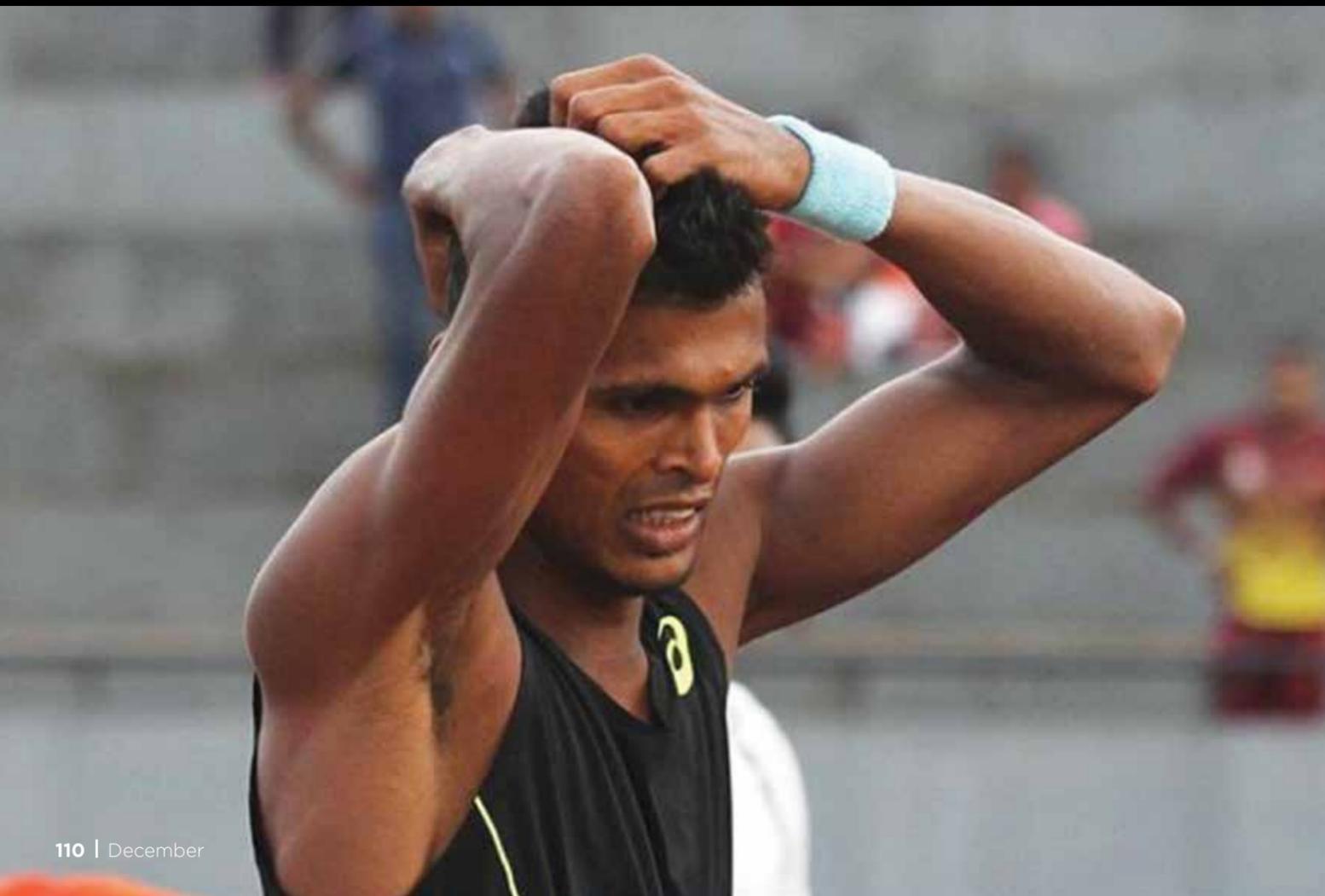
“I did not have shoes or a kit to wear and my parents couldn't afford it either. They didn't even have money to take me to Colombo to compete.

That's when the Principal of my first school and her husband took me to the competition,” said Manjula, born into a family of six, who rode rough seas throughout his career.

Manjula has won two Gold medals (Asian Championship 2005 and 2009), and represented Sri Lanka at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games 2005 World Championship, four Asian Games (2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014) and at two Commonwealth Games.

He is the last remaining athlete from a golden era of Sri Lankan athletics.

“I will be heading back to Australia, but I don't wish to end my sporting career completely with this. I want to come back as a trainer and give back to the sport. I also have hopes of modelling a player who one day can bring Sri Lanka an Olympic medal,” said Manjula Kumara whose jump of 2.27m remains a Sri Lankan record to date.



Modern Pentathlon CLIMBING THE PYRAMID

By Susil Premalal

At present, the American Ninja Warrior Championship in the United States gets high billing. This is a series of endurance tests for humans in various concocted obstacle courses which come in a form of sport. It is highly successful and multifaceted.

In a very subtle way Modern Pentathlon comes closer to this, but this consists of all accepted Olympic events made to perform as one discipline. Modern Pentathlon is an Olympic sport that comprises of five events - fencing, freestyle swimming, show jumping, a final combined event of pistol shooting, and a cross-country run. The sport has been a core sport of the Olympic Games since 1912, and since 1949 an annual World Championship has been held.





Photo: Modern Pentathlon competition in full swing

The sport is gradually gathering momentum and because it is in a pyramid style structure operating in this fashion – Pentathlon Team - Team Sport, Laser Run, which is an urban sport, World School Biathlon which is the school segment, Biathlon / Triathlon which is the Beach game segment, Triathlon – YOG University Sport and Pentathlon – the real Olympic Sport.

Pentathlon chief Nishanthe Piyasena explained, “At the moment we are engaged in three of the segments and its Triathlon. We started with Biathlon which is two sports. Under the UPIM (International Modern Pentathlon Union) – the Modern Pentathlon structure you get the above pyramid system. The bottom

half of the pyramid is to attract people to the game; as it is the Triathlon is a difficult sport with five events inside it. The UPIM has implemented a way forward plan by making the game accessible.” Piyasena said that either it could be running and shooting, which is the laser run or it could be the Biathlon which is swim and run. He says both these disciplines could be very popular with the beginners. He says Fencing and Horse Riding are rather difficult to master and excel. “We have been engaged in this sport since 2016 and are growing as an entity. We have done well in the Laser Run and the Biathlon and in these two segments, we went up to World Championships and some





Riding for juniors is a difficult task," says Piyasena. He added that they are already eyeing a slot at the 2022 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in Dakar, Senegal.

"We already have identified four athletes for the Senegal YOG. At the nationals held recently all these players did extremely well. Out of the four, one female athlete, is training in India right now. Besides two of our athletes - A.S. Nilaweera of the Sri Lanka Air Force and K.S. Udayanga of the Sri Lanka Army - got the opportunity of taking part in the 2019 Modern Pentathlon Asian Championships; Asia and Oceania qualification competition for the Tokyo 2020 Games. The qualifying round was held in Wuhan China from 11 to 21 November."



Photo: Modern Pentathlon President Nishanthe Piyasena in conversation with National Olympic Committee President Suresh Subramaniam

of our players are ranked within the first ten and we won seven medals in that championship."

Piyasena says the next step would be the fencing added to the curriculum. He is of the view that the main problem here is the scarcity of equipment in spite of the helping hand given by the Fencing Federation of Sri Lanka. However a while ago some of our own athletes started fencing and that is also on the way. He added, "When we had the MP (Modern Pentathlon)

Nationals recently we got four athletes to test on fencing. With the Fencing in the bag, now we have moved to the level of Tetrathlon. From here we are short of only one tier to move on to the Olympic level. Once we achieve that, we would have a pentathlete in our ranks."

"With the Tetrathlon our athletes can go up to the Youth Olympic level, because that requires only four of the five disciplines. The reason behind this is that Horse

"THE REASON BEHIND THIS IS THAT HORSE RIDING FOR JUNIORS IS A DIFFICULT TASK"



Photo: The competitors

A close-up portrait of Tony Campbell, an older man with short, graying hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark, textured polo shirt. The background is black. A red diagonal line runs from the top left towards the bottom right, passing behind the text and the portrait.

TO DRIVE HIGH-PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG ATHLETES
‘EDUCATING’
COACHES RECIPE FOR
SUCCESS!

By Allaam Ousman ----- / / /

Athletics in Sri Lanka seems to be back on track in its quest for glory after nearly two decades of inertia as Olympic silver medallist Susanthika Jayasinghe teams up once again with her American mentor Tony Campbell who believes the recipe for success is educating local coaches.

“I really believe that we can develop Sri Lankan coaches. Instead of bringing coaches from around the world, why don’t we make coaches

here better? I think this is the way of the future because if you keep bringing in coaches from different parts of the world, they don’t have the same ideology, mentality as the young man or young woman in Sri Lanka. So to be better able to convey what you want it is better to train Sri Lankan men and women to coach Sri Lankan athletes. This is my belief and I think we can do that,” said Campbell who felt there was no need to bring down foreign coaches here.



Photo:
Campbell with Lankan athletes

"It all begins with the coach. The coach must be able to go into the different villages and find talent to bring them to Colombo to help develop them. We will be making sure that coaches get properly educated through this programme through coaching seminars, coaching clinics, so they can help the athletes to become better athletes. I think at the end of the day this is what it is all about," said Campbell during a two-day visit. He delivered a lecture on 'High-Performance' to invited athletes at the NOC's Hemasiri Fernando Auditorium and a 'Motivational Talk' to the National pool athletes and coaches at the Sports Ministry auditorium and inspected the three main athletic venues in Sri Lanka - Sugathadasa Stadium, Diyagama Stadium and the Sports Ministry Complex at Torrington Square. Campbell acknowledged it would take some time to develop the coaches but was confident Sri Lanka could find another Susanthika Jayasinghe.

"I think it's a shame that we cannot find one man or woman in this

country that even approached the talent of Susanthika. I am sure there is one out there. Our job is to find him or her and bring them here, to make this country proud again. I am sure we can do that. That's our mission," declared Campbell who has been roped in by the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Sri Lanka to launch a high-performance programme for athletes and coaches in the country.

Susanthika had been discussing the possibilities of this program with Campbell for the past few years and thankfully he was in the right place at the right time.

"We worked very well together and more than a coach-athlete relationship, we have a family relationship. And I thought that if she was going to do something to help the country, then I would be here to help her realise the dream of hers to make Sri Lanka an athletic power," said Campbell who also worked with athletes of the calibre of Michael Johnson, Maurice Green, Otis Harris, Tanya Lawrence, Allen Johnson, Felix Sanchez, Calvin

Smith Sr and Dennis Mitchell during his illustrious coaching career. "We are going to be result-oriented, we are going to find this talent and we are going to work hard to see if in Tokyo we can have one Sri Lankan athlete make a final in something. I think the sports ministry and NOC SL would really like to see one young man or woman raise the flag in the final of some event at the Olympic Games. This is our goal, our mission," declared Campbell who knows the pulse of athletes and mentality of coaches.

"When we started talking with young athletes and coaches, we wanted to let them know that going forward,

"WE WORKED VERY WELL TOGETHER AND MORE THAN A COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP, WE HAVE A FAMILY RELATIONSHIP"

we are going to make sure we have the best possible prepared coaches to coach our young athletes in Sri Lanka. We want to make sure that they are properly prepared to deal with the future and bringing up young people because it all starts with them (coaches)," said Campbell who has mapped out a future programme with the NOC's Director of High Performance Jayasinghe herself.

"There are some good coaches here. I am not saying they are bad but I'm just saying this is the requirement by IAAF (International Amateur Athletics Federation). If you want to be a federation coach then you have to pass level

exams to certify yourself that you have the knowledge to do that. Then once you have that, then there is the other common sense things like travelling, speaking another language so that you can communicate because most of the time the kids don't speak another language," he pointed out.

"The Sri Lankan kids speak mostly Sinhalese. So the coach, whoever is travelling with them, has to speak another language because somebody has to be the representative of the team. So I think it is just some of the things that need to be done going forward, not all in one year. But this is going to be part of the programme that Susanthika is going to put together

with my help of course," he said. "We are going to make sure that the coaches are certified and that they are educated enough, so when they travel overseas with the young men and young women they are representing Sri Lanka not only themselves but this country. And we don't want to look like a bunch of ignorant people, just travelling around asking questions and no one knows what they are doing. We want them to represent this country properly like everybody else. We don't want to be better than them, we want them to be like everybody else," said Campbell who wants to make sure that coaches are responsible individuals that can take care of young athletes on the international circuit.

Photo:
Stressing a point at the head table





Photo:
Susanthika Jayasinghe during her heydays



Photo:
Karateka Dinusha Perera was a keen follower

Asked why athletes compete well locally and not overseas, he said: "They have no experience. The coach must have the experience because obviously the athlete has no experience. They've never experienced that. So the person to teach them is the coach. So that's why we want to make sure the coach is properly trained. So when they leave, he or she can convey this info to the young athletes so they can be more relaxed, so that when they get into line to go in front of 30,000 people instead of 100 people before, they don't lose a race before the gun goes off. Because they are not prepared, we want to make sure all the young men and young women when they leave Sri Lanka they are prepared to deal with the world outside." "Educate them properly. I think that is foremost. We have to educate them so that they are ready. So that they can compete to the full of their ability and don't lose a race before the race starts," reiterated Campbell who debunked the myth that training in foreign climes was essential for success.

"Susanthika was in a unique situation. Until I see another one here (Lanka), I can't really agree with that. She was a special athlete. Susanthika spoke English though she said 'no she don't speak English' but she speaks very well. And a lot of the athletes here don't speak English. So that's another problem ... communication," he said.

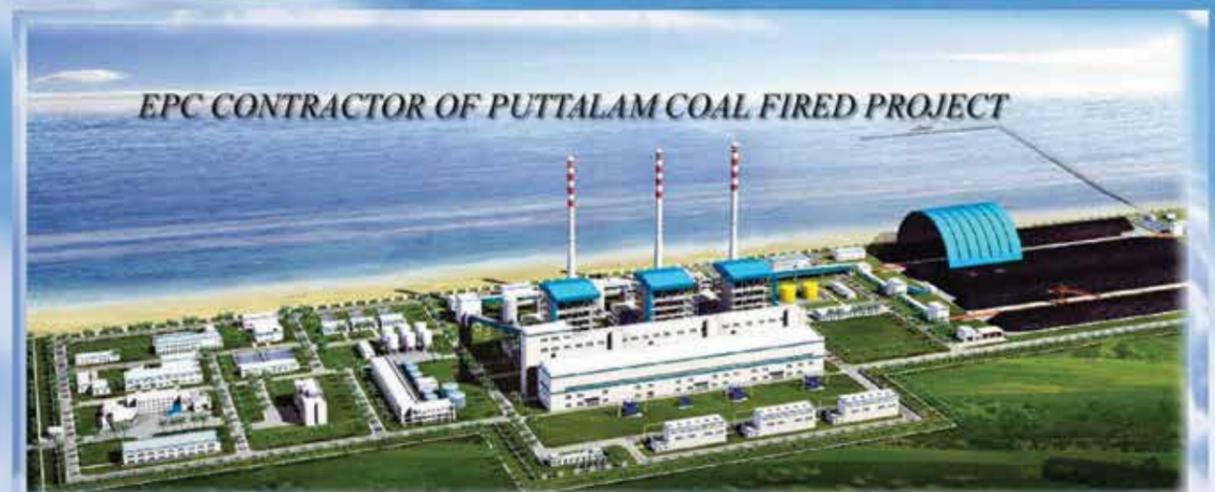
"That's why we are proposing that when they go to the school, they learn to speak another language. So when they travel, they can speak with other athletes and have cultural exchanges that will help them to relax more. You have to go step by step. You cannot accept everything.

"For Susan when she came to Los Angeles, she was living with a Lankan family. They were a very wealthy family so she was lucky. In Los Angeles, we have a big Sri Lanka community, so she was at home there. There was a good situation for her and I am not sure we can duplicate that going forward."

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K.L.F. Wijedasa

THE LAST SHOT

“Values played great deal in our coaching”

By Susil Premalal

K.L.F. Wijedasa is an iconic figure in the annals of Sri Lanka's athletic history. A Ceylon record holder, pedagogue and mentor of several national athletes who distinguished themselves in the international arena, Wijedasa, is the most senior living sports administrator in the country. The veteran athletic coach belongs to the era when sport was truly amateur and athletes basked in pristine glory without seeking riches.

A former national coach, Wijedasa bemoans the fact that athletes are motivated by winning prize money than the pursuit of excellence in keeping with the Olympic ideals.

“Today the camaraderie in sports is missing. Those days there was a lot of cooperation and sharing of knowledge between athletes. These human values which promoted healthy competition are absent now. Today the main focus is money. Everything is motivated by money. This has resulted in standards and discipline in athletics and sports in general sinking to a new low,” said Wijedasa who has over 30 years experience coaching National level athletes.

Born in 1932 and hailing from Ambalangoda, he received his education at Dharmasoka, Moratu Vidyalyaya, and Ananda College,

Colombo before graduating from the University of Ceylon (Peradeniya).

“The journey I undertook was very arduous. It was through sheer determination, sacrifice and hard work that I managed to produce a generation of athletes,” recalled the octogenarian who was a pioneer member of the premier sports club, CT & FC, which was established in 1959, taking the initiative to conduct the country's first marathon in 1960.

“Not having an internationally recognised sports degree was a big drawback for me. I had only a diploma since there were no opportunities to obtain a degree. If I had obtained an international degree, I could have achieved much more in my coaching career. Nonetheless I am satisfied with what I have attained with the knowledge and experience I had,” said Wijedasa whose coaching credentials was enhanced when he underwent a three-month Study Training Course for Top Asian Track And Field Coaches conducted by the DLV (German AAA) and the Malaysian AAA in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia in 1973, and the Colombo Plan Scholarship to follow a course in Physical Education at the Nedlands College of Advance Education in Perth, Australia in 1979.

Nonetheless, he produced several national and international level athletes such as Hema Amarasinghe, Wijitha Wijesekara, U. D. Wickramasinghe, Sunil Gunawardena, Kosala Sahabandu, Gregory de Silva, Palitha Wijesinghe, Prasad Perera, R. Rajendran, C. R. Ferdinando, Ransiri Serasinghe, Mallika Jayamanne, K. G. Badra, Nadeeka Silva, Surangani de Silva, Melani White, Thamara Padmini and Thirinu Premaratne, to name a few.

He coached over 30 National title holders, over 10 National record holders, and over 10 international athletes. In 1968 for the first time in the history of Sri Lanka athletics, three school girls clocked under 13secs in the 100 metres. All three girls K.G. Badra 12.5, Melanie White 12.8, Manori Wijeratne 12.9 were coached by Wijedasa. Another of his products C.R. Ferdinando became the first school boy to clock under 50secs in the 400m in 1978.

“When I functioned as athletics coach of Royal for 12 years between 1974 and 86, I didn't charge a cent from anyone as a coach that time. Today athletics and other sports coaches are motivated by money. Also

athletes become coaches shortly after they retire from the sport even though they are not qualified or have enough experience to guide others,” said Wijedasa who entered his name in the records book on August 22, 1955 when he clocked 11.00 seconds to win the 100 metre dash.

“Today because athletics is driven by money, there is a win-at-any cost mentality resulting in coaches resorting to win by hook or by crook using illegal methods in order to safeguard their reputation and image. During our time we never went after money. Our objective was to produce good clean athletes for the country. But today human values have deteriorated to such an extent that instances of coaches pursuing their selfish interests have surfaced, compromising values and principles,” said Wijedasa.

Recipient of the Kreeda Bushana Presidential award, Wijedasa said he does not even know the meaning of Bushana. When he asked Prof J.B. Dissanayake the meaning of Bushana, he said it is something similar to a glowing star.

“The athletes who I produced have not forgotten me. They come and see me, inquire about my health and give me respect and honour. I gain happiness when I see my products shining and remembering me,” said Wijedasa who was a member of the Executive Committee of the Sri Lanka Athletics Association from 1965 to 2008 and held the posts of secretary of the coaching committee, secretary of the selection committee, director of the coaching course, national coach and was also chairman of the national selection committee of the National Olympic committee of Sri Lanka.

“There are only a handful of veteran coaches who are among the living at the moment. My contemporary was Capt. Tilen Perera. We still have the ability and knowledge to mentor anyone be it athletes or administrators in the field of athletics. Those who know us still seek our expert knowledge and advice. Some of the present generation, do not have any idea about us. I would still love to impart my knowledge to anyone who wishes to acquire it,” said Wijedasa who edited and published a athletics news and athletics training hand book in all three languages - English, Sinhala and Tamil. He was also the Sri Lanka representative for Asian and World athletics news publications.

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