

After more than sixty years, young Shehan Ambepitiya is hoping to emulate Duncan White's medal winning feat, at the next London Olympics for his country, and has already begun the gruelling preparations.

Achievements

at International Level at National Level

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| Asian Junior Athletic Championship In Indonesia 100 M - Silver Medal | All Island National School Festival 100M - 1st Place (New meet record), 200M - 1st Place (New meet record) |
| World Junior Games in Poland 100 M - 7th Place | Junior Nationals Athletic Meet 100M - 1st Place, 200M - 1st Place |
| Commonwealth Youth Games Championships In India 100 M - Gold Medal (New meet record), 200 M - Gold Medal (New meet record), 100x4 - Gold Medal (New meet record) | Senior Target Athletic Meet: 100M - 1st Place 200M - 1st Place |

On the athletic scene

A star is BORN

Chris Dharmarage

He is young, he is talented and he is dynamic. He is the fastest man in Sri Lanka - Shehan Ambepitiya of Gateway International College, Colombo. This promising athlete reached another milestone in his brief but illustrious career when he was crowned as the 'Most Outstanding Sportsman of the Year' at the BMIC recently. The award is the result of some fascinating performances on the track both here and abroad where he has been able to shine above the rest in a most spectacular manner. In fact, his most significant effort was the three gold medals which he bagged at the Third Commonwealth Youth Games worked off in Pune, India.

Performances

He simply stunned a host of other top athletes from 93 countries to win gold medals in the men's 100 metres and 200 metres in a record time and followed up by running the final and decisive lap to take the men's 4x100 metres relay final. His efforts in this meet also helped Sri Lanka finish among the top ten out of a total of 71 nations in the final medals standings. It was not merely the gold medals that mattered. The inspiring fact was that a top athlete had emerged to carry the Sri Lankan flag after the retirement of celebrated Olympic Games medallist Susanthika Jayasinghe.

Preparations

But Shehan Ambepitiya will be the cynosure of all eyes until the next Olympic Games in London at which place Sri Lanka won its very first Olympic medal in 1948 through Duncan White. After more than sixty years, young Ambepitiya is hoping to emulate that feat for his country and has already started the long and hard preparations along with his experienced coach Sunil Gunawardena. This great athletic combination has brought some fantastic results in the recent past and they are set to make even a bigger impact in the coming years. The Sugathadasa Stadium in Colombo and the Sports Ministry grounds in Torrington Avenue are the adventurous venues where they train and practice the different arts of short distance running almost daily.

Coach and sponsors

Ambepitiya is no doubt blessed with a lot of talent and his coach Sunil Gunawardena is a veteran in this art having produced a number of top athletes in the past. To boost their morale they also have the strong backing of Ceylon Biscuits Limited who has come forward to sponsor Shehan Ambepitiya through their brand Munchee for the next four years. This lucrative sponsorship package worth Rs. 1 million annually is certain to

help him further enhance his talent and potential with specialised training here and abroad.

The sponsorship package also helped him to take another step ahead and move to Gateway International College from President's College Rajagiriya.

His next main target is the Asian Grand Prix Series to be held in China and India, Commonwealth Games in India next year and the upcoming Asian Games which will be staged in China.

Scholarship

Ambepitiya also received a tremendous boost and will be soon joining the Leeds' International in England for a well deserved scholarship.

Coach Gunawardena expressed his confidence in Ambepitiya and believed that he has the potential and the capability of rising to the top as he has already proved it.

Gunawardena noted that Ambepitiya has reached new heights in the local track and field scene in a short period of time and he has lived upto expectations by emerging as the fastest man at the

Commonwealth Youth Games in India. Ambepitiya has certainly not let down his mentor and is working hard in all areas of short distance running in his attempt to become the third athlete to win a medal at the Olympic Games after Duncan White and Susanthika Jayasinghe.

Humble

Chairman and the founder of Gateway College R. T. Alles was quite pleased with the efforts of Ambepitiya, and said that this is a fantastic effort from an extremely humble athlete who should be guided and protected in the correct way towards a bright future.

Alles said that Shehan was a very affectionate and loving child when he first joined Gateway College, and hoped that he would remain same while representing the country during the upcoming international events.

Alles further noted that Ambepitiya who is a pre scholar at Gateway College will be provided with all facilities for the sake of the country because Sri Lanka badly needs sportsmen of this nature to build their image on the international scene.



Shehan Ambepitiya



Sweating it at a work out in the sweltering heat.

Pictures by Mahinda Vithanachchi