



Bata Bata-the Sunday Times Schoolboy Cricketer 2011

the SUNDAY
TIMES

Sunday August 7, 2011



Bhanuka's younger brother Shanuka collecting the coveted prize on his behalf from Chief guest Sidath Wettimuny



Bhanuka Rajapaksa - Bata-the Sunday Times Schoolboy Cricketer of the year 2011

Taking up the challenge

Friday, August 5 was a day the schoolboy cricketers of Sri Lanka will long remember. They were rewarded for their hard and untiring efforts for the 2010 season. Bata and the Sunday Times together with officials of the Sri Lanka School Cricket Association, Association of Cricket Umpires and top cricketers of yesteryear and made a grand effort to pick and choose the best schoolboy cricketers and teams. These young cricketers will undoubtedly contribute to the national stream in years to come.

The grand night, the awards ceremony, of the 32nd Bata-the Sunday Times Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year kicked off on Friday at the BMICH in Colombo with the distinguished patronage of former national cricketer and present interim committee member of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), Sidath Wettimuny as the chief guest.

Among other invitees were Mr. and Mrs. Cesar Panduro (CEO of Bata), Hemaka Amarasuriya (Director, Bata), Brendon Kuruppu, Jayantha Seneviratne, Carlton Bernadus, Charith Senanayake and Hatta Tutuko (CFO, Bata). After the welcome speech from CEO of Bata, Cesar Panduro, Carlton Bernadus who is the manager of School Cricket Development at SLC made a short speech attributing the importance of recognizing the booming cricketing talents in the country.

But the center of all was chief guest, Sidath Wettimuny's oration which had many thought provoking sights for young cricketers, the coaches and in particular the parents. Wettimuny credited the present day cricketers who work hard to accomplish their goals going along with modern day technology.

"During my playing days a batsman could do a bit of fielding that was a big advantage. If a bowler could do a bit of batting it was a huge plus point. But today you get cricketers who bat, bowl and field alike. That's very good for cricket," Wettimuny pointed out.

"There will be a time in the very near future when all eleven players of a cricket team will be all-rounders. And even oratory capabilities could be considered as advantages," a light hearted Wettimuny added.

But he also elaborated another side. "When considering the sustainability of the cricketers of our era and the present there is a huge difference. Today's cricketers' careers are short-lived and injuries that were very rare in our days have resulted in many talented cricketers pulling out from competitions. This is very bad for cricket," said Wettimuny who was serious when he advised the youngsters to pick the most suitable and fitting version of cricket during his short yet eye-opening words.

The presentation of awards began soon after from the Emerging Schools category. Risika Theekshana of Sri Devananda was the first to take the stage to take the runner-up award for the best fielder. The winner of this award was Isira Uditha Kumara of Royal College, Panadura. Royal Panadura went on to lead the awards tally by winning both the runner-up and winner awards in the best bowler's category where Ruchira Thrindra Silva and Dushan Vimukthi were awarded respectively. Two national under-19 caps came on stage to collect the awards for the best batsman as Sanka Ramesh of Moratu Vidyalaya emerged as the runner-up. Promising batsman of Mahanama College, Duleeka Tissakuttige won the best batsman's award in the emerging category. Tharindu Kaushal who came all the way from Ratgama, Devapathiraja College was awarded as the runner-up in the best all-rounder category while Sanka Ramesh swept his second award by emerging as the best all-rounder.

Teams from the Emerging category were rewarded next. Five of the best teams from different provinces were selected in that category. Sri Devananda College, Ambalangoda was named as the best school from Southern Province while

from Central Province St. Sylvester's College was picked as the best. St. Mary's College, Kegalle was chosen from Sabaragamuwa Province as the Jaffna College cricketers all the way from North joined in to collect their award as the best team from Northern Region. Royal Panadura comprising promising cricketers was awarded the trophy for the best school from Western Province. From the overall records St. Mary's was named as runner-up of the Best Emerging Schools category while Royal Panadura with a track record of eight wins and five draws in 14 matches won the Best Team of emerging schools.

The awards for the best team in the international schools category were presented soon afterwards. Gateway College, Colombo were the runners-up while Lyceum International School, Wattala won the main award. The focus straight away shifted to the All-Island category and the entire team of St. Sebastian's College, Moratuwa were called up to the stage to collect their award as runner-up of the Best Team category. With an impressive record of 10 wins and seven draws in 17 matches Trinity College, Kandy won the best all-island cricket team award.

The individual awards from the All-Island category were given away and the wicketkeeper of S. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia, Sachin Peiris walked up to the

stage to collect his award as the runner-up of Best Fielder. Trinity skipper Akila Jayasundera was the winner of the main award. Lumbini College leg-spinner Prabath Jayasuriya collected his runner-up award in the Best Bowler's category. Right-arm leg spinner of Ananda College, Sachithra Perera who picked up 116 wickets during the 2010 season won the Best Bowler's award. Sri Lanka Under-19 cap Dhananjaya de Silva walked up to the stage to collect his runner-up prize in the Best Batsman's category. Former Royal skipper who captained Sri Lanka Under-19s, Bhanuka Rajapaksa was then called up as the Best Batsman All-Island. Since Bhanuka was away in England with the Sri Lanka 'A' team his younger brother Shanuka collected the award on his behalf. Imraz Rafi, the skipper of Zahira College, Colombo, won the runner-up award in the Best All-rounder category while Dhananjaya de Silva came up to the stage for the second time to collect his award as the Best All-rounder All-Island.

Awards for the International Schools were presented next. Mohamed Azhar Samsudeen of Layton Park International, Ganitha Wickremasinghe of Lyceum Wattala and Dhananjaya Seneviratne of Gateway Rajagiriya were awarded third, second and winner awards respectively in the Most Popular Cricketer category. The most popular awards in the emerging schools followed with Sanjuka

Ridma of St. Servatius College, Matara and Dulanjan Ruchiranga of Royal Panadura winning the Second and First Runner-up awards respectively. Kavindu Ashan Perera of Royal Panadura won the Most Popular Cricketer award in the Emerging category. Hemal Munaweera of Dharmaraja College Kandy was the Second Runner-up of the Most Popular Cricketer All-Island. The First Runner-up award went to Supun Nawaratne of Thurstan College, Colombo while Royal skipper and Sri Lanka Under-19 opener Ramith Rambukwella emerged the winner in that category.

Time was running out to give away the remaining main awards of the night and Trinity College skipper Akila Jayasundera was named the Best Captain of the 2010 season for guiding his team towards an unblemished end. Dhananjaya Seneviratne then walked up to collect a special award given to the Most Promising International School Cricketer followed by another award given away to the Most Promising School of the Year which was claimed by Karandeniya Central. Sanka Ramesh of Moratu Vidyalaya was awarded the Runner-up as the Emerging Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year while Dupeeka Tissakuttige of Mahanama won the main award. The spotlight was drawn when the chief guest and other distinguished guests took the stage to give

away the final couple of awards. The first was for the Runner-up award of the Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year which was won by Dhananjaya de Silva of Richmond College Galle. The entire hall was filled with applause when Bhanuka Rajapaksa's name was called as the Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year who was absent as he had to attend national duty. But Bhanuka conveyed his wishes to those who attended the ceremony and winners of the night through a pre-recorded video as his younger brother Shanuka collected the coveted prize on his behalf.

Though the glittering show came to an end with the giving away of the main award the words of the chief guest still validated the efforts of Bhanuka. Sidath Wettimuny while his speech further went on to say the importance of maintaining a healthy gap between the coaches and parents of the players.

"During our days, our parents never spoke to us while at practices or after a match. Such discussions were left to be done at home. My family had three cricketers and my mother never saw anyone of us playing while our father would sit under a tree and watch us play. Today I heard the situation is quite different. I urge the parents to let the players play free. Let them play in their own styles and perfect their techniques and become assets to Sri Lanka cricket," were Wettimuny's valuable words.