

Winning Elite Medals: Challenges in Sri Lanka for Athletics

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This paper is a critical evaluation concerning numerous aspects of elite level athletics in Sri Lanka. It is focused on identifying a strategy for development of athletics by adapting Veerle de Bosscher's SPLISS (Sports Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success) model that have led number of countries to win elite medals during the last ten years. The literature review shows that a country should do something remarkably special to yield success. This research presents a 'Nine Theme' conceptual framework that can be used for comparison of strengths and weaknesses in elite sports. The study of themes using a Mixed Methodology through Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Case Studies, Participant Observation and Field Survey will determine the gaps in scientific research on the relationship between elite sport strategies and international sporting success. It is mainly a qualitative study complemented with the quantitative data. The questions for the interviews served a deeper exploration of the underlying issues related to the themes. The data has been synthesized to provide an easy understandable analysis and displayed in a manner to reflect and include a comparison and combine distinct descriptions to formulate a coherent interpretation.

The Sri Lankan scenario in athletics when summarized under the 'Traffic Lights' system, the results were one 'Green', seven 'Yellow' and one 'Red'. In order to develop a strategy in a Sri Lankan context to achieve sustainable performance at elite level, the country should firstly strive to boost up the themes that blink 'Red' and 'Yellow' and then make all the themes 'Greener' by optimum utilization of the resources. Sri Lanka could consider Continental Games as the measure of success considering the likely medal haul in a very successful Olympic Games. A 5-Year Strategic Plan designed combining the best research findings of latest sports science and best practices from around the world as well as findings of the study, is recommended in order to produce elite athletes from Sri Lanka who could reach their full potential. If Sri Lanka properly concentrates on the 'Strategic Plan', the country could certainly reach the elusive elite medals in the most important sport of athletics at elite competitions.

Key words: *Athletics, Elite, Medal, Strategy*