

# Birth of de Soysa Park and Moratuwa Sports Club

by Vernon de Mel

Moratuwa Sports Club, born on 30th of June 1941, has a proud history of 64 years of existence. It would be pertinent at this stage to raise the beginnings and important moments of the club for the benefit of the present generation.

It is on record that a club called Rawathawatta Boys' Cricket Club existed in 1865. It is at the same venue that the present Moratuwa Sports Club and pavilion stands today that Rawathawatta Boys Club used for cricket matches.

D. H. L. de Silva, who was labelled as the father of Moratuwa Sports Club was instrumental in revitalising cricket in the area.

De Silva, with other cricket stal-

warts of that generation managed to convince the great philanthropist, the late A. H. T. de Soysa of the need for a playground. After negotiations, de Soysa donated five acres of land and a balance two acres owned by Victor de Soysa was sold below the prevailing price to the Moratuwa Urban Council, making them a party to the deal.

With a ground now available, deeds being signed on March 1941, Dr. H. I. Fernando, Chairman Urban Council, Moratuwa convened sports loving people of the area for a meeting for the formation of Moratuwa Sports Club and finally on the 30th of June, 1941 the first AGM of Moratuwa Sports Club was held at the Town Hall

premises.

According to the then constitution of the club, the Chairman, Urban Council was to be the President of the Club. The ground was declared open by the late S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, then Minister of Local Government, at the invitation of the UC Chairman and the President of Moratuwa Sports Club, DR. H. I. Fernando.

With the end of the second World War the ravaged ground which was occupied by the military was obtained by the club and built up to playable condition with generous contributions from a host of devoted and distinguished personalities of Moratuwa Sports Club.

The cricket ground, in an

improved state prompted glamour in the form of a club house for matches and members' use for indoor games. Here again it was de Soysa who fully funded the construction of the club's old pavilion in 1952. It was opened by the then Governor General of Ceylon.

The old club house has now given way to a newly built two storied pavilion, the major share funded by Sri Lanka Cricket and the balance by the members of the Moratuwa Sports Club amounting to nearly Rs. 50 lakhs.

The de Soysa Park was originally used primarily for the cricket matches played by the Moratuwa Sports Club. In 1976, the Moratuwa Sports Club management led by the then President C. E. L. de Silva

and secretary, Nisal Senaratne who was responsible for bringing the club to what it is today, managed to get from the good auspices of the then MP for Moratuwa, Wimalasiri de Mel from his decentralised budget a grant of Rs. 50,000 to lay centre turf wickets and side practice wickets in place of matting wickets, to provide better cricket facilities for the youth of the area. Members and cricketers of Moratuwa Sports Club engaged in a Shramadana to make this a success. In 1978, Tyrone Fernando MP for Moratuwa joined hands with Moratuwa Sports Club management to build the present stadium and elevate the venue to Test status.

Moratuwa Sports Club has, dur-

ing the period 1978-1993 staged 14 ODIs and several Test matches. The spectator interest at these matches was immense, even surpassing attendance at popular venues in Colombo and other districts.

The stadium should be developed more and brought up to international standards so that once again this cricket crazy town will benefit and see international cricketers at play at their home. This will also help the budding cricketers in the vicinity.

In conclusion, it must be mentioned that several cricketers of Moratuwa have brought fame and honour to Sri Lanka by their crick- eting prowess, the names of individuals being too numerous to mention.

## Cricket seminar at Ambalangoda



Deputy Chairman Mervyn Jayasinghe, Upul Tharanga and Sanath Jayasuriya being welcomed at the Ambalangoda Municipal Council grounds.

The first cricket training seminar was held last Friday at the Ambalangoda People's playground by the Fingara International Cricket Consolidated, as part of a countrywide programme.

The seminar was conducted by former Sri Lanka captain and coaching advisor, Fingara International Cricket Academy

Sanath Jayasuriya, Sri Lanka cricket team member Upul Tharanga and head coach of the academy, Hemantha Devapriya. It was attended by 130 junior cricketers for 10 schools.

Deputy Chairman, Fingara Cricket Academy, said that the aim of these seminars by Fingara is to form teams of various age groups



Head coach, Fingara cricket Academy Hemantha Devapriya leads a training exercise.

comprising the best junior cricketers from different areas of Sri Lanka.

Jayasinghe also promised, on behalf of Finance & Guarantee Company Limited, to present a sum of Rs. 100,000 to the Municipal Council for the restoration of the Ambalangoda People's playground.

In response to an appeal made by Jagath Senaratne, Principal of Ambalangoda Kularatne Maha Vidyalaya, whose western band played at the opening ceremony, Jayasinghe also pledged to provide the necessary financial aid in order to furnish the school's band with the necessary musical instruments.



Sri Lanka's gold medal winning athletes at the 10th South Asian Games were felicitated at a function held at Galadari Hotel on Tuesday. Dulanjali Ranasinghe of Devi Balika Vidyalaya, who won gold in the women's high jump event receives her award from Vijebandara, of Bandara and Sons Company.

## World record breaking cricketers felicitated

Fingara International Cricket Academy (FICA) sponsored the felicitation ceremony organised by NCC to honour the world record breaking performances of Sri Lanka cricketers, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Sanath Jayasuriya and Upul Tharanga and the NCC cricketers who toured England early this year.

Sri Lankans can truly be proud of the achievements of Sangakkara and Jayawardene (highest partnership in Test cricket 624) and Sanath Jayasuriya and Upul Tharanga (highest opening partnership in ODIs 286). NCC are delighted to have a cricketer in each of the record breaking partnerships - Kumar Sangakkara and Upul Tharanga.

The fiery Lasith Malinga, also from NCC, was a key player for Sri Lanka during the tour of England and he was also felicitated. Champion off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, pace ace Chaminda Vaas, skipper Marvan Atapattu and former Sri Lanka and NCC captain Hashan Tillekeatne were also presented with mementos in appreciation of their contribution to Sri Lanka cricket.

The mementos were presented by FICA, the main sponsor of the ceremony. Incidentally, Sanath Jayasuriya and Kumar Sangakkara also act as Cricket Ambassadors of FICA.



Mervyn Jayasinghe, Deputy Chairman of FICA with the holders of the world record for the highest opening partnership in ODIs - Sanath Jayasuriya and Upul Tharanga.

## All-Island Seven-a-Side Hockey

The Royal College Hockey Club will conduct the All Island Schools Seven-A-side Hockey tournament on October 6 and 7, for the fourth consecutive year.

Forty eight men's and women's teams from all parts of the island will take part in this tournament.

The tournament is being held to improve the standard of hockey at school level and also to encourage youth from different backgrounds and different parts of the island to come together and foster friendships and relationships.

## Eriksson eyeing top English club

Former England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson is eyeing a top English club for his return to coaching.

The Swede, who parted company with England after the World Cup, said: "I need to get back into coaching."

He told The Sun: "Arsenal? Liverpool? Manchester? They're all big clubs, and any of those would be good."

Eriksson, who earned an estimated £25m during his five-

year reign in charge of England, added: "It's the only thing in life I can do well."

England failed to progress past the quarter-final stage of any major competition under Eriksson.

But the Swede claimed his failure to land a major trophy was down to bad luck.

Eriksson said: "My time with England didn't have the support of lady luck."



Gateway College won the Colombo North Under-13 Basketball Championship in a thriller, beating St. Benedict's College by just one point, 37-36, at the Colombo International Schools Basketball courts recently. The tournament was organized by Colombo International School. The champion team and officials: (Seated from left to right): Ricardo Fernando (Captain), Gilson Peiris (Sports co-ordinator), Tharindu Fernando (Coach), Dr. Harsha Alles (Director), R. I. T. Alles (Chairman), Somabandu Kodikara (Headmaster), Shanthi Podimathathaya (Asst. Head of Sports) and Anuranga Ehelepola (Vice-captain). (Standing from left to right): Dimantha Jayaratne, Sajin Alles, Lakshan Kodagoda, Easa Zuhair, Faraz Fazel, Azeen Abdullah, Dhanushka Gunasekara, Ashain Thilakasundaram, Sashin Ramanayake and Kaumthi Illeperuma.

The Finance Company won the Badulla District Inter-Bank Softball Six-a-Side cricket tournament, which was held last Saturday. In the final, The Finance beat Uva Development Bank. The tournament was organised by David Pieris Motor Company. The champion team: Standing (L-R): Indika Pathiraja, J. P. Fernando, A. S. Manawadu (Capt), Shantha Subasinghe and Ajith Bandara. (Front row from left): Tilan Samaraweera, Lasantha Samarakoon and Ajith Indika. (Pic by T. Rajah)

