



Bhanuka Rajapakse (Royal College, Colombo) Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year 2011 receives his award from chief guest Muthiah Muralitharan. Also in the picture are Editor-in-Chief Sunday Observer Dinesh Weerawansa, Wijesiri Ambawatte ( Director Telecom/Mobitel), ANCL Chairman Bandula Padmakumara and Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella.



Most Popular Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year 2011: Ramith Rambukwella of Royal College receives his award from Dinesh Weerawansa the Editor-in-Chief Sunday Observer. Deputy Editor Sunday Observer - Sports A.C. de Silva and Pramod de Silva Senior Associate Editor Sunday Observer is also in the picture.

# Bhanuka Rajapakse joins elite band of cricketers



Sanka Ramesh (Moratu Vidyalaya) Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year (Outstation) receives his award from Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella

## Sanka Ramesh expected to improve with experience

by Ranjan Anandappa

Observer-Mobitel Outstation Schoolboy Cricketer with one more year to go at Moratu Vidyalaya, the winner of the Observer/Mobitel Schoolboy Cricketer of the year Outstation 2011 Sanka Ramesh is expected to do better things next year as the captain of his school cricket team.

Ramesh, missed the opportunity to represent the Sri Lanka Schools team by a whisker, but he hopes to make a comeback with a couple of junior tours coming up in the near future. Out of these tours he considers the most important one as the 2012 Under-19 World Cup Cricket Tournament which is scheduled to take place in Australia next August.

He first played Under 17 cricket for De Soysa MV at Moratuwa, prior to being drafted to Moratu Vidyalaya where he played 1st XI cricket. At

De Soysa MV during his primary days his one passion was the game of cricket. After joining Moratu MV he developed his skills and was good enough to find a place in the first XI team.

While at De Soysa MV, he was under the guidance of coach Sabu Weerasinghe and the Master-in-Charge Hafi. The Weerasinghe-Hafi combination put him on the right track with the right rudiments of the game. After joining Moratu MV, Ramesh went one step further when he became an important member in the Moratu MV side.

At Moratu MV, he was coached by Prasanna Disanayake. The encouragement given by the Master-In-Charge of Cricket Udaya Geeganage, Lakmal Sir and Ruwini Tharanga, a lady teacher who is also involved in cricket, has inspired him to perform well.

He has been a regular member of the SSC

Under 23 side and has taken over 30 wickets in the tournament last year, but he had to skip some matches this season due to the GCE (A/L) examination.

Sanka Ramesh made a strong claim for the title that he won at the contest by scoring 1,270 runs and bagging over 107 wickets during the concluded school cricket season. He has a double hundred (213) against Zahira College and two centuries 100 against St. Sebastian's College, Moratuwa and 123 against St. Sylvester's College, Kandy. His right-arm leg-spin bowling has given him two impressive match bags of 10 wickets against St. Sebastian's Moratuwa and 12 wickets against Royal, Panadura.

While thanking the Sunday Observer/Mobitel contest for fostering young talent for the future, he concluded saying that it was sheer hard work and dedication that brought him the trophy.



BY RANJAN ANANDAPPA

**OBSERVER-MOBITEL SCHOOLBOY CRICKETER:** Former Royal College Captain Bhanuka Rajapakse achieved the unique feat to join the elite band of schoolboy cricketers when he was judged The Sunday Observer/Mobitel Schoolboy Cricketer of the year for the second successive year (2010 and 2011) at a glittering ceremony held at the Hotel Galadari Ballroom amidst a distinguished gathering last Monday.

Prior to Rajapakse, only former Sri Lanka World Cup winning captain Arjuna Ranatunga (1980-1982), Roshan Mahanama (1983-1984), Thilana Samaraweera (1994-1995) and Lahiru Pieris (2004-2005) have won the contest on two occasions. In the 33-year

old history, Bhanuka Rajapakse became only the third Royalist to win the coveted award. Previously Madugalle (1979) and Roshan Jurangpathy (1986) now domiciled in Australia, won it.

Jurangpathy made his Test debut against India when Ranatunga and Madugalle were also members in the same team under Duleep Mendis.

### First a swimmer

Bhanuka Rajapakse, speaking to the Sunday Observer soon after he had won the school cricket crown, said that he excelled as a swimmer in his younger days, but had to give up the water sport due to a life threatening illness. "I was down with meningitis, a brain effecting disease and doctors advised me not to dive. So I took up to cricket. I have studied right throughout at Royal and represented the schools under 19 team which has really opened the doors for

me. I will concentrate more on cricket but I hope to live a balanced life, without mixing up cricket and studies" he said.

He represented the Under 19 Team at the last World Cup in New Zealand and played a prominent role which has helped him to captain an Under 19 team when their counterparts from England arrived last year. Bhanuka, in the two 'Tests' that he played, scored 309 runs with a top score of 149 averaging 103 runs. Among the other players in that team who were recipients in this year's Schoolboy Cricketer Of the Year competition, were: Amila Aponso who won the Best Bowlers Award (All Island), Dhananjaya de Silva Best All-Rounder and Runner-up Schoolboy Cricketer Of the Year (All Island), Lahiru Abeyratne (Runner-Up Best Fielder, All Island) and Shehan Jayasuriya (Runner Up Best Batsman, All Island).



Best Captain (All-Island): Akila Jayasundera of Trinity College receives the award from Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella. ANCL Chairman Bandula Padmakumara is also in the picture.

## Murali's advice: 'Play hard, dedicate yourself'



BY A.C. DE SILVA

**Observer-Mobitel Awards:** Sri Lanka's world beater Muthiah Muralitharan was chief guest and a welcome visitor on stage at Hotel Galadari Grand Ballroom for the awards ceremony of the Observer-Mobitel cricket show and his mere presence on stage brought rounds and rounds of applause last Monday night.

Speaking to the schoolboy cricketers who had gathered in such large numbers for this much awaited show, Muralitharan spoke to the young hopefuls in glowing terms. "You are the future players of Sri Lanka and you all must keep Sri Lanka's flag flying wherever you go."

He said that for the cricketers to succeed they must love the game. "Play hard and dedicate yourself and then success is bound to come," he said and added; "Young cricketers - you all must know that only 11 players can play in a team and when you get the chance of playing, you all must put your heart and soul and give hundred percent to the team, so that success will come your way."

Muralitharan said that he was very happy to be back on stage at this show after 20 years. He was the Schoolboy Cricketer of the year in 1991 when he was at St. Anthony's

College, Katugastota and on his way to get that honour he worked hard. "Don't be disappointed if you fail once or twice in the early stages of your career, keep on trying and success is bound to come your way."

After his playing days were over at St. Anthony's Katugastota, Muralitharan came into big-time cricket - Saravanamuttu Trophy Tournament and then on to Sri Lanka representative cricket.

But, the path was simply not easy as many obstacles were placed, but he never gave up, but plugged on and then success came his way. "In 1995 there was that chucking controversy, but I didn't give up and here I must thank Arjuna Ranatunga - the then skipper and Aravinda de Silva for backing me and the Cricket Board too supported me. Then when I got married, my wife supported me to the hilt and all obstacles were done away with and I came through", Muralitharan said.

Muralitharan also handed out some advice to the large number of schoolboys present at the show. "Keep absolutely cool even when the going is not the way you want.

I learnt this from my skipper Arjuna Ranatunga who sported a cool head even when the going was not good. Arjuna used to take pressure off the players when the going is not to his liking. He doesn't show any anger - that's why he is called captain cool," Murali remarked.



Most Popular Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year (Outstation): Keshan Gamage of Vidyartha College, Kandy receives his award from Senior Associate Editor Sunday Observer Pramod de Silva and Senior Chief Sub Editor Sunday Observer Dudley Jansz on left.



Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year 2011 Bhanuka Rajapakse (Royal College, Colombo) fourth from left with VIP officials from left Mahindananda Aluthgamage - Minister of Sports, Dinesh Weerawansa the Editor-in-Chief Sunday Observer, Wijesiri Ambawatte Director Telecom/Mobitel, Bandula Padmakumara Chairman/Managing Director, Muthiah Muralitharan (chief guest) and Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella.