

## Ranil Abeynaike's 70<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary

Ranil Gemunu Abeynaike

(12 February 1955 – 21 February 2012)

*“Ranil had ‘cricket commentator’ written all over him. He had a very pleasant, charming, attractive voice and deep dulcet tones and was one of the best commentators Sri Lanka produced.”*



- ✚ College Prefect & College Colours in Cricket, Hockey and Tennis.
- ✚ STC 1<sup>st</sup> XI Cricket Colours – 1971, 72 & 73.
- ✚ STC 1<sup>st</sup> XI Cricket Captain 1973 - Winners of The Life Buoy Shield for The Best School Team & The Vaseline Trophy for The 50-Overs Champions.
- ✚ Schoolboy Cricketer of The Year & Best Bowler 1973.
- ✚ Captain Colombo South Zone U18 Cricket Team (1972) – Winners of the ‘Observer’ Shield.
- ✚ Represented Ceylon Schools Cricket Team (1972) against the Australian Schools Team.
- ✚ STC – U12 (1965) & U14 Cricket Captain (1968); U16 Vice-captain (1970).
- ✚ STC – 1<sup>st</sup> XI Hockey 1971-73. Captain 1973.
- ✚ Hockey - Represented the Colombo Schools at the Nationals and awarded Ceylon School Colours in 1971.
- ✚ Public Schools Tennis - Junior Doubles Champion 1969 & 1970
- ✚ STC Tennis Captain in 1973. Awarded Public Schools Tennis Colours in 1972.
- ✚ Represented Sri Lanka Board XI in first class cricket.
- ✚ Played Professional Cricket (‘Minor Counties Championship’) in England.

- ✚ Victorious STC 1<sup>st</sup> XI Cricket Coach (2005 & 2007).
- ✚ Curator at SSC.
- ✚ Sri Lanka Cricket Selector and a Member of the Interim Committee.
- ✚ Renowned International Radio & TV Cricket Commentator.

(Compiled by Ravi Rudra – 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025)

## STC Cricket Captain 1973

Winners of The Life Buoy Shield for The Best School Team & The Vaseline Trophy for The 50-Overs Champions.



**Standing (L-R):** GDS Peiris, Gamini Kumarage, Ravi Rudra, Ranjit Ellalasingham, LG 'Gihan' de Silva, Turney Mohamed, Mohan de Silva.

**Seated (L-R):** Mr. Lassie Abeywardene (Asst. Coach and Master-in-charge), Shanmugam Manotharan, Ajith Abeygunawardena, **Ranil Abeynaike (Capt.)**, The Warden (Mr. S.J. Anandanayagam), LP 'Priyal' de Silva, Ravi Abeywardene, Johnny de Saram.

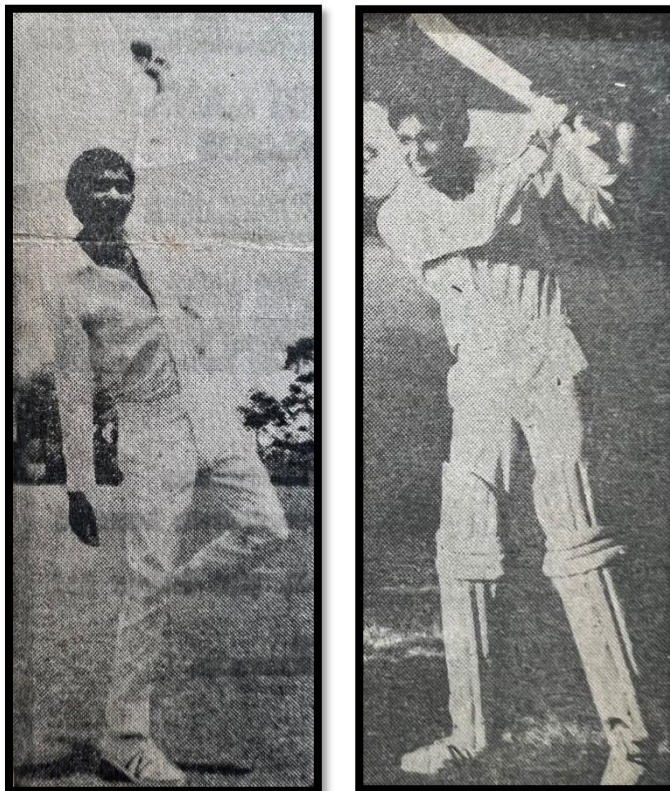
**Absent:** P.I. Pieris (Head Coach), Neil Chanmugam (Asst. Coach), Mevan Pieris (Asst. Coach).

**\*Played 15 games – unbeaten season, won outright 8 and won 7 on first innings.**

## Highlights from Ranil's 1971 - 1973 Cricket Season

**\*Captain Fantastic!**

**Ranil Abeynaike – A fine Allrounder and without doubt the Best Bowler in School Cricket in 1973 - taking over 90 wickets.**



### Best Bowling Performances

**\*1973 Season** – 5 for 18 v Dharmarajah; 3 for 9 & 4 for 52 v Zahira; 4 for 11 & 7 for 4 v Thurstan; 4 for 45 & 6 for 14 v St Benedict's; 4 for 25 v Nalanda; 5 for 68 v Ananda; 4 for 18 v Wesley; 3 for 23 & 6 for 45 v St. Joseph's; 5 for 56 & 4 for 52 v Trinity; 4 for 20 v St. Peter's; 4 for 36 v Royal. 5 for 12 v Dharmapala (50-Over competition).

**\*1972** – 4 for 19 v Richmond; 6 for 19 & 6 for 7 v St. Benedict's; 5 for 9 v St. Joseph's; 2 for 12 & 7 for 27 v Trinity; 5 for 19 v St. Peter's.

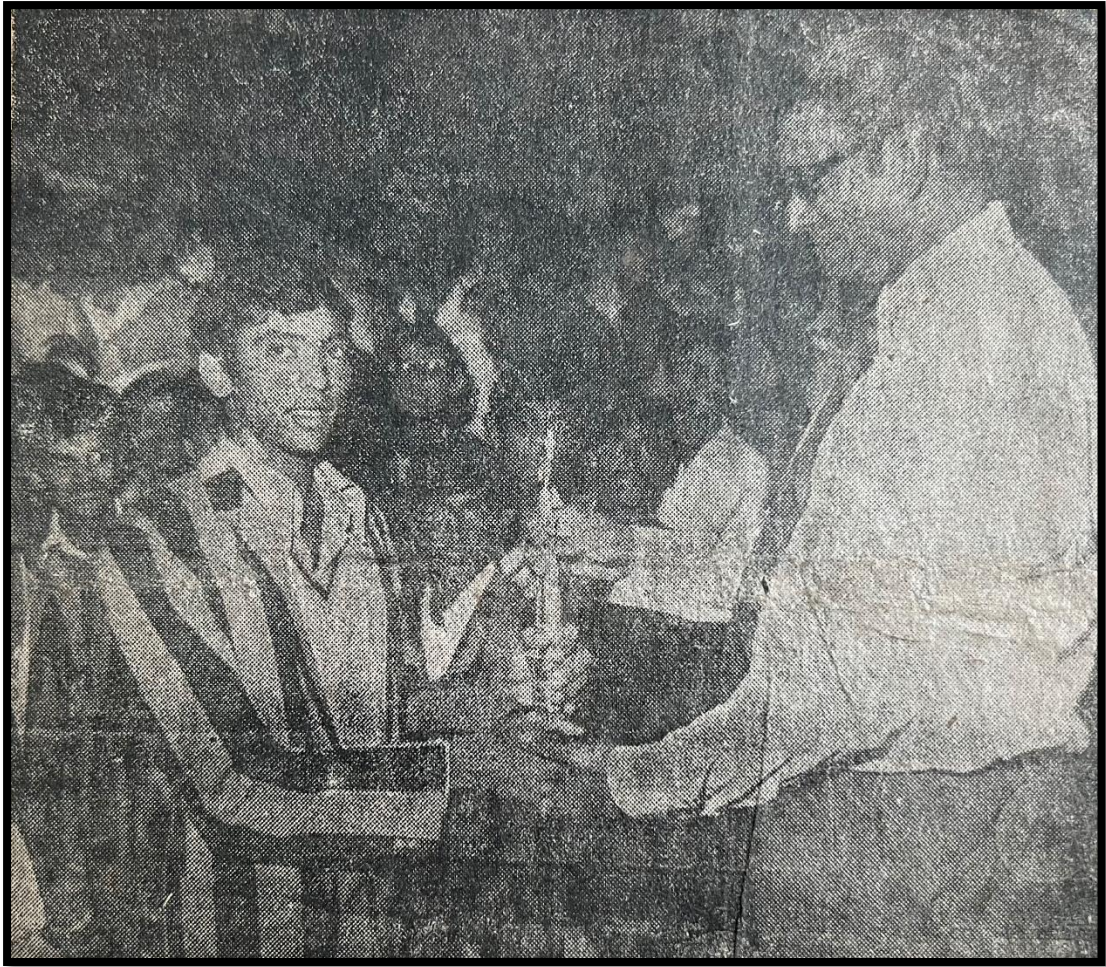
**\*1971**- 3 for 21 v Nalanda; 5 for 19 & 3 for 21 v Ananda; 4 for 72 & 4 for 28 v St. Anthony's; 3 for 28 & 2 for 38 v St. Joseph's; 5 for 43 & 4 for 40 v Trinity; 3 for 3 v St. Peter's; 5 for 19 v Issipathana.

### Best Batting Performances

**\*1973 Season** – 73 v Zahira; 81 v Nalanda; 69 v Ananda.

**\*1972** – 55 v Richmond; 43\* v Trinity; 27 v Royal.

**\*1971** – 21\* v Nalanda.



Mr. A. Saravanamuttu, General Manager-Director, Maharajah Organisation presenting the Vaseline Trophy for the Winners of the Inter-School 50-Over Tournament to S. Thomas' skipper Ranil Abeynaike.



Mr Orville Abeynaike presenting the Observer Shield to the Colombo South Skipper and his Son – Ranil Abeynaike.



For Mr. Orville Abeynaike, this was a very special occasion in his long association with cricket. “This is my silver jubilee year with cricket”, and it marked with a very touching scene, with him presenting the “Observer Shield” to his son, Ranil – the Skipper of the victorious Colombo South team.

## 1971 STC Cricket Team



**Standing L-R:** Indran Mylvaganam (Scorer), **Ranil Abeynaike**, Arasu Saravanamuttu, Trevor Rajaratnam. Rajan Saravanamuttu, Mazhar Rauff, Ajith Abeygunawardena.

**Seated L-R:** Mr. George Ponniah (Coach), GDV ‘Dhamitha’ Perera, Sunil Wijeratne, Ravi Sathasivam (Capt.), Mr. S.J. Anandanayagam (Warden), ADH ‘Hemanatha’ Samaranayaka, Duleep Mendis, Kamal Samarasinghe, Mr. Lassie Abeywardena (Master-in-charge).  
**Absent:** HDK ‘Keerthi’ Silva

## 1972 – CEYLON SCHOOLS TEAM

(To Play Australian Schools)



Photograph of Ceylon Schools Pool Players - Back Row L-R : Roy Dias, Ranil Abeynaike, Prasad Kariyawasam, Gajan Pathmanathan, Gary Melder, Flavian Aponso, Priyanka Seneviratne, Rajiv Benedict. Middle Row – L-R: Ajith De Silva, Dinesh Rajaratnam, Duleep Mendis (Vice-Captain), Asitha Jayaweera (Captain) , Bandula Warnapura, Ajith Mendis. Front Row L-R: H.D.K Silva, Nimal Malagamuwa, Ray de Silva and Merry Dunuwille.

Absent from the photo: **Kamal Samarasinghe (STC)** who played in all three Tests and for the President's XI.

**\*Ceylon Schools v Australian Schools (Jan – Feb 1972)**

**Ranil Abeynaike: 1<sup>st</sup> Test - 20\*; 2<sup>nd</sup> Test - 2 for 28 & 4 for 57;  
3<sup>rd</sup> Test - 2 for 52 & 2 for 37.**

## 1972 STC Cricket Team



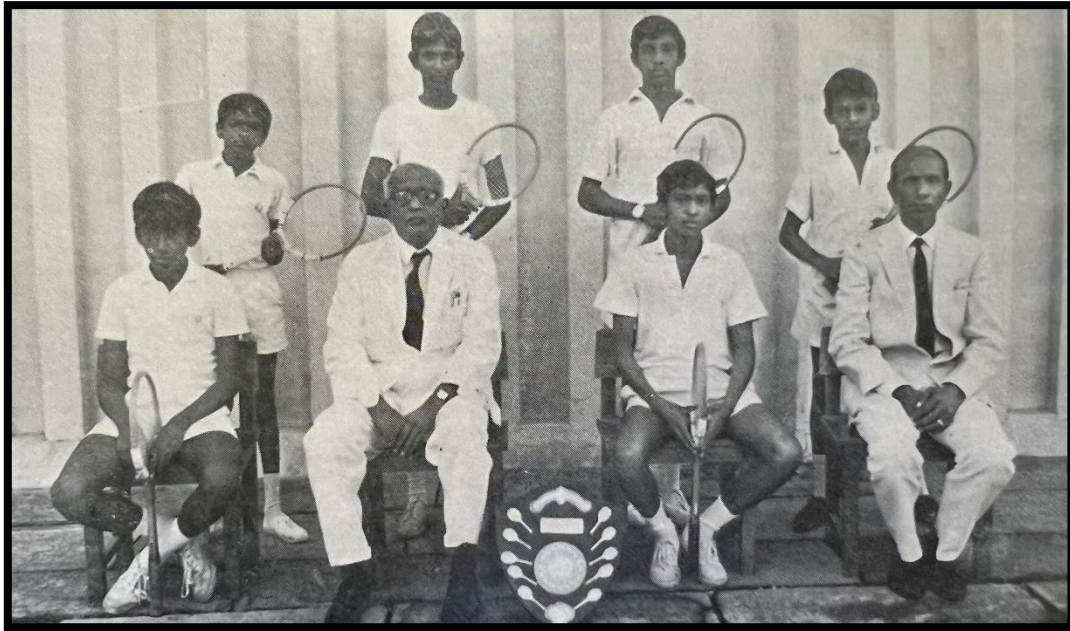
**Standing (L-R):** Shanmugam Manotharan, Ravi Rudra, LP 'Priyal' de Silva, CD Ekanayake, Ranjit Ellalasingham, Johnny de Saram, Ajith Abeygunawardena, Ravi Abeywardene.

**Seated (L-R):** Rajan Saravanamuttu, HDK 'Keerthi' Silva, ADH 'Hemanatha' Samaranayaka, Duleep Mendis (Capt.), Kamal Samarasinghe, **Ranil Abeynaike.**

**Ground (L-R):** Indran Yogasunderam (Scorer), NM Wijesuriya.

**Absent:** P.I. Pieris (Head Coach), Neil Chanmugam (Asst. Coach), Mevan Pieris (Asst. Coach) and Mr. Lassie Abeywardena (Master-in-charge).

**STC – JUNIOR TENNIS  
WINNERS OF THE LAINGS SHIELD (1970 PUBS)**



**Standing (L-R):** R.P. Wijesinghe, W. Watson, A. Narendra, F. Bogstra

**Seated (L-R):** W.R. Gunasena, The Warden (Mr. S.J. Anandanayagam), Ranil Abeynaike (Capt.), Mr. V.D. Burder (Master-in-charge).

**SCHOOL PREFECTS – 1973 (1<sup>st</sup> Term)**



**Standing (L-R):** Samantha Hettiarachchi, Farouki, Gihan Salgado, Yevindra Illangakoon, A.C. Jayasinghe, A.D. Dias, Suri Proctor, D T Gunawardena, V. Sivalingam,

**Seated (L-R):** L.P. de Silva, Gamini Kumarage, N.Y. Cassiechetty, Ravi Rudra, Mike Anthonisz (Head Prefect), Warden, Mr. Anandanayagam, D.K. Weerasinghe, Johnny de Saram, Ranil Abeynaike, W.C. P. de Silva, Chulla Warusevitane.



## **RANIL ABEYNAIKE**



### **A VERSATILE SPORTSMAN, CRICKET COMMENTATOR AND CURATOR:**

By Premasara EPASINGHE – Ceylon Daily News 14 Feb. 2013

*In the field of intellect  
Many a Prize we've won;  
And upon the fields of sports  
Thomians yield to none.  
Be it work, or be it play,  
We will do and dare.*

To the COLLEGE therefore we sing, For all we have and are! While turning the pages of my son – Bhagya's Thomian cricket scrap book, I came across this poem – Eight lines in bold letters.

I was thinking to myself, how many times my good friend Ranil, who sat next to me in the Commentator's Box here and abroad, that brilliant knowledgeable, cricket commentator par excellence RANIL GEMUNU ABEYNAIKE must have sung these lines many a times. He was moulded in the true gentlemanly Thomian tradition as depicted in the above lines.

Today – February 21, 2013, my friend, Ranil, ended his brilliant innings one year ago. I thought of penning a few lines about Ranil. I had the good fortune of being his room-mate in India. The last commentary the two of us commentated was the World Cup 2011 played in India. This was the song swan of our cricket commentary career.

The sin both of us committed in our commentary career was commentating the 2011 World Cup an ICC Event for a popular private radio station which was the official radio station for Sri Lanka. This probably may have been the reason the SLBC banned us. The two of us never commentated in any electronic media without an invitation. On principle, we never went behind anyone to do commentaries.

### **Family Background**

Ranil and his beloved father O.A. Abeynaike as proud Thomians made an indelible mark. They created history in cricket. Both father and son played, wore the “majestic Blue, Black and Blue cap and Blazer” for the college by the sea. (Any Thomian who plays in a Royal-Thomian is entitled to wear the Blue, Black and Blue Blazer). As die hard Thomians, two of them imparted their knowledge of cricket to young Thomians as Coaches. Ranil’s father Orville, was an excellent Teacher, Head Master, Sub Warden, coached cricket and hockey at S. Thomas’.

Another similarity was that both were left arm bowlers, of course, Ranil captained S. Thomas College in with distinction. Abeynaike’s and S. Thomas’ were inseparable. They are gentlemen of the highest order and contributed immensely to Thomian sports.

“Papa” Abeynaike had the distinction of playing in the 62<sup>nd</sup> Royal-Thomian on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> March 1941 at the NCC Grounds. He played under R. Proctor. The big-match was drawn. As a batsman Orville Abeynaike, going at No. 08 scored 05 runs. He was caught by Macan Markar. Bowler was Royal skipper O.W. Wambeck. In this Royal-Thomian, Ranil’s father became the best bowler returning amazing figures as opening bowler partnering the great gentleman, Sri Lanka captain Vernon Prins. O.A. Abeynaike’s figures were -25.2-3-60-7.

Ranil Abeynaike played for S. Thomas from 1971 to 1973 and captained in the final year, and scored an aggregate of 56 runs, and captured 9 wickets in three matches. In memory of Ranil’s contribution to Thomian cricket the family has donated a trophy for the Trinity vs S. Thomas’ first eleven cricket match. The inaugural match was played last weekend.

For Abeynaike’s the family sport was Hockey. Father Orville, sons Ranil, Ajith and Amitha played hockey for STC Mount Lavinia and obtained college colours and they were also college prefects. Orville, Ranil and Ajith captained college Hockey teams. Ranil played club hockey for NCC, Ajith for CH&FC, Amitha for NCC. The Royal-Thomian hockey match is played for the Orville Abeynaike Memorial Trophy.

Ranil was born on February 12, 1955. As Abraham Lincoln mentioned “Behind any successful great man, there is a great lady.” It’s the great lady, wife of Orville – mother of Mohan, Ranil, Ajith and Amitha – Mrs Daphne Abeynaike

who brought up the children with care and today they are productive citizens of Sri Lanka. Mohan, Ajith and Amitha are qualified Accountants. Ajith working down under in Melbourne, Australia.

After leaving school Ranil joined the Sinhalese Sports Club and played cricket for a number of years as an outstanding all-rounder. He was curator of the club and also served as the General Manager.

He had the proud distinction of playing for Ceylon in late 1970's and early 1980's. Then he proceeded to England and Australia and played professional cricket for more than ten years. In the meantime he followed a number of coaching courses abroad and excelled as a fine coach and also as curator.

Cricket was Ranil's life. He studied the preparation of Turf wickets and once he returned to Sri Lanka, he became the "Curator" of the SSC. Later he served Sri Lanka Cricket as a Selector and a Member of the Interim Committee.

### **His Voice**

Ranil had "cricket commentator" written all over him. He had a very pleasant, charming, attractive voice and deep dulcet tones and was one of the best commentators Sri Lanka produced.

I consider the Royal-Thomian commentary as the "Pinnacle of school commentaries" as some of the great leading cricketers with loads of experience commentating. It was a treat to listen to former Sri Lanka "King of Swing" Mevan Peiris, brilliant off spinner Neil Chanmugam, Michael De Zoysa, Mahinda Wijesinghe and the late Ranil Abeynaike. Out of the Royalists, my favourite and my idol was S. Skandakumar, who was outstanding. By listening to these commentators we learn the art of commentating. Their delivery and language – Excellent.

Ranil Abeynaike was one of the best international television commentators. His demise was a big loss for electronic media.

Added to his prowess as a radio and T.V. commentator he was a regular, highly respected cricket writer. He used to contribute to some of the leading English newspapers very valuable articles on cricket.

Ranil, sometimes on invitation, used to appear on T.V. panel discussions in Sinhala. He was clear, factual and like his English, the flow of his delivery in Sinhala too was excellent.

Ranil has three brothers – all Thomians – Mohan, Ajith and Amitha. His demise is an irreparable loss not only to his family, but also to the entire cricketing fraternity. His beloved wife Roshika was a tower of strength and a source of inspiration to him.

I wish to conclude this article on Ranil quoting this verse :-

When the Great Scorer comes

To write against the name

He writes not that you won or lost

But, how you played the game!

Dear Ranil, we miss you. You played the game well. Your demise is badly felt by all of us. We sincerely loved you. In return, you loved all of us. You are a rare gem. Life is impermanent. As a fine humble, warm hearted, God fearing gentleman, you always played a straight bat.

- *Premasara Epasinghe*

### **Late Ranil Abeynaike ‘a true gentleman’ says Sunil Gavaskar**



Sunil Gavaskar the veteran Indian opening batsman in an exclusive interview with a Sri Lanka Reporter in Canada said his close friend and fellow cricket commentator late Ranil Abeynaike was excellent in reporting the pitch condition prior to a game. Saddened by the sudden death of Ranil Abeynaike his fellow commentator in international cricket Gavaskar said this man was a true gentleman and easily one of the best in the world who could give an accurate assessment of any wicket in addition to his wonderful commentaries.



Dear Ranil

It was my greatest privilege to play with you Junior and 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket – especially under your superb captaincy in 1973. You were an outstanding sportsman, a wonderful friend and a gentle human being. Extremely proud to have known you.

May your beautiful soul continue to rest in eternal peace.

God Bless

Rudi (Ravi Rudra)

12<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025.