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Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage and the Route to the World Javelin Elite a Critical Analysis of Public Documents

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Abstract

Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage won the inaugural World Athletics Ultimate Championship men's javelin title in Budapest on 13 September 2026 with 91.09 m. This study examines how public documents represent the opportunities, relationships and resources associated with his development. Fifteen English-language narrative documents were analysed using a framework matrix, with four official competition records consulted separately. Six descriptive categories were compared across publication genres and periods. A subsequent interpretive reading distinguished announced assistance, reported delivery and evidence of practical access. The documents portray a pathway connecting varied childhood participation, school entry, sustained local coaching and international opportunities. Their evidential strength differs: a sponsorship promise specifies intended provision, an athlete's account describes assistance received, and an equipment-access complaint identifies a gap between provision and usability. Awards and recognition also occupy different positions relative to successive performances. These contrasts support an account of development through particular access arrangements, while leaving coordination and performance effects unresolved. Whereas earlier ecological and policy research examined development environments or national provision, this study contributes a transparent, athlete-level procedure for evaluating public support claims, applied to a South Asian javelin pathway. Practical implications concern school transitions, continuity of coaching and dependable access to preparation. Source dependence, retrospective testimony and outstanding substantive author validation limit the analysis.

Keywords: Javelin Throw, Sri Lanka, Talent Development, Coaching, Document Analysis

Introduction

Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage's victory in Budapest offers a valuable opportunity to examine how an athlete reaches the highest level of international competition. The official result records a winning distance of 91.09 m on 13 September 2026, ahead of Anderson Peters and Julian Weber (World Athletics, 2026). The precise competition matters. Pathirage won the World Athletics Ultimate Championship, an event distinct from the biennial World Athletics Championships. At the 2025 World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, he had finished seventh with 84.38 m (World Athletics, 2025). Conflating these competitions would obscure the sequence being investigated. The relevant development is the movement from an established world finalist to the winner of a major global championship within the following season.

Explaining this progression requires attention to the opportunities through which an athlete can prepare and compete. A named coach, a scholarship or an overseas training visit identifies a relationship or resource, but says relatively little about its availability in everyday practice. Public accounts often place sponsors, schools, employers and sporting organisations around a successful athlete without establishing what each provided or when the athlete could use it. The analytical problem is therefore how to distinguish public association with success from evidence about the conditions of development.

Pathirage's public record permits that distinction to be examined through concrete episodes. An early interview reports restricted competition access and difficulty using supplied equipment (Dissanayake, 2024). Later publications identify scholarship arrangements, transport sponsorship, community assistance during overseas training and practical help from his local coach (Bandara, 2026; LOLC Finance, n.d.; Olympic Council of Asia, 2025, 2026c; Sri Lanka Sports Association of Queensland, 2026). These sources concern different needs and stages of his career. Their contrast is more informative than a simple count of supporting organisations.

Existing research provides several useful starting points. Ecological work on talent development directs attention towards the athlete's surrounding environment and the connections among its participants (Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010). Research on international sporting success identifies policy areas through which organisations may influence competitive opportunity (De Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg, & Shibli, 2006). Studies of multidisciplinary development and talent transfer question the assumption that the route to elite performance must begin with exclusive early commitment to one sport (Green, Fleischman, Mulcahy, & Kean, 2024; Güllich, Macnamara, & Hambrick, 2022). These perspectives suggest questions to ask of the documents. They do not establish that any particular feature caused Pathirage's championship victory, and they should not be used to convert a plausible story into a proven mechanism.

The article develops an account of support through its function, timing and usability. Function concerns the need a contribution is intended to address. Timing locates it relative to a particular transition or performance. Usability concerns evidence that the athlete could put the contribution to its intended purpose. Across these questions, an announcement, a report of delivery and an account of practical access carry different evidential weight. They are distinctions for interpreting the documents, not a validated scale of support quality or a new theory of talent.

The main research question is: How do selected public documents represent the relationships and access arrangements associated with Pathirage's progression to the world javelin elite? The analysis asks how early participation became a specialist opportunity, what the sources establish about assistance, and how difficulties and public recognition qualify the success narrative. The case does not establish a national development model, and priority over all existing biographical work is not claimed. Sinhala and Tamil publications, subscription databases and the biography reported by Bandara (2026) were not systematically examined. The value of this case is also methodological. A championship creates a clear point from which earlier accounts can be reconsidered, but it can encourage the reader to make the eventual result the organising explanation for everything that preceded it. The present study instead asks what an account could establish at the time it was published. The 2024 interview, for example, records concerns before the later title was available to frame them. Reading that interview alongside later celebrations preserves uncertainty within the pathway. This approach allows a successful Sri Lankan athlete to be studied without presenting his career as either the inevitable product of a national system or an achievement detached from the people and arrangements around him.

The study is expected to make three contributions to existing knowledge. The first is empirical: a source-linked account of how one Sri Lankan javelin thrower's pathway has been publicly represented, from varied childhood participation and school entry to local coaching, overseas training and recognition. The second is conceptual. By examining support through its function, timing and usability, the study asks whether a contribution reached the athlete in a usable form at a relevant time, rather than only which organisations surrounded him. The third is methodological. Document analysis and the framework method (Bowen, 2009; Gale et al., 2013) are adapted so that descriptive coding of content remains separate from an interpretive judgement of what each claim can support. Together, these contributions are intended to give researchers and practitioners a transparent way to evaluate public support claims when observation and interviews are unavailable.

These contributions differ from those of earlier investigations in level, evidence and emphasis. Ecological studies have examined development environments through interviews and observation (Henriksen et al., 2010), and a review of that approach found limited attention to neutral or negative cases (Feddersen et al., 2021). Policy research has identified areas through which national systems may influence international success (De Bosscher et al., 2006). Sri Lankan studies have examined national policy implementation and the knowledge of sprint coaches (Jayawardhana et al., 2023; Sellathurai & Draper, 2022), while diversification and talent-transfer research has questioned the need for exclusive early commitment to one sport (Green et al., 2024; Güllich et al., 2022). The present study works instead at the level of one athlete's documented arrangements, relies on public documents rather than privileged access, and retains difficulties within a successful case. Its intended new insight is narrower than a theory of talent: that evidence of support can be graded according to whether provision was announced, reported as delivered or shown to be usable, and that this grading changes what a successful pathway can be said to explain. The Discussion returns to these distinctions and summarises them in Table 10.

Literature and analytical perspective

Development through environments and relationships

Henriksen et al. (2010) examined a successful track-and-field development environment through interviews, observations and documents. Their analysis highlighted the relevance of cooperation, organisational culture and attention to athletes as people. This approach shifts the explanatory focus beyond the isolated performer. It is especially useful here because the public corpus identifies contributors who operate in different institutional settings. Nevertheless, the evidential difference between the studies is substantial. The present analysis has no observation of training sessions and no direct access to conversations between the athlete and support personnel. It uses the ecological perspective to organise questions about relationships, not to claim that the functioning of Pathirage's environment has been observed comprehensively.

The Great British Medalists Project reviewed evidence across performers, environments, practice and training (Rees et al., 2016). Its separation of levels is useful here: aspiration, institutional provision and measured performance require different evidence before their connections can be assessed.

De Bosscher et al. (2006) proposed nine policy areas associated with international sporting success. Financial support, organisation, coaching and competition opportunities consequently provide relevant questions alongside individual effort. The present case uses that attention to provision without attempting a national policy score. Evaluation of a national system would additionally require evidence about coverage, distribution and outcomes across athletes.

Feddersen et al. (2021) identified limited attention to neutral or negative cases in a review of twelve studies using the holistic ecological approach. Their criticism matters when a champion is selected retrospectively: success cannot establish that every part of the environment worked well. This study accordingly treats the championship as a boundary for the case, while retaining access complaints, inconsistent recollections and interrupted preparation. The ecological perspective directs attention to connections among contributors; the documents must then establish whether those connections involved communication, shared decisions or actual access. Several organisations appearing in one biography is insufficient evidence of a coordinated environment.

For this study, the useful analytical unit is therefore a relationship performing a specified task. A school and a coach may be connected through recruitment, while a community association and an athlete may be connected through assistance during a training visit. These connections operate at different scales and need not have the same duration. An ecological reading becomes more precise when it asks who acted, which need was addressed and what evidence links the action to participation. This interpretation follows the relational emphasis of Henriksen et al. (2010), while making a distinction between mapping contributors and demonstrating how they worked together. The distinction prevents the language of an environment from implying more integration than the documents reveal.

Sporting diversification and opportunities to specialise

Côté and Vierimaa (2014) reviewed the Developmental Model of Sport Participation, distinguishing sampling, specialisation and investment. It offers a language for considering experience across activities. The public biographies, however, do not provide complete training hours, informal-play records or overlapping commitments. They establish a broad sporting background, including cricket, without locating every childhood year within a measured developmental sequence.

Güllich, Macnamara, and Hambrick (2022) found that patterns associated with adult world-class performance differed from those associated with stronger youth performance. Their synthesis supports examining varied developmental histories rather than assuming that earlier exclusive specialisation is always preferable. Green, Fleischman, Mulcahy, and Kean (2024) similarly identify personal, task and environmental constraints in talent-transfer pathways. Together, these studies justify asking how an athlete moved between activities and obtained specialist support. They do not establish that cricket caused Pathirage's later javelin performance. The public accounts contain neither a measured assessment of transferable skills nor evidence of a formal cricket-to-javelin programme.

The distinction between recognising promise and making a new activity accessible is especially relevant to school transitions. A coach may notice an athlete, but continued participation also requires admission, practical support and the athlete's willingness to change commitments. This case can illuminate how those steps are represented. It cannot determine whether similar pupils received equivalent opportunities or whether an alternative sporting choice would have produced a better outcome.

A further distinction concerns what can be carried from one sporting activity into another. Familiarity with organised practice, willingness to compete and access to school sport are different propositions from the transfer of a particular throwing technique. Public biographies may place cricket and javelin in a persuasive sequence, but sequence alone cannot identify which capacities mattered. The diversification literature provides a reason to retain the earlier activities in the account rather than treating them as wasted years (Côté & Vierimaa, 2014; Güllich et al., 2022). In this case, the more accessible question is how participation became visible to someone able to offer a new opportunity. That question can be investigated through the reported school transition even where technical transfer remains unmeasured.

Sri Lankan sport and the delivery of support

Sri Lankan empirical research provides a more specific context than general descriptions of a resource-constrained country. Jayawardhana, Crabtree, and Piggin (2023) studied implementation of the 2012 national sport policy through a survey of 240 respondents and five administrator interviews. They reported problems of coordination, resource distribution and implementation. These findings concern the policy period investigated; publication in 2023 does not make them a diagnosis of every institution operating in 2026. Their relevance here is to distinguish an announced policy from the arrangements through which an athlete encounters it. Pathirage's publications can identify particular services, but cannot establish whether access was routine, equitable or dependent on exceptional personal connections.

Sellathurai and Draper (2022) interviewed ten experienced Sri Lankan short-sprint coaches and examined their knowledge and use of periodisation and training methods. Their findings identified gaps in preparation and monitoring knowledge within that sample, supporting attention to coach education and access to expertise. The study concerns sprint coaching, not javelin, and provides no assessment of Tony Prasanna or Pathirage's preparation. It therefore informs a research question rather than a judgement about his staff: how does learning obtained through external contact become available in daily coaching? Addressing that question requires evidence about communication and implementation as well as the presence of an overseas training relationship.

These studies suggest examining identifiable arrangements rather than assigning one description to the national system. A scholarship, school place or training exchange has a particular purpose, intended beneficiary and delivery process. The relevant question is how the athlete encountered that arrangement, including any obstacles between entitlement and use. Local relationships remain central to that inquiry; international training should not be treated as proof of inadequate local coaching.

The Sri Lankan setting also gives practical meaning to the level at which support is examined. A national policy statement, an institutional award and a coach's provision of accommodation answer different questions about responsibility. Combining them under a general label of support would obscure whether the athlete accessed an entitlement, benefited from a discretionary decision or relied on a personal arrangement. Jayawardhana et al. (2023) provide a basis for attending to implementation, while the present documents supply particular instances for closer examination. The analytical task is to connect these levels through evidence. Neither the existence of a policy nor the generosity of one contributor can establish how reliably an arrangement would serve another athlete.

Public documents and the interpretation of support claims

Document analysis involves interpreting materials produced for purposes that may differ from those of the researcher (Bowen, 2009). Here, the documents were not generated to answer a common research question. Sporting organisations announce results and achievements; sponsors explain partnerships; journalists construct readable accounts; community organisations demonstrate their contribution. Those purposes shape what is visible. A detailed description of a presentation ceremony may coexist with almost no information about ordinary training. This does not render the documents useless. It means that both the reported contribution and the reason for reporting it belong within the analysis. Publicity is evidence of representation even when it is insufficient evidence of implementation.

The framework method organises comparison while preserving links between material and interpretation (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Here, documents occupy rows and six descriptive categories occupy columns. Shared questions about one athlete make comparison possible, while producer, genre and date remain visible. The matrix does not make a sponsor statement equivalent to an athlete interview. It records where relevant content occurs before the content's evidential status is considered.

Three distinctions guide the subsequent interpretation. Announced assistance establishes a public commitment. Reported delivery identifies a claim that a resource or service was supplied, with the claimant's position retained. Evidence of practical access describes how the athlete encountered or used that resource, including circumstances in which it was unsuitable or unavailable. These distinctions do not imply that every arrangement passes through a recorded sequence. A retrospective account may describe use without preserving an announcement, and a detailed provider report may be informative without independent corroboration. The purpose is to keep the claim proportionate to the available evidence.

These distinctions require attention to the position from which a claim is made. A provider can describe what was offered, an athlete can describe encountering it, and an official competition record can establish a result. Their accounts become complementary when they address the same episode, but agreement on a broad success narrative is less informative. Conversely, a detailed complaint need not invalidate every positive account of assistance. Following Bowen's (2009) treatment of documents as material requiring interpretation, the analysis considers both content and purpose. The question is which part of the developmental explanation a source can support, rather than whether its producer should be labelled wholly reliable or unreliable.

Methods

Design and documentary corpus

This exploratory qualitative document analysis examines one athletic pathway, bounded by Pathirage's 2026 World Athletics Ultimate Championship victory. Later publications available by 23 October 2026 are included to examine recognition and continuing preparation. The corpus contains fifteen public English-language narrative documents, D01–D15, comprising nine institutional communications, four newspaper profiles or interviews, one governing-body competition report and one syndicated wire report. Four official result records, R01–R04, were consulted separately for key competition outcomes and are excluded from narrative-category counts. Table 1 identifies the narrative corpus, Table 2 lists the official result records, and Tables 3–6 preserve the source and coding documentation.

The original discovery used the ChatGPT web-search and page-retrieval service on 23 October 2026. Search terms combined Rumesh Tharanga or Rumesh Pathirage with javelin, coach, Prasanna, Australia, scholarship, sponsorship and Ultimate Championship, followed by relevant domain searches. Selection was purposive. A source required retrievable substantive text about a developmental relationship, resource, competition episode, difficulty or public response. Repetitive summaries, unsupported social-media snippets and commercial biography aggregators were excluded. The complete ordered query sequence and exclusion totals were not retained, so the search is reported as purposive rather than exhaustive.

The original retained search record includes the D08 recovery query site:worldathletics.org "Pathirage delivers" "85.69". The recorded 24 October discovery checks were "Rumesh Pathirage" "javelin" "coach"; "Rumesh Tharanga" "scholarship" "2025"; and "Rumesh Pathirage" "childhood" "Sri Palee". Regional literature searches paired Sri Lanka with sport policy, coach education and periodisation. A scholarly query for "A Qualitative Meta-Study of a Decade" "pdf" supported the critical literature review. The original complete ordered discovery log and exclusion totals are unavailable.

The dated publications span 6 August 2024 to 16 October 2026; the sponsor announcement is undated. The corpus was fixed on 23 October and retained during revision on 24 October. Its stopping rationale was coverage of early testimony, assistance, competition, difficulty and recognition before and after the title, rather than saturation. The retained query record is reproduced above, and source provenance is documented in Table 3. Revision re-opened the fourteen non-World Athletics narrative pages and checked selected result entries through official indexed records. Direct access to the World Athletics report remained restricted; its earlier recorded recovery route and the limits of the renewed check are retained rather than represented as a new full-text retrieval.

The temporal design should be understood as a comparison of documents available at different points, rather than repeated observation of the athlete. Earlier and later publications differ in genre as well as date. A later institutional report may contain more detail about recognition because that is its purpose, not because recognition became more important in the athlete's daily life. The dated groups are therefore used to locate claims and identify possible retrospective framing. They are not treated as equivalent samples of developmental conditions. Retaining the undated sponsor page separately avoids assigning its commitments to a period that the publication itself cannot establish.

Table 1
Narrative documentary corpus

ID	Description	Author or issuing body	Date	Type
D01	Cricket to javelin profile	Raj, P.	8 April 2026	Journalistic profile and interview
D02	Olympic sponsorship announcement	LOLC Finance	Undated	Sponsor announcement
D03	Scholarship briefing	Olympic Council of Asia	16 December 2025	Sports institution news
D04	Rome record and scholarship	Olympic Council of Asia	9 June 2026	Sports institution news
D05	Doha embassy recognition	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment & Tourism	19 June 2026	Government ceremony report
D06	Air Force return welcome	Sri Lanka Air Force	21 June 2026	Employer institution news
D07	Air Force promotion	Olympic Council of Asia	6 August 2026	Sports institution news
D08	Budapest championship report	Mulkeen, J.	13 September 2026	Governing body competition report

ID	Description	Author or issuing body	Date	Type
D09	Damaged javelins report	Agence France-Presse	16 September 2026	Syndicated wire report
D10	Queensland community assistance	Sri Lanka Sports Association of Queensland	10 October 2026	Community organisation retrospective
D11	Goodness ambassador event	Foundation of Goodness	16 October 2026	Foundation event report
D12	Asian Games return	Olympic Council of Asia	1 October 2026	Sports institution news
D13	Early pathway interview	Dissanayake, A.	6 August 2024	Published athlete interview
D14	Family and school recollections	Bandara, K.	20 September 2026	Event report with athlete and family testimony
D15	Childhood and training profile	Davy, C.	7 August 2026	Journalistic profile and interview

D01–D15 are the narrative corpus. Official result records R01–R04 are listed separately in Table 2. Full titles and URLs appear in the references. Publication dates do not necessarily indicate the dates of events described.

Table 2
Official result records outside the narrative corpus

ID	Record	Verified item
R01	World Athletics U20 Championships Cali 2022 men's javelin throw final results	Final result row 7; 69.98 m
R02	Asian Throwing Championships Mokpo results men's javelin throw	15 June 2024; first, 85.45 m
R03	World Athletics Championships Tokyo 2025 men's javelin throw final results	Final result row 7; 84.38 m
R04	World Athletics Ultimate Championship Budapest 2026 men's javelin throw final results	13 September 2026; first, 91.09 m

Source appraisal and analysis

Each publication was considered in relation to its producer, access to the reported event, purpose and relationship to other sources (Bowen, 2009). An organisational announcement establishes that the organisation made the stated claim; edited interviews preserve attributed testimony without providing the original recording or editorial history. Syndicated and reproduced reports were not treated as independent witnesses. D04 is the OCA reproduction of NOC information, replacing an inaccessible NOC page. D08 was recorded in

the original analysis as recovered through indexed substantive text. Table 3 distinguishes the original producer from the access route and records source-specific limitations.

Table 3
Source access and provenance

ID	Access and provenance notes
D01	Full web body; Web retrieval. Named journalist; edited athlete testimony. Recording, interview language and participant review are not available. Selective retrospective account.
D02	Full web body; Web retrieval. First-party evidence of an announced commitment. Promotional account, not a contract or delivery audit. Text specifies 2026–2028; no publication date displayed.
D03	Full web body; Web retrieval. Institutional account of a briefing; useful for announced procedures. Recipient reports and expenditure records were not available.
D04	Full web body; Web retrieval. OCA report of an NOC statement. Replaces the inaccessible NOC page at re-audit; not independent corroboration of that statement. All-time ranking wording excluded.
D05	Full web body; Web retrieval. Official account of a ceremony. Its June headline uses “world champion” before the September event; the headline is not evidence of championship chronology.
D06	Full web body; Web retrieval. Official employer publication supports affiliation and the reported welcome; it does not establish salary, training expenditure or causal influence.
D07	Full web body; Web retrieval. Institutional reporting with secondary news attribution. Awards are distinguishable from pre-performance support; no independent financial audit.
D08	Full web body; Indexed full body. Seven substantive English paragraphs recovered from indexed output; direct retrieval blocked. Round sequence and athlete reaction checked in the recovered body; preliminary duplicate excluded.
D09	Full web body; Web retrieval. AFP attribution retained in the newspaper reproduction. Named accounts are evidence of reported damage, not an adjudication of airline responsibility.
D10	Full web body; Web retrieval. Self-description includes a specific athlete assistance episode; no athlete-level expenditure verification. Broad organisational history is not all evidence about this athlete.
D11	Full web body; Web retrieval. First-party statement of an event and intended role. Future participation effects and headline ranking are not independently established by this item.
D12	Full web body; Web retrieval. Institutional account with an attributed athlete statement. Weather is reported testimony; the item is not an evaluation of preparation.
D13	Full web body; Web retrieval. Named interviewer, edited question-and-answer text; recording and consent terms unknown. Inconsistent age and school chronology; headline alone oversimplifies qualification.

ID	Access and provenance notes
D14	Full web body; Web retrieval. Named reporter; remarks mediated through an event and article. School chronology differs from D13. Opening 91.01 m conflicts with official 91.09 m; opening figure excluded.
D15	Full web body; Web retrieval. Edited athlete testimony with dramatic narrative framing. School-entry age is not adopted as a firm date; extraordinary travel anecdotes are not treated as independently confirmed.

Original versions were recorded as retrieved on 23 October 2026. The renewed checks described above took place on 24 October 2026. Sources were public English-language publications; substantive bodies excluded navigation, advertising and automated summaries. Coding combined initial categories concerning sporting background, coaching, resources and competition with separate treatment of difficulty and public recognition developed during reading. A meaningful passage was the coding unit, while prevalence was counted at document level. Each document contributes at most once to each category, and categories overlap. A named affiliation alone does not establish a resource; a specified scholarship, vehicle, award, equipment commitment or support procedure does. Table 4 presents the codebook, and Tables 5 and 6 reproduce all ninety assignments of documents to categories, with paragraph locators and topic cues supporting positive decisions.

Paragraph identifiers P01, P02 and onward count substantive body paragraphs in the original retrieved version, excluding headings, bylines, captions, navigation and automated summaries. D13 uses Q for interview question and A for the answer paragraph within that question. The identifiers are analytical locators, not publisher numbering. Topic cues accompany positive assignments so that passages remain recognisable when web layouts change.

Table 4
Operational coding rules

Code	Operational category	Inclusion and exclusion rule	Example locator
T1	Sporting background	Explicit childhood, family sport or participation in another sport. Exclude assumptions about transferable physical ability.	D13 Q1 A1–2
T2	Coaching and specialist relationships	Identifies a coach, training specialist or named support practitioner and a relevant relationship. A generic institutional name is insufficient.	D01 P03
T3	Resources and support procedures	Specifies assistance, an award, a commitment or a support administration process. Employment affiliation or gratitude alone does not qualify.	D02 P02
T4	Competitive episodes	Gives an explicit javelin result or describes a javelin competition episode. A generic title or ranking without an episode is insufficient.	D08 P03–06

Code	Operational category	Inclusion and exclusion rule	Example locator
T5	Difficulty and vulnerability	Describes a specific obstacle, disruption, hardship or within-event setback. Equipment displayed later without an account of disruption is insufficient.	D09 P01–04
T6	Public recognition	Substantively frames achievement through national, institutional or community pride, celebration, identity or a future public role. Generic nationality is insufficient.	D11 P01, P05–07

The retained matrix contains totals of 6, 8, 8, 13, 7 and 14 for T1–T6. Its arithmetic was checked before comparing publication genres. Eight dated documents preceded 13 September 2026, one reported the title that day and five followed it; one document remained undated. These groupings describe the selected publications. A dash means that no qualifying passage was coded, not that a contribution was absent from the athlete's life. Frequencies are descriptive, with no statistical test or weighting by presumed source independence.

The recorded original re-audit changed seven assignments: D04/T1 after source substitution; D09/T4 and T6; D10/T4; D11/T4 and T5; and D12/T5. The retained matrix totals are 6, 8, 8, 13, 7 and 14 respectively. The present revision recomputed totals and genre summaries without treating the interpretive access distinctions in Table 7 as additional prevalence codes.

Table 5
Source assignments for background coaching and resources

ID	T1	T2	T3
D01	P01 · cricket	P03 · introduction	—
D02	P03 · family	P04 · Australia	P02 · vehicle
D03	—	—	P04–05 · reporting
D04	P05 · cricket	—	P05 · scholarship
D05	—	P05 · personnel	—
D06	—	—	—
D07	—	P04 · named awards	P04 · cash awards
D08	—	—	—
D09	—	P03, P07–08 · coach	P09 · replacement
D10	—	—	P07 · footwear
D11	—	—	—
D12	—	—	—
D13	Q1 A1–2 · school	Q5 A1 · coach	Q4 A1 · javelin
D14	P10–13 · family, school	P14–18 · Tony	P08, P18 · living support

ID	T1	T2	T3
D15	P04–07, P11 · childhood	P11–12 · coach	—
n	6	8	8

Table 6
Source assignments for competition difficulty and recognition

ID	T4	T5	T6
D01	P02, P07 · results	—	P11–12 · identity
D02	P04–06 · results	—	P07–09 · ambitions
D03	—	—	P06 · national pride
D04	P01–02 · Rome	—	P03 · NOC pride
D05	P02 · Ostrava	—	P01, P03, P06 · recognition
D06	P01 · tour	—	P02–03 · welcome
D07	P03 · Glasgow	—	P01–02 · promotion
D08	P02–06 · results	P03, P07 · setbacks	P07 · national goal
D09	P12 · Rome, Zurich	P01–04 · damage	P11 · national hope
D10	P07–08 · medals	—	P07, P13 · community
D11	P02 · Rome	P03 · travel damage	P01, P05–07 · legacy
D12	P04 · Asian Games	P06 · wet conditions	P01, P03, P07 · recognition
D13	Q3 A1 · 85.45 m	Q2 A1–2; Q4 A2 · access	—
D14	P23–24 · results	P12, P23 · setbacks	P07, P19 · book launch
D15	—	P02–03 · travel, space	P01, P08, P13 · public role
n	13	7	14

A dash means no qualifying passage was coded. T1–T6 are defined in Table 4. Counts are of documents and categories overlap. These records were produced with AI assistance; substantive human author validation remains to be completed.

Interpretation then compared selected passages about support through function, timing and usability. Announced provision, reported delivery and practical access were used to assess what a passage warrants; they were not added as a second quantified codebook. Table 7 presents the principal contrasts, with their source identifiers and limits. Alternative readings were retained, including resources attracted by prior success, differences in publication purpose and later accounts that refer to earlier events. The procedure separates recorded outcomes, attributed accounts and analytical propositions, and does not estimate causal effects.

For example, the transport announcement was interpreted by identifying its intended function and stated partnership period, then separating these details from the missing delivery date. The equipment account was interpreted through the athlete's description of receiving an implement and encountering a barrier to its intended use. This comparison concerns the scope of the evidence, not a rating of either provider. It also distinguishes a missing detail from a negative finding: an unspecified delivery date cannot be coded as failed delivery. Recording that boundary allows a later reader to revise the interpretation if more complete records become available.

Generative AI assisted retrieval, extraction, coding, the original re-audit and revision. The source-linked matrix improves inspectability, but substantive human author validation has not yet been documented. No independent coder, participant validation or agreement statistic is claimed. The Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research informed reporting checks (O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014); they do not establish the accuracy of the coding. Author verification remains necessary before the provisional analysis can be submitted as completed research.

Reflexivity and research ethics

The first author, Hussain Haleem, is a former Olympic distance runner, an athletics coach and a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Sports Science and Coaching at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia. This practitioner standpoint directs attention to preparation and support arrangements but can favour familiar coaching explanations. The analysis therefore records what a coach is described as doing before inferring a developmental role. The second and third authors are based in the same faculty, and the fourth author at KH Sports Academy. The authors have declared no competing interests. No direct interviewing, observation of Pathirage's preparation or privileged access forms part of this study. The argument remains grounded in the public corpus, with its selection and interpretation open to author and external scrutiny.

All sources concern publicly reported sporting activity. No participants were recruited, research interviews conducted or confidential records collected. Attribution is retained, conflicting accounts remain visible and interpretation is restricted to what the publications can support. No formal ethics review took place, and no institutional approval or exemption is claimed. The applicable institutional position remains to be established before submission, as stated in the declarations. Public availability and the absence of recruitment do not by themselves settle that determination.

Findings

From varied childhood participation to a school opportunity

Six documents describe early sporting participation or family background: D01, D02, D04 and D13–D15. The accounts locate development within family life, Sri Palee school and a later move to St. Peter's College in Colombo. Davy (2026) describes participation across activities and substantial cricket involvement. These recollections establish a varied sporting background, while their retrospective and sometimes celebratory framing limits what they reveal about ordinary practice or the child's preferences at the time.

The earliest retained interview provides a more detailed account of entry. Pathirage recalled school sprinting, cricket and district-level leadership, followed by throwing events. He associated a 2017 junior schools javelin performance with coach Tony Prasanna helping him enter St. Peter's, and said that he stopped competing in discus in 2022 (Dissanayake, 2024; D13). The published dates and ages are not wholly consistent, so the article does not reproduce its precise school-grade chronology as established fact. The developmental point is narrower: several sporting activities overlapped before greater commitment to javelin. Entry into the event and exclusive specialisation were not necessarily the same moment.

The sponsor biography describes the father's experience in discus and shot put (LOLC Finance, n.d.; D02). At a later book-launch event, Pathirage's mother recalled practice beside the family home, while the athlete acknowledged his parents' confidence in him (Bandara, 2026; D14). These accounts identify participation and encouragement within family life. They provide no dependable measure of household resources or practice hours, and do not establish a predetermined route to elite javelin.

Read together, the family and school accounts place early participation across more than one setting. Practice near home and encouragement from parents concern the conditions in which sporting activity was sustained; the later scholarship concerns access to a different educational and coaching opportunity. These are related contributions, but they should not be collapsed into a single moment of talent discovery. The published recollections do not indicate when family participation became structured preparation or how decisions were negotiated at home. Their contribution is to retain the people and settings that preceded specialist recognition, so that the later institution does not become the apparent starting point of the entire sporting history (Bandara, 2026; LOLC Finance, n.d.).

The school transition is a particularly important link between participation and opportunity. Bandara (2026) reports that Prasanna drew the attention of St. Peter's rector, Rev. Fr. Trevor Martin, to the young athlete and that a scholarship followed. The report places the observation at a discus competition in 2016, whereas the earlier interview associates entry with javelin in 2017. These could describe stages of recognition, but the documents do not resolve their exact relationship. The article therefore identifies a school-and-coach connection without inventing a definitive recruitment date. School records and interviews with those involved would be required to establish that chronology securely.

Across those differing chronologies, the common connection is between being noticed by a coach and obtaining access to a more specialised school setting. The accounts describe a person who linked the athlete to an opportunity. The scholarship reported in D14 adds a practical arrangement through which that opportunity could be pursued. This is more specific than saying that a school supported a future champion, although the admission process and the experience of other applicants remain undocumented.

Cricket remained a meaningful alternative. Raj (2026; D01) reports an under-18 pace competition, while Davy (2026; D15) recounts school cricket performances. These accounts support a history of competence and participation before specialisation. They cannot reconstruct a counterfactual cricket career. The developmental finding concerns a transition

among activities supported by recognition and access, rather than a demonstrated biomechanical transfer from bowling to javelin throwing.

Local coaching and the practical conditions of participation

Eight documents identify coaching or specialist relationships: D01, D02, D05, D07, D09 and D13–D15. Pathirage attributes his introduction to javelin to Tony Prasanna and describes technical guidance and broader personal support (Raj, 2026). Bandara (2026) adds his account of accommodation and food provided by the coach. These sources specify different functions within one relationship: instruction, encouragement and assistance with everyday living. The practical help matters analytically because access to coaching can depend on the conditions that allow an athlete to remain near it.

International contacts appear alongside this locally anchored relationship. The sponsor account identifies training in Australia associated with Mike and Kelsey Barber (LOLC Finance, n.d.), and the Queensland association describes footwear assistance during a Brisbane programme in 2025 (Sri Lanka Sports Association of Queensland, 2026). The publications therefore identify specialist contact and a particular material contribution around overseas training. Their coexistence does not establish a shared plan, a division of technical responsibility or how advice was incorporated after the visit.

The embassy report identifies Prasanna and physiotherapist Chandima Sarathchandra Gurusinghe among those present with the athlete in Doha (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment & Tourism, 2026). The Air Force award report also names the coach and physiotherapist (Olympic Council of Asia, 2026a). Their presence and recognition make differentiated roles visible, but disclose little about the availability of services between competitions. The evidence supports further inquiry into continuity and coordination rather than a conclusion that a complete support team operated consistently.

The distinction is relevant to the wider coaching argument. A biography can identify people associated with a successful athlete while leaving their working relationships unclear. Here, the athlete's account of living support gives a concrete example of assistance received, whereas the public descriptions of international contacts provide less information about routine integration. This uneven detail should guide the explanation: the documents support particular functions more securely than they support a general claim of coordinated environmental effectiveness.

The accommodation account makes the location of coaching analytically relevant. Technical guidance is available only if an athlete can reach and remain within the setting where it is provided. Food and living arrangements therefore concern the conditions of participation as well as personal kindness. Bandara's (2026) report permits this connection to be identified because it describes a practical contribution rather than merely naming a coach. It does not establish the length, cost or exclusivity of the arrangement. The finding is consequently about the reported breadth of Prasanna's role, while questions about workload, institutional recognition and the distribution of responsibility belong to subsequent investigation.

Assistance ranged from commitments to reported practical use

Eight documents specify a resource, commitment, award or support procedure: D02–D04, D07, D09, D10, D13 and D14. These assignments identify content, not equivalent levels of implementation. LOLC Finance (n.d.) announces logistical support, including a vehicle intended for training and competition travel during a 2026–2028 partnership. The wording establishes a commitment with a clear purpose. The undated page does not establish when delivery occurred or whether transport changed access to training.

The scholarship publications document an arrangement with administrative expectations. OCA reports an award from September 2025 and a subsequent briefing involving athletes and coaches, including guidance on utilisation and quarterly reporting (Olympic Council of Asia, 2025, 2026c). These sources identify a beneficiary, a stated start period and reporting responsibilities. They do not provide the athlete's disbursement or expenditure records. The scholarship consequently supports an inquiry into preparation before Budapest without establishing what any particular payment enabled.

Reported delivery is more explicit in the Queensland association's account of professional footwear supplied during 2025 training and in the athlete's recollection of food and accommodation provided by Prasanna (Bandara, 2026; Sri Lanka Sports Association of Queensland, 2026). Both remain attributed accounts. They nevertheless specify a contribution and an occasion or purpose, making practical access more visible than in a general declaration of support. Neither source measures the contribution's effect on throwing performance.

Dissanayake's (2024) interview provides a contrasting access episode. Pathirage reported receiving a requested javelin but being unable to use it in the intended competition after equipment checks, requiring an unfamiliar implement. Within his account, provision and usability diverged. This illustrates why a resource can be present without serving the intended purpose. It remains the athlete's published account, rather than an independent investigation of equipment compliance or organisational responsibility.

Timing also changes the meaning of an award. The August promotion and cash rewards followed Commonwealth Games success but preceded the Budapest title (Olympic Council of Asia, 2026a). They are retrospective recognition relative to one result and possible future resources relative to another, although their use is undocumented. By contrast, the ministry's equipment-replacement commitment followed Budapest and concerned subsequent preparation (Agence France-Presse, 2026). Assistance cannot be classified simply as before or after success without naming the performance or transition being explained.

The comparisons also show that resources can address different points within the same preparation process. Footwear concerns participation during an identified training visit; transport sponsorship concerns movement between training and competition settings; accommodation concerns remaining near coaching. Their functions are complementary in principle, but the documents do not show that the contributors planned them as one package. Treating each contribution separately preserves this distinction. It also prevents the visibility of a larger sponsor from displacing a smaller, more specifically described contribution. The appropriate comparison is the need addressed and the evidence of access, rather than an

assumed hierarchy based on an organisation's profile (Bandara, 2026; LOLC Finance, n.d.; Sri Lanka Sports Association of Queensland, 2026).

Table 7
Support claims and the evidence for practical access

Source and arrangement	Timing and evidential status	What the account permits
D02 Vehicle and logistics	Undated announcement for 2026–2028	Identifies intended travel support; delivery date and use are not established.
D03–D04 Olympic scholarship	Award reported from September 2025; briefing in December 2025	Identifies an award and reporting process; athlete expenditure and resulting access are unavailable.
D10 Professional footwear	Provider reports assistance during Brisbane training in 2025	Specifies a delivered resource and setting; training effects and sustained use are unmeasured.
D14 Food and accommodation	Retrospective athlete account of local coaching support	Describes assistance received in daily life; duration and precise chronology remain unspecified.
D13 Supplied javelin	Athlete account of an equipment problem in 2024	Shows a reported gap between receiving equipment and being able to use it as intended.
D07 Promotion and financial awards	After Commonwealth Games success and before Budapest	Records recognition and awards; any contribution to subsequent preparation remains untraced.
D09 Replacement javelins	Commitment following Budapest victory	Identifies a proposed continuity response; fulfilment is not documented in this item.

This is an interpretive comparison of selected passages, not an additional prevalence coding exercise. Reported delivery and use remain attributed to the source; no performance effect is inferred. Sources and original analytical locators appear in Tables 1–6.

Competitive progression and continuing vulnerability

The longer trajectory includes seventh place with 69.98 m at the 2022 World Athletics U20 Championships and victory with 85.45 m at the 2024 Asian Throwing Championships (World Athletics, 2022, 2024). These results show international experience before the senior global breakthrough. The selected chronology in Table 8 is not a complete season dataset. Reports use different victory totals and reference points, so no season winning percentage is calculated. Nor is every lower mark interpreted as regression. Competitive conditions differ, and a winning distance need not be a season best. The important observation is progression across developmental stages, followed by further high-level performances.

The later reports place 92.62 m in Rome and 92.07 m in Zurich before the Budapest winning mark of 91.09 m (Mulkeen, 2026; Olympic Council of Asia, 2026c). The subsequent Asian Games account records gold with 88.55 m and attributes difficulty with a record attempt to wet conditions (Olympic Council of Asia, 2026b). These are distinct performances rather than

a single uninterrupted improvement curve. Table 8 records selected milestones without calculating a season success rate or assigning a psychological explanation to variations in distance.

Table 8
Selected milestones in international competition

Date	Competition	Result	Source
2022	World U20 Championships, Cali	7th • 69.98 m	R01
15 June 2024	Asian Throwing Championships, Mokpo	1st • 85.45 m	R02
2025	World Athletics Championships, Tokyo	7th • 84.38 m	R03
June 2026	Rome Diamond League	92.62 m	D04, D06
2026 before Budapest	Zurich Diamond League	92.07 m	D08
13 September 2026	World Athletics Ultimate Championship, Budapest	1st • 91.09 m	R04, D08
September 2026	Asian Games, Aichi Nagoya	Gold • 88.55 m	D12

R01–R04 are official result records; D04, D06, D08 and D12 are narrative reports. This selected chronology is not a complete season dataset. The World Athletics Ultimate Championship is distinct from the biennial World Athletics Championships.

Seven documents contain specific difficulties or setbacks: D08, D09 and D11–D15. Their subjects differ substantially. The earlier interview concerns competition access and an unfamiliar implement; the championship narrative records a lower opening attempt; later reports concern travel damage or weather. These cannot be combined into an adversity measure. The shared category locates material that complicates a smooth success narrative, while the explanation must remain specific to each event.

AFP reports the athlete's and coach's accounts of javelins damaged during travel after Budapest, together with the ministry's replacement commitment (Agence France-Presse, 2026; D09). This episode makes continuing dependence on usable equipment visible after elite success. It does not establish airline liability or a measured psychological effect. The later foundation report describes the damaged implements entering a museum display (Foundation of Goodness, 2026; D11). That is a second representation of the same incident, rather than independent evidence of another disruption.

The shift from damaged equipment to commemorative objects is relevant to the construction of sporting history. A practical interruption becomes part of a public story of achievement. The later symbolic value does not show that the original difficulty was beneficial. Similarly, a strong result achieved with unfamiliar equipment does not demonstrate that access arrangements were adequate. Successful outcomes can coexist with problems that would remain important even if the athlete had performed less well.

The equipment episode can also be read prospectively. From the position of the next competition, damaged implements represent a preparation problem requiring a timely response, regardless of the athlete's previous result. From the position of the later commemorative account, the same objects help tell a story about achievement and adversity. These readings are compatible, but they answer different questions. AFP's report identifies the interruption and a replacement commitment; the foundation publication identifies a subsequent public use of the objects (Agence France-Presse, 2026; Foundation of Goodness, 2026). Keeping the two purposes visible avoids allowing the commemorative ending to stand in for evidence that the practical problem had been resolved.

Public recognition and the limits of the success narrative

Fourteen documents frame achievement through collective pride, recognition or a public role; only D13 falls outside the category. All nine institutional communications contribute, compared with three of the four profiles. Early participation has a different distribution: all four profiles contribute, alongside two institutional sources. Table 9 therefore shows which genres carry different parts of the account. The prominence of recognition partly reflects a corpus rich in announcements and ceremonies, while childhood is represented mainly through edited biographical testimony.

Table 9
Descriptive categories by publication genre

Code	Category	Institutional n = 9	Profiles n = 4	Event n = 1	Wire n = 1	All n = 15
T1	Sporting background	2	4	0	0	6
T2	Coaching and specialists	3	4	0	1	8
T3	Resources and procedures	5	2	0	1	8
T4	Competitive episodes	8	3	1	1	13
T5	Difficulty and vulnerability	2	3	1	1	7
T6	Public recognition	9	3	1	1	14

Categories overlap. Cells count documents, not independent witnesses, assistance episodes or causal effects. Institutional sources are D02–D07 and D10–D12; profiles are D01 and D13–D15; D08 is the event report and D09 the wire report.

Recognition was already present in seven of the eight publications preceding Budapest. It therefore cannot be treated as an effect of that title alone. A source may celebrate an earlier achievement while making commitments relevant to later preparation. Publication dates also differ from event dates: the October Queensland retrospective describes assistance in 2025. Interpreting only the publication sequence would misplace that contribution after the championship it may have preceded.

The foundation accounts illustrate another distinction. Davy's August profile already associates Pathirage with the Foundation of Goodness and describes a public role, whereas the foundation's October announcement presents his formal welcome as an ambassador (Davy, 2026; Foundation of Goodness, 2026). The formal announcement cannot establish

when the relationship began. Nor does a pledge to encourage rural athletes demonstrate programme delivery. Evaluating that commitment would require evidence about activities, access and continued participation beyond the champion's appearance.

Source inconsistencies remain consequential. The school-recruitment accounts differ in year and event. The June embassy headline uses world-champion language before the September Ultimate Championship, while the opening of D14 gives 91.01 m before stating 91.09 m later. The analysis retains the official championship result and does not adopt those inconsistent details as historical facts. The sources remain informative about representation and attributed support even where particular claims require correction or qualification.

The genre comparison identifies an asymmetry in whose concerns become visible. The early interview gives space to an athlete's difficulties accessing competition and equipment, while the institutional items are organised more often around awards, partnerships and public returns. This is an observation about the selected texts, not proof that institutions ignored those difficulties. It does, however, affect the account a reader would construct from only one genre. Institutional publications would provide substantial information about recognition but a thinner history of childhood and school entry. Profiles supply more of that history while introducing retrospective selection. Combining the genres permits these differences to be examined, rather than averaging them into a single authoritative biography.

Discussion

Support becomes explanatory through evidence of access

The central finding is that the public record documents different parts of support with unequal specificity. Some publications identify a provider or commitment; others describe a delivered resource or the athlete's encounter with it. The contrasts in Table 7 make that difference observable. Transport is promised, footwear is reported as supplied, living support is recalled as received, and a supplied javelin is described as unusable in the intended setting. These claims should not be compressed into one undifferentiated statement that the athlete was well supported.

The interpretation builds on Henriksen et al.'s (2010) attention to the environment by specifying what documentary evidence can establish about a connection within it. The school account links recognition to an admission opportunity; the coaching account connects instruction with daily living; the overseas accounts locate specialist contact alongside a material need. Each identifies a possible relationship between opportunity and participation. Evidence of shared decisions, routine communication and continuity would still be needed to assess coordination across the environment. This distinction addresses the risk, identified by Feddersen et al. (2021), of allowing a successful outcome to determine the prior evaluation of the setting.

De Bosscher et al.'s (2006) policy areas help identify different forms of provision, but naming a policy area does not establish implementation for a particular athlete. The distinction between commitment and experienced access brings the analysis closer to the implementation problem reported in Sri Lankan policy research (Jayawardhana et al., 2023). Pathirage's case does not test that national study's conclusions. It supplies concrete

arrangements through which implementation could be investigated, including access to appropriate equipment, competition entries and training travel.

A bounded proposition follows: a support account becomes more informative about development when it connects an identified need with delivery and the athlete's opportunity to use the contribution. This is a proposition about explanatory evidence, not a claim that more detailed publicity means better support. It could be challenged by records showing that a publicly specified contribution was unused, poorly timed or unrelated to the need described. Conversely, an organisation that publishes little may provide substantial assistance. The interpretation evaluates what the documents establish while leaving actual provision open to further investigation.

The distinction has consequences for how a successful case might inform another setting. Reproducing the names or types of organisations around a champion would not reproduce the functions through which assistance became useful. A school might provide admission without accommodation, or an overseas visit might provide expertise without arrangements for continued practice on return. These are illustrative possibilities, not additional findings about Pathirage. They show why the transferable element of this analysis is a question about connections between need and access. The case can guide what another programme examines, while the effectiveness of any proposed arrangement must be established in that programme's own circumstances.

Timing and dependence qualify explanations of success

Support and performance may influence one another over time. The 2024 access complaints precede the reported 2025 scholarship, while the 2026 sponsorship announcement describes an expanding commitment without a publication date. That pattern invites examination of changing opportunity, but the documents differ in purpose as well as time. A complaint about a missed competition and a sponsor's announcement cannot measure the full support available in either period. A defensible comparison would pair dated competition plans and entries with selection, disbursement and delivery records.

The August awards show why an athlete's development should not be divided around a single moment of success. An award can acknowledge one result and become available before another. Its developmental significance depends on whether and how it was used, rather than on its position in a celebratory narrative. The post-Budapest equipment promise is more narrowly located: it concerns continuity after that title. These distinctions prevent later benefits from being presented retrospectively as causes of an earlier performance, while allowing prior success to influence subsequent opportunities.

The source material also identifies possible dependencies between contributions. A school place may require accommodation; a training opportunity may require transport and suitable equipment; specialist advice may require someone to integrate it into daily preparation. These are propositions for investigation rather than a recovered management plan. The local coaching and international training accounts suggest that several needs were addressed, but do not establish that responsibility for their connections was explicit. Dated plans, communication records and athlete accounts would help distinguish coordinated provision from separate contributions that happened to coexist.

The athlete's agency remains part of this explanation. Public accounts describe sporting choices, effort and engagement with advice. An access-focused account should not portray the performer as a passive product of institutions. It instead asks what options were available and how the athlete could pursue them. Likewise, success should not make interruptions appear necessary or desirable. Equipment problems and restricted competition opportunities remain concerns even when an exceptional athlete performs well despite them.

The relationship between agency and support is especially important when a biography emphasises determination. An athlete may actively seek assistance, accept a change of school or continue competing through difficulty. Such choices do not remove the need for material opportunities, and the presence of assistance does not make the athlete passive. The documents are best read as accounts of choices made within particular arrangements. This avoids assigning the entire outcome either to personal will or to external provision. It also leaves room for choices that are not reported publicly, including rejected opportunities and competing priorities, which cannot be reconstructed from the successful outcome alone.

School transitions and continuity of coaching

The childhood material supports a practical argument for preserving routes between activities. Its strongest evidence concerns participation, recognition and access to a specialist setting, rather than a measured transfer of cricket skills. This reading is compatible with diversification and talent-transfer research while preserving the limits of the case (Côté & Vierimaa, 2014; Green et al., 2024; Güllich et al., 2022). A programme based on the case would therefore need to evaluate willingness to change sports, learning opportunities and the availability of appropriate coaching. Selecting pupils only because their movements resemble a champion's would leave those conditions unexamined.

The role attributed to Prasanna suggests that a school transition involved more than technical instruction. Practical living support may make an opportunity accessible, but a system depending on personal generosity also raises questions about continuity and equitable access. The documents do not establish whether the arrangement was formalised or how other athletes were supported. A useful institutional response would investigate the functions being carried by individual coaches and determine which require dependable school or organisational provision. This follows from the reported breadth of the role without assuming that the relationship was deficient.

A practical implication for schools is to distinguish recognition from a supported transition. Recognising a promising pupil can open a route, but the receiving institution would still need to clarify educational continuity, access to coaching and the practical arrangements for attendance. These are proposed questions arising from the case, rather than a claim about how St. Peter's administered the scholarship. They also provide a basis for examining access beyond the selected champion. Records of applicants, offers, uptake and continued participation would show whether an opportunity depended on exceptional personal connections or was available through a process that other suitable pupils could navigate.

Overseas training raises a related question about continuity. Contact with additional expertise becomes developmentally informative when the content of the exchange and its use on return can be described. The local coach's continuing role should therefore be considered

alongside international contributors. Sellathurai and Draper's (2022) findings on sprint coaches justify attention to learning and implementation in the Sri Lankan context, but do not assess Pathirage's staff. Follow-up work should examine what advice was exchanged, who adapted it and what resources supported its continued use.

For coaching organisations, continuity also concerns who holds responsibility when several contributors are involved. A useful follow-up would ask how the athlete and local coach understood an overseas visit, which ideas they intended to try and how they evaluated those ideas afterwards. Describing such a process would give substance to the relationship between international contact and daily preparation. It would also allow disagreement or adaptation to be examined without assuming that either represented failure. The present publications identify contact but do not document this learning process. Their value is to locate a specific question for investigation, with the local relationship remaining part of the explanation rather than disappearing behind the prestige of an overseas setting.

Contributions beyond earlier investigations

The contributions anticipated in the Introduction can now be stated as specific insights. Table 10 places each beside the investigations on which it builds. The comparison identifies what the present analysis adds; it does not suggest that the earlier studies were mistaken, and a single case cannot test their conclusions.

Table 10
Contributions of the present study relative to earlier investigations

Earlier investigations	What they established	What the present study adds
Henriksen et al. (2010); Rees et al. (2016)	Environments and relationships help explain talent development; evidence from interviews, observation and multi-level review	Distinguishes a contributor's presence in a public record from evidence that its contribution was delivered and usable
De Bosscher et al. (2006)	Policy areas through which national systems may influence international success	Locates provision relative to one athlete's successive performances; an award can recognise one result and precede another
Côté and Vierimaa (2014); Güllich et al. (2022); Green et al. (2024)	Varied participation and talent transfer can precede world-class performance; constraints shape movement between sports	Describes the reported access arrangements (coach recognition, a scholarship and living support) through which a multisport pupil reached a specialist setting
Jayawardhana et al. (2023); Sellathurai and Draper (2022)	Problems of policy implementation and gaps in sprint coaches' knowledge in Sri Lanka	Provides athlete-level instances in a field event, including functions reported as carried personally by a local coach

Earlier investigations	What they established	What the present study adds
Feddersen et al. (2021)	Limited attention to neutral or negative cases in ecological talent-development research	Retains access complaints and equipment interruptions within a successful case and reads earlier accounts as written before the title
Bowen (2009); Gale et al. (2013)	General procedures for document analysis and framework analysis	Adapts these procedures to support claims by separating descriptive coding from judgements of announced, delivered and usable support

The comparison identifies what the present study adds to each body of work. It does not test the conclusions of the earlier studies, and the additions remain bounded by the public corpus described in Tables 1–6.

The first insight concerns the evidence through which support becomes visible. Ecological research has established that environments and relationships, not only individual performers, help explain talent development (Henriksen et al., 2010; Rees et al., 2016), and Henriksen et al. reached that conclusion with direct access to the setting studied. The present analysis shows what a public record can and cannot establish without such access. Recognition appears in fourteen of the fifteen documents, whereas specific accounts of delivery or use are few, and one access episode shows provision and usability diverging. A contributor's presence in a successful athlete's biography is therefore distinct from evidence that its contribution was usable. This gradation of evidence is the study's principal addition to ecological accounts of athlete development.

The second insight concerns timing. De Bosscher et al. (2006) identified forms of provision associated with international success in order to analyse national systems. Within a single pathway, the same award can recognise one result and become available before the next, and a retrospective publication can describe assistance that preceded a later title. The direction of influence between support and success therefore cannot be read from the order in which support is publicised. Support must be located relative to a named performance or transition before its developmental role can be assessed. This adds an athlete-level, temporal qualification to provision-based explanations of success.

The third insight concerns the transition from varied participation to specialisation. Earlier research has shown that elite performance need not begin with exclusive early commitment to one sport and has identified constraints that shape movement between sports (Côté & Vierimaa, 2014; Green et al., 2024; Güllich et al., 2022). The present accounts add a description of how such a transition was represented in practice: coach recognition, a school scholarship and living support are reported as the arrangements through which a multisport pupil reached a specialist setting. In these accounts, the transition depended on access arrangements as well as sporting history. The case does not show that cricket skills transferred to javelin.

The fourth insight concerns the Sri Lankan context. Earlier studies reported problems of policy implementation through a survey of 240 respondents and five administrator interviews

(Jayawardhana et al., 2023) and gaps in sprint coaches' knowledge (Sellathurai & Draper, 2022). The present study moves from the system and the coaching workforce to the arrangements encountered by one athlete in a field event. It shows formal scholarships and sponsorship alongside functions, such as accommodation and food, that were reported as provided personally by a local coach. This adds a specific question to the earlier system-level findings: which developmental functions are carried by individuals, and which are secured through dependable institutional provision?

Finally, the study contributes a way of examining a successful case without allowing success to validate the whole environment, the risk identified by Feddersen et al. (2021). General procedures for document analysis and framework analysis (Bowen, 2009; Gale et al., 2013) are adapted to support claims by separating descriptive coding from judgements of announced, delivered and usable support, and by reading earlier accounts, such as the 2024 interview, as written before the title. The genre comparison adds a related observation: institutional publications and personal profiles carry different parts of an athlete's history, so an account assembled from one genre alone would be partial. These contributions remain bounded by the public corpus. They do not establish causal effects or a national model, but they give earlier frameworks an athlete-level, documentary means of distinguishing what was announced, what was delivered and what the athlete could use.

Practical implications and further research

For practitioners, the analysis supports recording an assistance arrangement at the level at which an athlete uses it. A concise record could identify the need, responsible provider, promised date, actual delivery, intended use and any interruption. For a competition, these fields might concern entry, travel and suitable equipment; for a training visit, they might concern access to staff and the plan for continued learning. Such records would make responsibilities visible before an opportunity was missed. This is a proposed application of the analysis, not a programme documented in Pathirage's preparation.

Evaluation should consider continuity of access alongside agreed performance objectives. Relevant questions include whether planned competitions were entered, whether usable equipment was available and whether specialist support could be reached when required. Athletes and qualified staff would need to define the measures and their practical burden. A medal remains a significant outcome, but cannot show which service was delivered consistently or whether comparable athletes received equivalent opportunities. The same reasoning applies to ambassador programmes: public commitment should be followed by evidence of supervised activities and sustained participation.

At organisational level, an assistance record would be most useful when reviewed with the athlete and the staff who must act on it. A delivery receipt could confirm that equipment arrived, while an athlete's account could establish whether it was available for the intended occasion. These forms of evidence should be connected to a named arrangement rather than collected as general endorsements. A brief review after an interruption could then identify which responsibility needs clarification and which information was missing beforehand. This proposed approach follows the documentary distinction developed here; it is not presented as a tested intervention or a guarantee of improved performance.

The same approach could make recognition programmes more accountable without diminishing their symbolic value. An award can be recorded as recognition in its own right. If a later claim is made that it supported preparation or widened participation, the additional activity would need to be documented separately. For a community appearance, that might involve a record of the activity offered, its intended participants and whether opportunities continued after the event. For a financial award, it might involve the agreed purpose and the assistance actually received. These are proposed forms of evidence, not claims that the organisations in this case had adopted or failed to adopt them.

Further research could combine consented interviews with dated training, travel and support records to examine the transitions identified here. Accounts from the athlete, family, school, local coach and international contributors would permit different interpretations to be compared. Including other throwers and athletes who left the pathway would address the selection of a successful case and help assess uneven access. Such work would require its own permissions and appropriate ethics process. The present article supplies traceable questions and documentary contrasts for that inquiry, rather than anticipating the answers.

A comparative study could begin with one transition rather than attempting to compare whole careers. School entry, an overseas training visit or preparation for a major competition would provide a defined period and a set of participants to investigate. Selecting athletes with different subsequent outcomes would help separate access arrangements from the later prestige of a medal. Interviews could be compared with contemporaneous records to examine agreement and changes in recollection. Such a design would extend the present analysis by investigating how arrangements operated, including decisions and interruptions that never became public news, while preserving the distinction between participants' accounts and independently documented events.

Limitations

The purposive English-language corpus privileges publicly visible contributors and cannot represent the complete career archive. Sinhala and Tamil material, subscription databases and the reported biography were not systematically examined. The incomplete original query log prevents replication of the entire discovery sequence. Organisational communications and profiles dominate different parts of the account, and sources may repeat the same incident or testimony. Category totals consequently measure representation in this selection, not the prevalence of assistance or hardship in the athlete's life.

The case contains no comparison group, complete financial history, direct observation or verified training dataset. Retrospective accounts leave childhood chronology and intervention timing partly unresolved. Maturation, unobserved changes in preparation and support attracted by improving results remain plausible explanations. The distinction between announcement, reported delivery and practical access helps discipline interpretation, but has not been validated as a general assessment instrument. Missing documentary evidence cannot establish missing support.

The apparent precision of the matrix should also be interpreted cautiously. A document receives the same presence code whether it contains one qualifying passage or an extended discussion, so the totals do not measure depth or importance. The four publication genres

are descriptive groupings within a small purposive corpus; their differences cannot be generalised to all sports reporting. The matrix is useful because it makes the distribution of this material inspectable. Its role is to organise the interpretation and expose gaps, while the evidential judgement continues to depend on the passages and their context.

The first author is a practitioner interpreting a successful athlete's public history, and AI assisted the analytical process. The recorded sources, explicit coding rules and matrix allow examination of the claims, but do not substitute for substantive author validation or external challenge. Human validation and the applicable institutional ethics position remain outstanding. The present version is therefore a revised analytical draft rather than a claim that those research requirements have been completed.

Conclusion

The selected public documents represent Pathirage's development through varied childhood participation, a school opportunity, sustained local coaching, international contacts and several forms of practical assistance. Their contribution to explanation depends on what each account establishes. A commitment identifies intended provision; a report of delivery specifies assistance supplied; an access episode shows how the athlete encountered that assistance, including difficulties using it. The same resource or award can also occupy different positions relative to successive performances.

These distinctions qualify a celebratory account of the pathway without diminishing the achievement. They support an ecological interpretation attentive to concrete opportunities, while leaving coordination and performance effects unresolved. For practitioners, the useful question is whether assistance reaches the athlete in a form and at a time that permits preparation. For researchers, the next step is to connect the documentary contrasts with dated records and accounts from those involved. Relative to earlier ecological, policy and diversification research, the study shows that evidence of support can be graded from announcement to usable access, that support must be located relative to a named performance before its developmental role can be judged, and that the move from varied participation to specialisation was represented as depending on practical access arrangements. The article's contribution is a traceable way to examine that connection, rather than a formula for producing champions.

Declarations

Ethics and consent

This study uses public sporting publications and official results. No participants were recruited and no research interviews or confidential records were collected. No formal ethics review took place; no approval, exemption or institutional determination is claimed. The authors must establish and report the applicable institutional determination or policy basis before submission.

Funding and competing interests

The authors confirm that this research received no funding and declare no competing interests. Assistance discussed in the article concerns the athlete and does not constitute funding for this research.

Prior publication

The authors confirm that this manuscript has not been published previously and is not under consideration elsewhere.

Data availability

The fifteen narrative sources and four official result records are identified in Tables 1 and 2 and the references. Tables 3–6 include provenance notes, the codebook and all ninety assignments of documents to categories. The analytical locators refer to retrieved substantive text rather than publisher-supplied paragraph numbers. Online sources may change, and their availability remains subject to the publishers' terms. These tables provide an audit record, not evidence of completed human validation.

Author contributions and AI assistance

Hussain Haleem specified the topic, childhood focus and revision priorities. ChatGPT assisted source discovery, retrieval, extraction, initial coding, matrix checks, interpretation, drafting and formatting. Revision included renewed source checks and restructuring of the argument. Substantive author validation of the sources, coding and interpretations has not yet been documented; no claim of completed human verification or final author approval is made. The authors remain responsible for those checks and for the submitted manuscript.

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