



### **GODAMANNA KEEPS SRI LANKA ALIVE AGAINST INDONESIA IN DAVIS CUP RELEGATION BATTLE**

COLOMBO, April 7, 2018: Harshana Godamanna kept Sri Lanka alive in the Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Group Two relegation tie against Indonesia when he won the second singles on the opening day to share the spoils at the Sri Lanka Tennis Association on Saturday.

Sri Lanka's most decorated Davis Cup player swept aside David Susanto 6-3, 6-1 to level the score at 1-1 after Indonesian number one Christopher Rungkat had won the first singles defeating Sharmal Dissanayake 6-4, 4-6, 3-0 (retd.).

Godamanna, 33, who is playing his 51<sup>st</sup> Davis Cup tie was recognized for his long and invaluable service to the country by the International Tennis Federation before action got underway when he received an ITF Commitment Award. The left-hander then went on the clay courts and proved how much Sri Lanka will miss him in the future, especially in singles, as he dominated Susanto.

"I'm really proud to get this award," Godamanna said. "It wasn't something I planned for or aimed at but it is pretty cool to be in the company of a couple of other Sri Lankans who have given their commitment to the Davis Cup which is a special event."

"He is a worthy recipient of this award for he has given a lot to the country," said Suresh Subramaniam, president of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka and a former Davis Cup member too.

The other local recipients of this award are the late Bernard Pinto and Arjun Fernando.

Godamanna first represented Sri Lanka at the Davis Cup in 2002 and has now played a record 51 ties including 94 matches – 69 singles and 25 doubles – with a 43-15 win-loss record in singles and a 26-10 doubles record.



He will be hoping his 51s tie, the last time he will be playing singles, will be a successful one with Sri Lanka facing relegation to Group Three next year if the visitors are triumphant in the five-match tie (two opening singles, doubles, and two reverse singles).



“Indonesia is a good team. They have been in Group Two for a long time consistently whereas we have been back and forth between Group Three and Two. But this will be a good opportunity for us to prove we belong to Group Two,” said Godamanna who is based in the United States where he works as a professional tennis coach.

“If I continue after this year, it will be mainly playing doubles. This will be my swansong in singles but I leave with the team in good shape as we have three guys, Sharmal (Dissanayake), Yasitha (de Silva) and Alex (Fairbanks) who are all good prospects for the future. In the past we have depended on one or at most two players but now we have a solid core,” Godamanna pointed out.



Godamanna, who was once ranked as high as 811 in the ATP world rankings (in 2008), could figure in the crucial doubles which will be played first on Sunday before the two reverse singles are played. He will come up against Rungkat in the first of two reverse singles.

Due to a rule change brought in by the International Tennis Federation, all matches will be on a best-of-three sets format instead of the old best-of-five sets.

“The ITF brought this in so as to cut costs for hosting nations. Now a tie can be completed in two days instead of three. But whether it will work in our favour remains to be seen. In the past, the fitter player had more chances of winning by keeping their opponent on court longer,” said Iqbal Bin Issack, SLTA president, who along with match referee Emilliano Zaron, presented the ITF award to Godamanna.

“In the past, I preferred playing five set matches and most of my wins have come in such encounters,” Godamanna said. “But at this stage of my career, I think a best-of-three sets format suits me better.”

Sri Lanka’s non-playing Davis Cup captain Rohan De Silva might take the gamble and play his number one player Godamanna in the doubles especially as the left-handed ace hardly raised a sweat against Susanto in a commanding victory. Yasitha De Silva and Alex Fairbanks have been nominated to play the doubles but a change can be made to the combination on match day.