

MEDIA REPORT – ST. JOHN’S COLLEGE, JAFFNA

RENOVATED BASKETBALL COURT OPENING – 12.01.2018

The opening ceremony of the renovated Basketball court took place on the morning of 12th January 2018. The agenda for the day is given below:

- Procession
- Prayer by the Rev. V.Daniel Jeyaruban, Assistant Chaplain of the College
- Planting of Tree by the Project Chairman, Dr. T. Gobyschanger
- Hoisting of College Flag by the Principal of St. John’s College
- College Song
- Unveiling of Plaque by Vice Principal, Mr. V.S.B.Thuseetharan, and Old Boy and Zonal Manager of Nations Trust Bank, Mr.Rohan Thevathason
- Opening of the Court by Hon.T.Gurukularajah, former Minister of Education, Cultural Affairs, Sports and Youth Affairs, Northern Province
- Unveiling of Plaques - Stand I and Stand II by Mr.David Ponniah and Mr.Thayaparan
- Unveiling of Flood Lights by Mr.Vamadeva Thiagendran, Proprietor –TCT, an old boy of the College
- Blessing the Court by the Rev. S.S.Jebachelvan
- Welcome Speech by Dr. T. Gobyschanger
- Address on behalf of the President of OBA, Jaffna by the Rev. Jason Selvarajah
- Address by the Principal, the Rev. N.J.Gnanaponrajah
- Release of Souvenir by Editor, Dr.T. Gandeepan
- Presentation of Mementos & Gifts by the Principal
- Vote of Thanks by Dr. T.Gandeepan
- Exhibition Match - Old Boys vs Present Boys
- Refreshment

At St. John’s, equal attention is paid to games, sports, academic development and involvement in extra-curricular activities to cultivate one’s personality. The basketball court needed a facelift and this was identified by a member of the Sydney OBA. After months of hard work, the opening ceremony of the renovated Basketball court took place on the morning of 12th January 2018.

The College band led the procession that included Hon.T.Gurukularajah, former Minister of Education, Cultural Affairs, Sports and Youth Affairs, Northern Province & his wife, Members of the Provincial Council - Hon. Kanagalingam Sivajilingam, Hon. Kesavan Sajanathan & Hon. Velupillai Sivayogan, Surgeon - Dr. Gopishankar, Mr. David Ponniah, Principal of Chundikuli Girls’ College - Mrs. D.Thuseetharan, Principal of

St. John’s College - the Rev.N.J.Gnanaponrajah, Vice Principals - Mr.V.S.B.Thuseetharan & Mr.A.H.Gnanarajan, Assistant Chaplain - Rev.V.D.Jeyaruban and many other important personalities, to the venue. Past administrators, teachers and students of St. John’s College, past and present basketball players, coaches and old boys too graced the occasion.



The procession led by the band

The Opening Prayer was said by the Rev.V.D.Jeyaruban, Assistant Chaplain. He prayed that God should bless the court and the players and thanked God for everyone who upheld the College in the past.



The Opening Prayer

Next was the tree planting ceremony – the tree will remind people of this historic day in the years to come. The planting of the sapling was done by Surgeon, Dr. T. Gobyshanger.

The next event was the hoisting of the College Flag by the Principal, the Rev.N.J.Gnanaponrajah, followed by the College Song.



Hoisting of the Flag by the Principal. The pride of being a Johnian knows no bounds.

Next was the unveiling of the plaque by the Vice Principal, Mr.V.S.B.Thuseetharan and Mr Rohan Thevathason.



Unveiling the Plaque

The most eagerly awaited moment – the moment for which years of coordination and hard work went into - the opening of the Renovated Basketball Court, was next. Hon.T.Gurukularajah, former Minister of Education, Cultural Affairs, Sports and Youth Affairs, Northern Province, was invited to sever the ribbon.

Next, the Plaques on Stand I and Stand II were unveiled by Mr. David Ponniah and Mr.Thayaparan.



Unveiling Stand I



Unveiling Stand II

The Plaque on the Flood Lights Stand was unveiled by the proprietor of TCT, Mr.Vamadeva Thiagendran.



The unveiling of the light stand

After the ceremonial opening, the court was blessed by the Rev. S.S.Jebachelvan.



Blessing of the Court

The Welcome Speech by Dr. T. Gobyschinger, the Chairman of the Project Committee, followed. He spoke passionately and eloquently about how the dream of renovating the Basketball court became a reality. In his wonderful speech, he said that the idea to renovate the court came from his friend and the then Secretary of the Old Boys' Association of Melbourne, Jude Prakash, when a large number of old boys came for the Big Match in March last year.

‘OBA Melbourne was extremely generous in their pledge. Stimulated and fuelled by them, we started raising funds from our past players and Johnians. Large sums were pledged towards the project. Greatly encouraged, we started to communicate through emails, phone calls and social media. Subsequently, we managed to establish a network of willing donors. Positive responses from Johnians began to heap up and the Northern Provincial Council too came forward with a substantial financial support. It is this teamwork that led to the materialization of our dream.’

‘We had the following in mind before work on renovation commenced, he continued. We wanted the court:

- To be built in such a way that it could be used for many years.
- To reduce player injury.
- To be on par with national and international standards.
- To be used not only by the students of St. John’s College but by all Schools and Clubs in the North.
- To lead to the improvement of this game in the North
- To be used for national level competitions.



Welcome Address

Then the Rev. Jason Selvarajah, on behalf of the President of OBA, Jaffna, shared his feelings of appreciation and applauded the efforts of everyone concerned.



Address on behalf of the OBA President

The Principal’s Address was next. He expressed his gratitude to the past Principals, Vice Principals, Sectional Heads, teachers, old boys, parents and well-wishers - those walking on the surfaces of the Earth and those with their dwellings in heaven - for their loyalty and dedication. He said that it was their persistence that enabled the institution to see its third centenary of existence. He also had the following to say:

- Barely had two weeks gone since the reopening of the school for the new academic year that two historic events have taken place – the NVQ1 Building Career Skills examinations

were held for the students of St. John's at St. John's and the basketball court was renovated to be on par with national standards.

- The year that commemorates the bicentennial of the arrival of Joseph Knight has begun with a very good and promising start!
- The College has a list of needs, numbering about twenty-eight. These needs range from developing the classrooms to international standards to the construction of a swimming pool. As of 12.01.2018, the College was one need less. By 2023, with everyone's support, the college would have achieved all.
- In 2023, children will be studying in SMART St. John's with all the facilities that a student could ask for.

He said that he has witnessed work being carried out on this basketball court thrice. The Principal let his memories gradually shift to the 60's. He was taken back in time to the point where he was a boarder at Evarts Hostel. He said that he could remember watching the construction of the Basketball Court from where the College flag was flying at the time of his speech.

'I recollect standing in the old Staff Quarters and looking at the second phase of work in 1998 – but this time, I had grown up a bit and was a Sectional Head,' he quipped in his speech. He went on to say that he observed the third phase being carried out two decades later from the Principal's residence. This time around, the work has been done to national standards.

The Principal gratefully said, 'The College is extremely grateful to each and everyone who chipped in, in little ways and big - in terms of finances, expertise and knowledge. My heartfelt thanks go to the SJC OBA Melbourne who initiated this project and to all the old boys around the world for their generous support, especially Dr. Gobyshanger, Dr. Gandeepan, Mr Senthuran, Mr. Hajeepan, Mr. Rohan Thevasan and their team from OBA Jaffna for their hard work. We thank Honorable T.Gurukularajah and the Northern Provincial Council, Sri Lanka for their

financial assistance, Mr. Thiyaharajah for his financial assistance and Consultant Engineers Mr.Suthakar and Mr. Nihold for their voluntary services. I take this opportunity to thank my work supervisor, Mr. Donald and his team for their hard work to make this function successful.'

The Principal continued, 'Eyeing 2023, we have started stepping on the accelerator. We should all forge ahead, hand in hand, achieving more and more, making the smiles of our brothers wider and wider. We need each and every one of your support in big ways and small. We, in particular, want the Old Boys associations to stand by our side as pillars of strength. You have been a steadfast support in the past and present and we seek your continued support in the years to come. The renovation of the court which you very successfully accomplished is an example of your commitment and is an inspiration to all.'



Hon Gurukularajah's Address was next. He talked about his involvement with Basketball. 'I remember playing basketball during my younger days,' he reminisced. 'Many students will play this game with a lot of interest. This game is less prone to injuries and will give good values to the players.'



The next address was by Mr.David Ponniah, son of Late Vice Principal and

Basketball Coach Mr.J.N.Ponniah. He spoke about his father's reputation as a good Basketball coach.



Address by Mr.Ponniah

A souvenir was released by Dr.T. Gandeepan, Editor, to mark the opening of the renovated Basketball Court at St. John's College. He handed over the first copy to Hon.E.Arnold, former member of the Northern Provincial Council who had shown a lot of interest in this project. It was during his tenure that financial support was obtained from the Provincial Council under the direction of Hon.T.Gurukularajah.



Releasing the souvenirs

Following this was the presentation of mementos, little tokens of appreciation, to those who were behind the renovation of the court.



Presenting Mementos

The Vote of Thanks was proposed by Dr. T. Gandeepan. He thanked everyone for their support. He expressed his sincere gratitude to

Mr.P.Thayaparan, Mr Jude Pragash, Mr.S.Amilthan, Mr.K.Ratnamukunthan, Mr.Dilan Thevathason and Mr.B.Sivaharan for their contribution, interest and inspiration.

'I would also like to thank and congratulate all batches from 1985 for their active contribution. It needs to be mentioned that the 1986, 1992 and 1998 batches expressed their interest exponentially,' Dr.T.Gandeepan, Project Secretary and Editor of the souvenir, said.

The doctor finished his speech thus: 'Let us all work together to build on the success of the past 195 years of the history of St John's College, so the future generation can take pride and lift the school to greater heights to celebrate the bicentenary in magnificent grace in 2023. Where there is Unity, there is always Victory.'



Vote of Thanks

Donation of balls, jerseys and other materials were made by the old boys. The materials were received gratefully by the Prefects of Games, Mr.V.Kumanan.



Handing over basketball accessories

The Exhibition match between the Old Boys and present boys was interesting and exciting to watch. The former won.

Srirankan Srirajeevan, an old boy, was the first to shoot the ball through the hoop of the renovated basketball court.

Jayanth Anistan of UPVII, Vice Captain and Defender of the team was the first to score a point for the team of present students.



Exhibition Match



The final score of the first game played on the renovated court



The event came to a grand finish with the serving of refreshments to the guests in Peto Hall.

The renovation of the basketball court will, no doubt, holistically nurture the body and mind

of the students. Countless students, now and in the years to come will benefit immensely from this project which was carried out at an approximate cost of Rs. 8million.

A special word of thanks goes to:

- Mr.P.Thayaparan, Mr.S.Amilthan & Mr.B.Sivaharan
- 92 & 98 batches
- Mr.R.S.Thevathason and Mr. Dilan Thevathason for their contribution in memory of Late Mr & Mrs Thevathason
- David Ponniah and his Batchmates of 1986 for the movable new fibre glass boards and rings donated in loving memory of Late Mr J.N Ponniah (Teacher, Prefect of Games & Vice Principal)
- 1992 batch for the movable new fibre glass boards and rings (Stand – II) in memory of late Mr Sivasothy Sivakumaran
- Mr.K.Ratnamucunthan of 1991 batch for the adornment of the pavement with grass pitch

The College would wish to see the same dedication and love for the Alma Mater from everyone. The College invites all the Johnians and well-wishers to join hands, strengthen the existing links of comradeship and undertake future projects for the benefit of their younger brothers.

St. John's has taken the first two steps in its march towards the College's bicentennial in 2023...we invite the others to join the parade...