

KHAN HE HIT

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WE were in a conversation when a youngster came up to us. Politely he asked “Mr Khan could you spare some time with us”?

Yee Khan looked up to the boy and said “I’ll be with you all in ten minutes.”

I had a puzzled look and on noticing it, Yee Khan pointed to a group of about 15 boys and girls sitting away from us.

“They are from a South Korean badminton Club on a training stint here”, he explained.

The kids were around 15 years of age and were spending a week at Yee Khan’s Pangkor Seaview Resort.

They had deliberately picked Pangkor so they could get some pointers on badminton from Yee Khan, whom they described as a “great world class player” from the 60s.

As he got up to go, He gestured to me to follow him. So I ended up listening to the “badminton maestro” talk about his experiences.

The kids were enthralled and listened with all he said. This was a session on badminton education. Later speaking to a couple of Korean youngsters, I was told that their coaches educate them on past “great” shuttlers.

So their trip to Pangkor was to learn about Yee Khan’s training habits, his unique ‘smashing’ power and how they can utilise his regimen in today’s game.

And my presence in Pangkor on 21st September 2005, was to celebrate Yee Khan’s 65th birthday.

After watching him showing these youngsters various systematic workouts, it prompted me to find out what made him and partner Ng Boon Bee “the world’s undisputed doubles badminton kingpins.”

He then related what Brother Pius, the Brother Director of St Michael’s Institution in Ipoh told him: “If you want to be a good sportsman, always aim to be the Number One. Only then all your sacrifices you make are worth it.”

Those words of Brother Pius set him on his glory trail. He did not allow anything to

shatter his dream in the world of badminton.

During the casual conversation, he took me through all his years of punishing rituals seldom seen today. His speed, power and strength were his forte when he ruled the badminton courts from Tokyo to London.

He recalled when he was called to join the Malayan (Malaysian) Thomas Cup squad in 1958, he was the first schoolboy to be selected.

He skipped his Senior Cambridge examination all for badminton. For the next three months he diligently stayed and trained with Eddy Choong, the former All-England singles champion.

Eddy and the other senior players showed him so many different styles of play and he learnt how to adapt and improvise them into his game.



Yee Khan showing Korean youngsters how to strengthen the fingers with newspapers.

Even today, his smashing prowess is spoken of in awe. He was rated as one with the hardest smashes in the world. On many an occasion he demolished shuttlecocks.

Once during a match in India, his punishing smash went through the net. His opponent cried “foul”. The umpire overruled the complaint and awarded the point to Yee Khan.

He demonstrated to the Korean youngsters on how to exercise the fingers and forearm by working newspapers into a ball.

Another of his training secrets was smashing 400 to 500 used shuttlecocks against the wall. He worked on his endurance by running on the Perak Turf Club track. He would run 10 rounds five days a week.

It was the same methodology he used when he turned to golf on retiring from badminton: “I used my badminton theory in golf. I knew where to apply my inner strength.”

Though having met him at the tailend of his badminton career, I really got to know the “Tan Yee Khan” on the golf course.

He was very close to the Yusof brothers (Nazamuddin and Sahabudin) the Bluah brothers (Sulaiman and Eshak). All of them grew up playing on the Tiger Lane Course like Yee Khan.

He worked on his golf, knocking around 300 hundred balls at the driving range. He was without a doubt a long hitter averaging around 280 yards, however he was short of Zainal Abidin Yusof who reached 300 yards.

From a double digit golfer, he went down to a 4 handicapper and eventually becoming a scratch player despite having an orthodox grip.

Yee Khan left a rich sporting legacy for Malaysia. He set a gold standard on discipline, attitude, determination and excellence which Malaysia’s young and aspiring athletes can emulate.

