



# MY ROLE MODEL

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**R**AMU as I called him was my role model and mentor when I was just making into the Selangor Razak Cup team in 1978.

I had already made my mark with the National Juniors having played in the Junior Asia Cup a year earlier.

My first impression of Ramu was despite being a National player and a "star" in his own right, he was so down to earth.

Humility was Ramu's other name. He always had time for the junior players.

Like Ramu, I too had a burning dream of playing in the Olympics, World Cup and Asian Games. I also wanted to emulate my Dad, Lawrence Van Huizen.

Ramu used to visit my hometown Seremban with Michael Yan on weekend breaks from National team training.

Whenever he saw me, he would take me aside and ask me: "Young man how is your hockey and also how are you doing in your studies. Make sure you train hard and don't neglect your studies".

Having an international player encouraging me, was an immense boost.

I made sure I worked on my game and never neglected my studies.

When I joined the Selangor team in 1978, it was quite intimidating as I was training and playing with hockey legends who I looked up to - M Mahendran, Ow Soon Kooi, R Ramu, KT Rajan, K Balasingam and others.

It was Ramu who took me under his wings. I followed him, learned from him and trained even harder.

Ramu would always

emphasise: "Don't pick up bad habits for you have a long way to go."

One piece of advice he pounded into me was to be disciplined, keep fit always, analyse my game, be humble and never be shy to seek the seniors for help.

I remember in one National training camp Ramu felt that he needed to lose weight and build his fitness. He would quietly do the extra extra mile after our field sessions.

When he made his last appearance at the 1981 Intercontinental tournament which was the qualifier for the Bombay World Cup. I was dropped. and was the liaison officer for the team.

However Ramu was injured in the "qualifier". I replaced him for the 4 Nations tournament in Singapore. and became a regular.

Ramu's injury and stepping away from National duty, found me becoming a first eleven choice.

All the advice from Ramu helped me improve on my game and stayed with the National outfit for ten years.

The sad part was. I never got to play alongside Ramu in the National team.

Throughout my playing and coaching career he was always available to share his experiences and also give good advice that was really valuable.

For me he was my mentor and role model whom I looked up to.

Unless you are a hockey fan you won't know much about Ramu. He hardly talked about his hockey career. You won't hear him brag about himself despite being one of Malaysia's finest players.