

REMEMBERING C. PARAMALINGAM

PARAM'S LOVE AFFAIR

I got to know Chelliah Paramalingam, who passed away on December 12 at the age of 91, when I did a feature article on him for *allSports* magazine (now defunct) in 1983.

Param was in his late forties, an age where the energy and enthusiasm of youth begin to yield to the debilities of age. I possessed an enthusiasm for the sport that was insurance against too fast an erosion.

As I talked to him and probed the wellsprings of his motivation, I found that love -- for anything at all -- was the source of Param's attachment to field hockey. After all this was a man who was the inspiration and motivator of several youth teams and outstanding individual players in Klang, where Param lived and moved.

His eyes had a sparkle when he talked about the game and I

noticed it did not dim with age. I was into my early thirties and beginning to be curious about the psyche of people and what drove them to their pursuits, especially when these did not bring them the financial rewards that extraordinary endeavour ought to.

I thought Param reminded me of the FIFA referee and FIH umpire S Kathiravale, a man who could officiate an Under-12 match with as much enthusiasm as he did an international football or hockey match. You know the saying: if you show love in small things, you would in big things as well.

Param's love affair with hockey virtually covered the entirety of his life. Although he was wheelchair-bound toward the tail end of his 91-year-old life, his immobility did not dim the lustre of his love for hockey. As Frankie D'Cruz, that prolific *Free Malaysia Today* balladeer of sports performers

and personalities, noted in his eulogy for Param, he gave to the game what all he gained from it.

Old stalwarts never die. They don't even fade away, as General Douglas MacArthur mused about old soldiers. They embed themselves in the subconscious of their admirers and give them the spring that is as perennial as grass. transparent about his plans and goals for his team.

If he was under any pressure, he never showed it and always maintained a pleasant relationship with me.

He could talk for hours on matters pertaining to hockey and there were many gems of wisdom to be picked up from these conversations with him.

A true character and legend of Malaysian hockey.

BY TERENCE NETTO

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